



Preparing for Marriage

Keeping track of the countless details in planning your wedding is often a stressful experience. You will be surprised by the amount of time and energy needed to plan the wedding. Yet a wedding only lasts one day; a marriage is intended to last for a lifetime. With 50 percent of today's first marriages ending in divorce, it is vital for you to give serious attention to building a healthy, long-term marriage. The incidence of divorce is even greater with second and third marriages.

A way for you to enhance your relationship is through an enrichment program aimed at helping develop your strengths as a couple. These programs are often offered in small groups through religious institutions or independent agencies that focus on relationship growth. You can also meet individually with professional counselors trained in relationship building and pre-marital counseling.

In selecting an enrichment program, keep several guidelines in mind:

- ❖ **Look for programs that emphasize building relationship skills such as communications and conflict resolution.** These will remain with you long after the program is finished and provide a solid base for your relationship.
- ❖ **Select a program that uses a relationship inventory.** An inventory offers a personal assessment of key areas of your relationship, allowing you to examine strengths and growth areas you have as a couple.
- ❖ **Consider participating in a program after you are married.** Most couples need to make a number of adjustments in their first year of marriage. This is especially true when blending families. An enrichment program provides a forum for discussing issues that might otherwise be left unexplored.

Like weddings, enrichment programs require an investment of time, energy and money - but they pay dividends for your marriage that will last for years to come.