

Introduction

What is the *Full Marriage Experience*?

The *Full Marriage Experience* is to married couples what a map is to an explorer, what a nautical chart is to a ship's captain, and what architectural blueprints are to a builder. The map, chart, and blueprints are instrumental for those viewing them to reach their ultimate destination.

The *Full Marriage Experience* is instrumental for couples to reach their ultimate destination: to experience all marriage has to offer.

Couples need something greater than themselves in the times of laughter and pain, joy and sorrow, financial uncertainty, health troubles, and real life trials. By uniting around a common vision for their own marriage, and partnering with the Creator of Marriage, couples can endure through most anything, even circumstances that test their breaking point.

The *Full Marriage Experience* is that something greater couples need. The *Full Marriage Experience* results as one man and one woman unite and experience all ten ideals during their marriage journey.

E: Exchange a Lifetime Vow of Commitment

X: eXpand the Depths of Love and Intimacy

P: Protect and Nurture the Relationship

E: Endure Through Life's Highs and Lows

R: Raise and Teach Children

I: Interdepend on Each Other

E: Encounter God Together

N: Nurture Each Other's Well Being

C: Contribute to the Betterment of Society

E: Empower Others' Relationships

Millions of couples, hundreds of thousands of hours of research, thousands of years of experience, and hundreds of books (including *The Good Book*) confirm the *Full Marriage Experience*.

Great marriages are not the result of good luck, finding the perfect soulmate, or waiting for just the right moment. A great marriage is made, not born. To achieve a great marriage, couples must go into it with a clear purpose and clear intentions. The *Full Marriage Experience* is available to any couple that makes the commitment, acquires the knowledge, uses the skills, keeps the faith, and goes the distance!

Why Use Before "I Do"

An enormous amount of time is spent planning for the wedding day. Hours upon hours are spent picking out the perfect wedding cake, the prettiest flowers, and the most appropriate wedding announcements. Within a week of the wedding, the cake is eaten, the flowers are dead, and the invitations have been recycled. While they may all contribute to your special wedding day, they don't do much for the marriage.

Before “I Do” integrates proven relationship insights, Scriptural references, and practical relationship skills. Written from a Christian worldview, this guidebook displays a complete picture of what marriage is intended to be and how to get there.

Before “I Do” helps engaged and pre-engaged couples discuss issues, learn relationship fundamentals, and attain the skills to live the *Full Marriage Experience*. Couples benefit greatly by the topics covered, the issues raised, and the questions asked. While the book is filled with useful information, *Before “I Do”* engages readers to interact with the material, and more importantly, their mate.

The author makes no assumptions of who you are, what you believe, the family you were raised in, or the quality of your premarital relationship. Readers are welcome to disagree with any of the content in this book. But, while it is all right to have a difference of opinion with the writer, it is vital for you and your mate to be in full agreement on all things marriage.

I guarantee, after completing *Before “I Do”*, you will be prepared to live the *Full Marriage Experience*.

How to Use *Before “I Do”*

Before “I Do” is designed to help you and your mate discover more about yourselves and your relationship than you know now. This guide is adjustable to fit the schedules, the circumstances and fast-paced lifestyles of any couple.

Get the Books:

Each couple should have two copies of *Before “I Do,”* one for him and one for her.

Start Up:

The book is divided into eight sections. Each section is divided into seven-day chunks. Complete the first five days of exercises individually. On the sixth day, get together as a couple and discuss the material that you each completed on your own (using Couple Time Discussion Questions). On the seventh day, if at all possible, meet as a couple with a Marriage Investor to share comments, concerns, and issues that arise in each section.

Find a Marriage Investor:

Pre-marital education is fitness training for your relationship. *Before “I Do”* is an in-depth relationship fitness program. To increase what you get out of the “workout,” meet with a Marriage Investor (clergy, small group leaders, marriage mentor, seasoned married couple, or counselor who acts as a pre-marital education facilitator). Meeting regularly with someone a little older and wiser will only enhance your pre-marital experience. They can provide perspective, accountability, and insights.

If you belong to a church or if your wedding is taking place at a church, meet with a pastor to find out about the congregation’s pre-marital education opportunities. If they don’t have a program, or their program does not include *Before “I Do”*, ask if they could help facilitate you and your mate through this book.

If you don’t belong to a church, find one that offers *Before “I Do”* as its pre-marital education program (check out the Registry of *Before “I Do”* Providers at www.FullMarriageExperience.com).

Or you can turn to a trusted couple with a seasoned and healthy marriage. Order them their own copies of *Before “I Do”* and schedule times to get together and discuss the material.

For some, Christian counselors in your community may be the best option. Find a counselor who is willing to facilitate your pre-marital education experience with *Before “I Do”*.

Whoever your Marriage Investor is, check if they offer a relationship inventory (PREPARE or FOCCUS). It will help them help you even more.

If you have exhausted all routes to find a Marriage Investor and still come up short, go ahead and get started on your own.

Pace Yourself:

The seven-day breakdown is only a suggestion (a strong one, but a suggestion nonetheless). Some may find finishing each section on their own over five days too slow of a pace. Feel free to go through the content faster. If it's too much work to complete the section in one week, break it up over two weeks.

Overcome the Distance:

If your relationship is long-distance prior to the wedding day (or engagement), complete the material as described above and plan regular phone dates to discuss each section. Reserve the time to discuss the section material only. Attempting to discuss other issues (such as wedding details) can either distract you from talking about your relationship or create tension by covering too many intense topics. In addition, arrange regular phone conferences with a Marriage Investor.

Go Deeper:

Every section has the potential to raise issues, questions, or information that may need more than what this book offers. Helpful books and articles, informative web sites, and practical resources related to topics covered in each section can be found at www.FullMarriageExperience.com.

Get Even More Out of *Before “I Do”*:

Create your own book club. If you have friends who are planning to get married (or planning to get engaged), coordinate regular times when all of you can get together and discuss the different sections of *Before “I Do”*.

Enhance Your Premarital Experience:

In some communities, churches work together to provide an array of programs to engaged and pre-engaged couples. Find out if there is a local weekend retreat, a daylong conference, or a series of classes that can complement your working through *Before “I Do”*.

Whether face-to-face or long-distance, get the most out of *Before “I Do”* by completing each section on your own, then discuss them as a couple, and then debrief as a couple with someone else. This is the time and season to invest as much as you can into your relationship to learn, discover, and discuss what you need to prepare to live the *Full Marriage Experience*.

Feel free to jot me an e-mail and let me know how things go.

K. Jason Krafsky
kjasonk@FullMarriageExperience.com

A Special Note for Marriage Investors

You play a pivotal role in the life of the couple in whose future marriage you are investing. That doesn't mean you have all the answers. Nor do you have to have had the “perfect” marriage. You simply need to be there for the couple. They need consistency, accountability, and someone who cares about their future marriage. At www.FullMarriageExperience.com is more information to help Marriage Investors, but here are a handful of tips to get you started.

Go Through *Before “I Do”* On Your Own:

Experience what the couple is going through by going through *Before “I Do”* on your own, or better yet, with your spouse. Even if you and your spouse are not conducting pre-marital education together, go through the book together. Take note of key questions throughout the sections. It will help you coach couples through the book.

Let *Before “I Do”* Do the Heavy Lifting:

Before “I Do” is a dynamic pre-marital guide that helps couples think about and discuss issues they have probably never discussed before. The process of discovery, introspection, and dialogue make this a constructive pre-marital experience. In your time with the couple, focus on key questions throughout the section, and inquire about what they learned about themselves and their relationship. This helps them articulate what they learned, which is a key step to move the knowledge from the head to the heart.

Use a Relationship Inventory:

If you are not using a relationship inventory in your work with engaged and pre-engaged couples, you are making your job a lot harder than it needs to be. PREPARE and FOCCUS are two similar but different relationship inventories designed to help Marriage Investors be more informed on the couple’s relationship, more knowledgeable of strengths and growth areas, and therefore, more effective in their time with the couple. Different from personality and temperament tests, the relationship inventory allows you to have a broad assessment on how the couple feels about themselves individually, their mate, and their relationship. Find out more information and how you can get trained in a relationship inventory at www.FullMarriageExperience.com. The relationship inventories work hand-in-hand with *Before “I Do”*.

Make Adjustments (if Necessary):

Less is not more when it comes to pre-marital education. The eight sections in this book focus on the major relationship issues couples should know before the wedding day. If eight sessions with a couple is just not possible, pick and choose which sections are required and which sections are optional. Because relationships struggle and deal with different issues, use a relationship inventory to determine a couple’s growth areas. This will allow you to personalize the required sections on where the couple has the greatest needs. Regardless of how often they meet with you, encourage the couple to complete the entire book before their wedding day.

Get Help (It’s Just a Click Away):

The web site offers an ever-expanding list of helpful tips, ideas and resources to assist Marriage Investors. Check it out often. If you don’t find the answers you need, e-mail your questions to me (kjasonk@FullMarriageExperience.com).

Promote Your Pre-marital Services to the World (or at least your area):

If *Before “I Do”* is your primary pre-marital education tool, promote your church or organization on the Registry of *Before “I Do”* Providers at www.FullMarriageExperience.com. It’s free, it’s easy, and it’s a no-brainer. You benefit from the national promotion and sales of this book. This is a simple way for couples in your area to find the pre-marital education they want, and that you can provide.

I welcome your e-mails as we embark together to help more couples live *the Full Marriage Experience*.

K. Jason Krafsky
kjasonk@FullMarriageExperience.com