

# How does one prepare well for marriage?

How does one prepare well for any path of life, for that matter? The answer to these questions lies in the much bigger questions of “who am I?”, “where have I come from?” and “where am I going?” Marriage is a relationship like no other: it is the union of one man and one woman entered into for life, whereby they become one flesh and are invited to experience, in a unique way, the union of Christ who sacrificed Himself unconditionally for His Bride, the Church.

How are we meant to prepare for, and live well, this wondrous vocation to married life? The answer to this question, and life in its entirety, lies in this one truth: the single most important relationship in our lives is our individual relationship with the One who created us— God. Herein lays our meaning of life, our purpose for existing and our reason for loving others, no matter where our uniquely individual journey leads us.

## Cultivate self-awareness

*“Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.”*

— ARISTOTLE

Pursue awareness through prayer and your relationship with God. Ask God for the grace to see yourself as He does, and to reveal areas in which He wants you to grow. Openness and receptivity to the feedback of those who have our best interests in mind – family, loved ones and friends, spiritual director – can reveal areas in our lives that may need improvement (attitude, virtue, outlook, behaviour, etc...).

*“Love your neighbour as yourself” (Mt. 22:39). “Loving others is contingent on the ability to love yourself... Loving yourself requires that you know, value, and respect the person you are while moving toward the person God has made you to be.”<sup>2</sup>*

*“To love another we must first love ourselves.”<sup>3</sup>*

## BEGIN BY ASKING YOURSELF THESE THREE QUESTIONS<sup>4</sup>:

### 1. Where do I come from?

- a. *“...we are shaped by what we have learned from those around us.”<sup>5</sup>*
- b. *“...knowing your past is crucial to succeeding in your present.”<sup>6</sup>*
- c. *“Understanding where you come from means taking a good hard look at your past and giving yourself the freedom to learn from it. Understanding can lead to liberation. Knowledge can bring freedom from the past. For those who don’t take the time to understand their past and are blind to how it has shaped them, the road to true love can be difficult.”<sup>7</sup>*

### 2. Where and who am I now?

- a. *“a person who listens to God’s word but doesn’t change is like a person who looks in the mirror but walks away, forgetting what they saw — James 1:23-25”<sup>8</sup>*
- b. *“Your beliefs and view of self are so central to determining the kind of person you will relate to.”<sup>9</sup>*
- c. *“...your beliefs about yourself drive so much of what you choose in life. Your identity determines what and even whom you will identify with, because human beings are drawn to what is familiar.”<sup>10</sup>*

### 3. Where am I going?

- a. *“Your story has far more to do with finding God’s unique calling and purpose for your life than it does with finding the love of your life.”<sup>11</sup>*

## Prayer

Put Christ at the centre of your life, firstly, and then at the centre of your marriage. Build and work on your personal relationship with God. Christ’s love needs to transform our hearts, so that we can then love our spouse with His love. Let’s continually invite Christ into our lives especially by approaching Him often in the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Eucharist.

A personal prayer life enables us to love others with grace, and not just in a human way – but with the grace of God’s unconditional, faithful love.

Pursue healing and holiness. Being open to areas of your life where wounds from the past may need to be addressed, so healing and forgiveness can take place is important. Wounds are an experience of ‘un-love’; we were not meant to experience them. Wounds then get surrounded by pain and the pain becomes surrounded by fear, and fear leads to managing behaviours. Holiness is the pursuit of being more like Christ, more fully conformed to His Will and to who He created us to be.

*“Be who you were created to be and you will set the world on fire.”*

— ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA