



Marriage Prep: Dialogue Stimulation

Congratulations! You're engaged to be married. This is a time for you to grow in love toward one another and to contemplate the seriousness of the vow you will take in front of the Holy Altar. The questions below are meant to be a "conversation starter/dialogue stimulator." I have put together these questions from my experience as a parish priest for the last 40 years. In talking and discussing these issues, I hope you will gain a better understanding of each other, and even more, an understanding of yourself as a wife or husband and the life you will share together.

Instructions:

- 1) Bride and groom answer the questions separately in writing without discussing your answer with one another.
- 2) Even if you think your partner knows what your answer is, write it down. Be honest. Remember honesty is the cornerstone of a successful marriage.
- 3) Set up a date - some place out of the ordinary to have a conversation - local coffee shop, a favorite hiking spot, at the beach - some place where you won't be distracted by phone calls or anything else. This is time for the two of you.
- 4) Undistracted and with complete honesty share your answers with one another.
- 5) Engage in a dialogue with one another. Be honest. Your discussion and conversation is an opportunity to grow.

Remember – you are two different individuals. You will answer questions differently. This does not mean you are incompatible, but in discussing those differences you will have an opportunity to share concerns and thoughts with one another.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to call on me. With best wishes... I look forward to the day when we will find ourselves before the Holy Altar at the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

- Fr. Vazken

Topic: Family

- 1) Describe your family.
 - a. Who in your family were you *emotionally* closest to when you were growing up?
 - b. Who in your family are you *emotionally* closest to now?
 - c. Who in your family do you still see on a regular basis?
 - d. Who in your family experienced the most conflict when you were growing up?
 - e. Who in your family experiences the most conflict now?
- 2) Have there been any deaths in your immediate family?
 - a. If so, how did they affect you/your family?
- 3) Has there been any significant illness (physical or emotional) in your family (including yourself)?
 - a. If so, how has it affected you/your family?
- 4) When your parents experienced conflict between each other, how did they deal with it?
- 5) When your parents experienced conflict with you & your siblings, how did everyone deal with it?
- 6) What are any current expectations your family has on you?
- 7) What expectations will they have on your new spouse?
- 8) Did your parents have close friends when you were growing up?
 - a. If so, what were those friendships like?
- 9) Did you have close friends when you were growing up?
 - a. If so, what were those friendships like?
- 10) What were your family vacations like?
 - a. What would you change about them?
- 11) What is your favorite memory with your family when you were growing up?

Topic: Religious Orientation

- 1) What was your understanding of God when you were growing up?
- 2) How has that changed?
- 3) Did you attend a worship service on a regular basis when you were growing up?
 - a. What was that experience like for you?
- 4) Do you attend a worship service on a regular basis now?
 - a. Why or why not?
- 5) Do you plan on attending a worship service after you are married?
- 6) What do you think is your church's expectation for men/women, husbands/wives?
 - a. How do you feel about those expectations?
- 7) What do you think is your church's expectation in regard to raising children?
 - a. How do you feel about those expectations?
- 8) What do you think your church's expectation on your spouse?

- a. How do you feel about those expectations?
- 9) Are there *any* expectations which your church places on you with which you are uncomfortable?
- 10) How involved do you want your spouse to be in the religious aspects of your life?
- 11) Are there any religious differences (beliefs or practices) between you and your spouse of which you are concerned?
- 12) What are your religious convictions about:
 - a. premarital sex?
 - b. birth control?
 - c. abortion?
 - d. divorce?
 - e. remarriage?
- 13) How would you describe your religious beliefs today?

Topic: Money Matters

- 1) Have you ever had a savings account?
 - a. If so, how old were you when you opened your first one?
 - b. For what purpose would you put money into a savings account?
- 2) Do you invest in the stock market?
 - c. If so, how much of your income do you normally invest?
 - d. How would you describe your portfolio (conservative, risky, balanced)?
- 3) Do you have other financial investments?
- 4) What amount and kinds of investments would you like to make after your marriage?
- 5) Do you balance your checking account every month?
- 6) What are the things over which you believe are worth going into debt? (Home, furniture, home improvements, car, education, vacation, art?)
- 7) Do you regularly use credit cards?
 - If so, how much do you pay on your balance each month? (For example, do you pay them off each month, just pay the interest, interest plus principal?)
- 8) What are your current debts? (Include credit cards, college loans, home, auto, etc.)
- 9) What are your thoughts regarding tithing/giving to your faith community?
- 10) Do you give to a faith community regularly?
 - How much do you now give?
 - How much do you want to give after you are married?
- 11) Do you give to other causes/charities regularly?
 - How much do you now give?
 - How much do you want to give after you are married?
- 12) Do you see yourself more as a saver or a spender? How about your spouse?

- 13) How much do you feel you should have on hand in case of emergency?
- 14) Do you now have a monthly and/or annual budget?
- 15) Who should organize the finances—you, your partner or both?

Communication & Resolving Conflict

- 1) Do you easily talk about your feelings?
 - a. If so, are there any exceptions?
 - b. If not, why not?
- 2) Does your partner easily talk about his/her feelings?
 - a. If so, are there any exceptions?
 - b. If not, how do you deal with it?
- 3) Have you noticed that there are times when it is difficult to communicate with your partner?
 - a. If so, when are those times?
- 4) How do you and your partner resolve conflicts or disagreements?
- 5) Have you had any major fights so far?
 - a. If so, what were they about?
- 6) Would you be in favor of seeking professional counseling as a help to your communication skills?
 - a. If so, when would you do this?
 - b. If not, why not?
- 7) Who would you talk to if you were having a major conflict with your spouse?
- 8) Are there currently any unresolved issues in your relationship?
- 9) Given the high divorce rate, do you think you have more of a chance than others to remain married for the rest of your lives? Why or why not?
- 10) Do you feel safe expressing your feelings to your partner?
- 11) Are you comfortable with the way your partner expresses anger?
- 12) How would you describe your ability to communicate with your parents:
 - a. When you were a child?
 - b. When you were a teenager?
 - c. Now?
- 13) Are you comfortable with answering this questionnaire?
- 14) Are you comfortable knowing that your partner will look at your answers?

Topic: Attitudes & Expectations Regarding Your New Family

- 1) Do you believe that there are roles a person has simply because of gender?
- 2) How many children would you like to have?
- 3) How far apart in age would you like your children to be?

- 4) What are your views on discipline?
- 5) Will you expect your children to perform well in school? In athletics? In other areas?
- 6) Will you expect your children to attend college?
- 7) How often do you expect to go on vacation as a family?
- 8) What is your ideal vacation?
- 9) Would you consider going on a vacation without your spouse?
- 10) How do you expect to spend your weekends?
- 11) How many nights each week would you like your family to be at home?
- 12) How would you describe your ideal home? (Include location, type of building, rooms, yard, etc.)
- 13) Do you hope to have pets? How many? What kind?
- 14) How often would you like to make love with your spouse?
- 15) What kind of things do you hope to continue doing to keep the romance in your relationship?
- 16) How would you describe "quality time" with your spouse?
- 17) What is your idea of a great date?
- 18) Do you have any fears about marriage in general? If so, what are they?

In General

- 1) If you could change only one thing in your life, what would that be and why?
 - 2) In a regular day, what do you find yourself thinking about the most?
 - 3) On your drive to/from work, what consumes your mind, the majority of the time?
 - 4) What things in your life bring you the greatest pleasure?
 - 5) What do you feel is your greatest accomplishment in your life?
 - 6) Did other people help to make that happen?
 - 7) In what settings are you the happiest? Eager? Most comfortable? Saddest? Unsure? Most afraid?
 - 8) What things do you look forward to each day? In your life?
 - 9) If you had three wishes that would come true, what would they be?
 - 10) What major regret do you have so far in your life? Is it too late to change it?
 - 11) When you reach the rocking chair stage of your life, what do you wish you would have done that you haven't attempted so far?
 - 12) Is there a belief or attitude that seems to interfere with creating or pursuing a big dream?
 - 13) What are a couple of things that you appreciate about your relationship and why do these things seem significant?
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Topic: Blended Marriages For marriages where either spouse have children from a previous relationship.

Answer the following questions if your spouse has children:

- 1) How would you describe your current relationship with your future stepchildren?
- 2) How would you describe your role as a stepparent?
- 3) What expectations does your future spouse have of you as a stepparent?

Answer the following questions if you have children:

- 4) How would you describe your relationship with each of your children?
- 5) How do you see your spouse's role as a stepparent?
- 6) What expectations do you have of your spouse toward your children?
- 7) What kind of financial assistance do you plan on giving to your children once they have graduated from high school?

Answer the following questions if either you or your spouse has children:

- 8) What concerns do you have regarding the disciplining of the children?
- 9) When will you spend quality time together as a couple (without the children)?
- 10) What will you do for that quality time together?
- 11) What kinds of activities will you share as quality time with the children?
- 12) What is your greatest fear or concern regarding your new family?

