

STEPS & REQUIREMENTS

Crossroads' premarital process is designed to guide you through your engagement and help you plan your ceremony and build a strong foundation for your marriage based on biblical principles. This includes growth, community, communication and finances. To best equip you for this, we require several months between the time you start the process and your wedding date.

We ask for this much time for several reasons. We want to allow time for you to be able to attend the *Building Blocks for Marriage* classes. We want you to have time to process the things you are learning and experiencing, along with planning a wedding. Also, we need time to schedule the volunteers that will be serving you along with your marrying pastor.

Crossroads' marrying pastors are available to marry couples in our chapel or at an off-site location within the Tristate area. You will indicate this, and other details about your preferences, by completing the wedding data sheet.

One member of the couple must be a regular attender who considers Crossroads their "home" church. A regular attender is defined as someone who has been attending Crossroads for the past six months.

Both must be Christ-followers or both must be seekers. This is based on what the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, and also on experience that has shown there can be great tension caused by a couple not sharing a common spiritual foundation.

NEXT STEPS

- **Initial contact with pastoral care coordinator** (*Susan Levey*).
 - Return Wedding Data Sheet along with **two separate checks**: a \$125 fee—per couple—to cover class materials for Building Blocks for Marriage and a \$400 chapel reservation fee—if you are using the chapel at Crossroads.
- **Your wedding date is tentatively reserved. You are given 30 days to complete the following:**
 - Write your spiritual journey statements
 - Send us your three letters of recommendation
 - Register for Building Blocks for Marriage class or make arrangements for professional Christian counseling
 - Discuss the purity promise with each other
 - Schedule date for Dollars & Sense consultation

After we receive all of your information, your wedding date will be confirmed.

APPROXIMATELY TWO MONTHS BEFORE YOUR WEDDING:

- Meet with your assigned wedding coordinator to discuss decorations, candles, flowers, photography, music and other details and logistics.
- Begin meeting with your Crossroads' marrying pastor to get to know each other and to plan the ceremony.

SO WHAT ARE THOSE “NEXT STEPS”?

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY STATEMENTS

The Spiritual Journey Statements are designed to help you communicate with each other about your individual spiritual journeys. What you believe spiritually is foundational to your marriage. Your letters will provide an opportunity for you to learn more about each other, how you have grown and your desires for growth after your wedding. And it may also help you plan your wedding ceremony.

Each of you is to **WRITE A LETTER TO EACH OTHER** describing your own spiritual journey. Please answer these questions in your letter—and anything else you want to share.

- When did your spiritual journey begin?
- What do you believe about God?
- Who do you understand Jesus to be? Does He play a role in your life?
- Who were your spiritual role models?
- What did your parents believe?
- What events have marked your spiritual journey?
- How have you experienced God in your life recently? Give two or three examples.
- In what ways do you encourage/challenge/compliment each others' spiritual growth?
- What role do you see your spiritual life playing in your marriage?
- What do you plan to do to prepare yourselves for marriage spiritually, emotionally and sexually?

So...

- Write your letter independently.
- Share your letters with each other...take time to discuss them.
- Send your statements to the pastoral care coordinator.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Relationships are an important part of your lives. One of the most important aspects of a relationship is that you allow and even encourage space for truth telling. We strongly encourage you to give permission to those people you love and respect to talk to you about sensitive subjects.

So, we ask you to provide three letters of recommendation. Input from others can be invaluable to the success of your marriage. Please provide a letter from each of the three categories below:

- Someone who attends Crossroads with whom you feel a connection
- A family member
- A friend

Ask them to write a letter recommending you for marriage. Ask them to talk about your strengths and your areas for growth—individually and as a couple. Ask them how they feel about your future life together. The letters may be given or sent to you to give to the pastoral care coordinator or they can be sent directly to Crossroads.

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR MARRIAGE CLASSES OR PROFESSIONAL PREMARITAL COUNSELING

Another part of the premarital process is to understand and learn as much about yourself and your future spouse as possible and to build relationship skills. This involves discovering what you have in common, uncovering areas where you differ and learning how to be a thriving couple amid those differences. Research and experience show that couples have an improved first several years of marriage when they invest in skill building BEFORE they wed. (It's like learning to drive before you hop in the car.) That is why we require either Crossroads' premarital classes or professional Christian counseling.

Building Blocks for Marriage classes are held at Crossroads three times a year. They focus on skill building, relationships and stories of married couples' lives. We encourage you to enroll in classes for community and group learning. The classes are held on four consecutive Saturdays, which include one full-day class and three morning classes. The topics covered include: personalities, family heritage, biblical marriage, prayer, communication, love languages, sex, conflict resolution and forgiveness. The classes are a combination of large group experience, small group discussion with a married couple facilitating, and one-on-one time with your future spouse. Check the web site or contact the pastoral care coordinator for upcoming dates.

You may also choose professional Christian counseling. A minimum of seven sessions are required if you choose not to attend the *Building Blocks for Marriage* classes. A trained professional counselor can lead you through testing that identifies your individual personality types. Also, he or she can work with you to see how both your personalities, no matter how different, need to be honored and valued in your relationship.

The following list of local counselors is not comprehensive, but just a sample of Christian counselors in the greater Cincinnati Area. Many have been referred to us by people who attend Crossroads, friends and staff. The list is updated periodically and the information is subject to change. Plan two months for the counseling process.

Local Christian Counselors

Mark Pruden & Associates
310 Terrace Ave. Suite 210
Cincinnati, OH 45220
513.861.6543

New Beginnings Christian
Counseling Services
515 Monroe St
Newport, KY 41071
859.426.9020

Thompson & Associates
7800 Cooper Rd., #101A
Cincinnati, OH 45242
513.489.1171

David Barr
P.O. Box 12315
Norwood, OH 45212
513.675.4626

PURITY PROMISE

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Genesis 2:24-25

What is God's purpose and design for marriage? Oneness. Being spiritually, physically and emotionally naked and unashamed with each other. Complete intimacy. God joins two people together into "one flesh." Preparing spiritually, emotionally and sexually for marriage begins long before the wedding.

If you've been around Crossroads, you may have heard us talk about the inseparable partnership of truth and grace.

TRUTH

God created sex. It is a gift He has blessed us with. He wants us to enjoy it according to his design.

Song of Songs 5:1

...Eat, O friends, and drink; drink your fill, O lovers.

There are certain guidelines we need to follow in order to use it the way it was intended and to protect us from getting hurt. Since God invented sex, it's reasonable for us to consider the guidelines he has given us. These instructions include the reservation of sexual activity for marriage.

Proverbs 4:23

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

1 Corinthians 6:13, 18-20

The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body...Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust...For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

GRACE

Most of us, if not all, have some sexual baggage at one level or another. God wants to heal us of our past. He will also continue to love you if you struggle with and break the boundaries he has set around sex. Nothing can separate you from His love (Romans 8:38). God gives grace and forgiveness to all who ask for it.

Romans 3:23

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

Psalms 103:8-12

The Lord is compassionate and gracious; slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse...He does not treat us as our sins deserve...As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

We strongly encourage you to prepare for marriage by honoring God's original plan AND your future spouse by pledging to keep, or restore, the purity of your physical relationship. This includes a promise you make to God and each other to abstain from sexual intercourse from today until your wedding day.

For those of you who have already made a decision to abstain from sex until marriage we encourage you to continue your commitment.

For those of you who are experiencing a sexual relationship with each other, you might be asking, "So what are the benefits of doing this?" Great question! Since it is God's plan for you to wait, we believe he will bless other areas of your relationship when you commit to this. We have heard from other engaged couples who chose to restore their sexual purity until their wedding night...here's what they had to say (seriously, they really said this.)

"We chose to abstain because we thought it was a requirement. But what it really did was help us focus on the other areas of our relationship that we were neglecting during our engagement."

"We felt like we could communicate better than we were before, because sex didn't become a distraction."

"We wanted to abstain because we wanted to build our faith and trust in God and with each other. Now, two days before our wedding I can honestly say it was the best thing we could ever have done. God blessed our communication in ways I couldn't imagine. When things got tough we were forced to talk it through instead of using sex as a crutch or medication like we did in the past."

We know that choosing to remain sexually pure or restoring sexual purity to your relationship will be a blessing to your future marriage and to your current relationship with God. We also know this is not an easy thing to do. This is an act of surrendering to God's leadership in your life and a submission to trusting that he knows what is best for you. Also

keep in mind that since God designed sex, and he has a plan for it in our lives, then there has to be a place where we can also lean into his grace and power.

Take what God says as his instructions to you in your journey. Talk about them with each other and figure out what they mean for you and your relationship. Our hope is that you will choose to abstain from sex until you are married. Sign the Promise of Purity as a way of marking the moment and a sign of accountability to one another. If you wish to have an extra level of accountability, send a copy to a close friend or your marrying pastor.

PROMISE OF PURITY

- In response to God's command, I promise to protect your purity from this day until we are married.
- Because I respect and honor you, I commit to show my love for you in ways that allow both of us to maintain a clear conscience before God and each other.

Signed _____ and _____

Date _____

DOLLARS & SENSE SPENDING PLAN

Money influences our relationships—how we live, how we work, how we dress, who we marry, what we drive, where we live...need we say more? Our goal is to equip you to develop a basic budget, control debt and manage your finances in a way that is pleasing to God.

Dollars & Sense is designed to help people take control of their individual finances through periodic seminars and counseling. The volunteer team doesn't provide investment advice or recommendations.

Take your time with this process. We do not keep or share this information. Think about your goals and objectives as a couple starting your life together. Here are some things you may want to consider during this process:

- What if one of us loses his or her job?
- Do we want to start a family? If so, when?
- How should we plan for that family?
- Will we both work after we have kids?
- Does either one of us plan to go back to school?
- Are there any student loans?
- Do either of us have credit cards?
- Do we want to buy a house?

Contact Brian Collings at 513.731.7400 x1584 to create a spending plan in collaboration with a Dollars & Sense team member.