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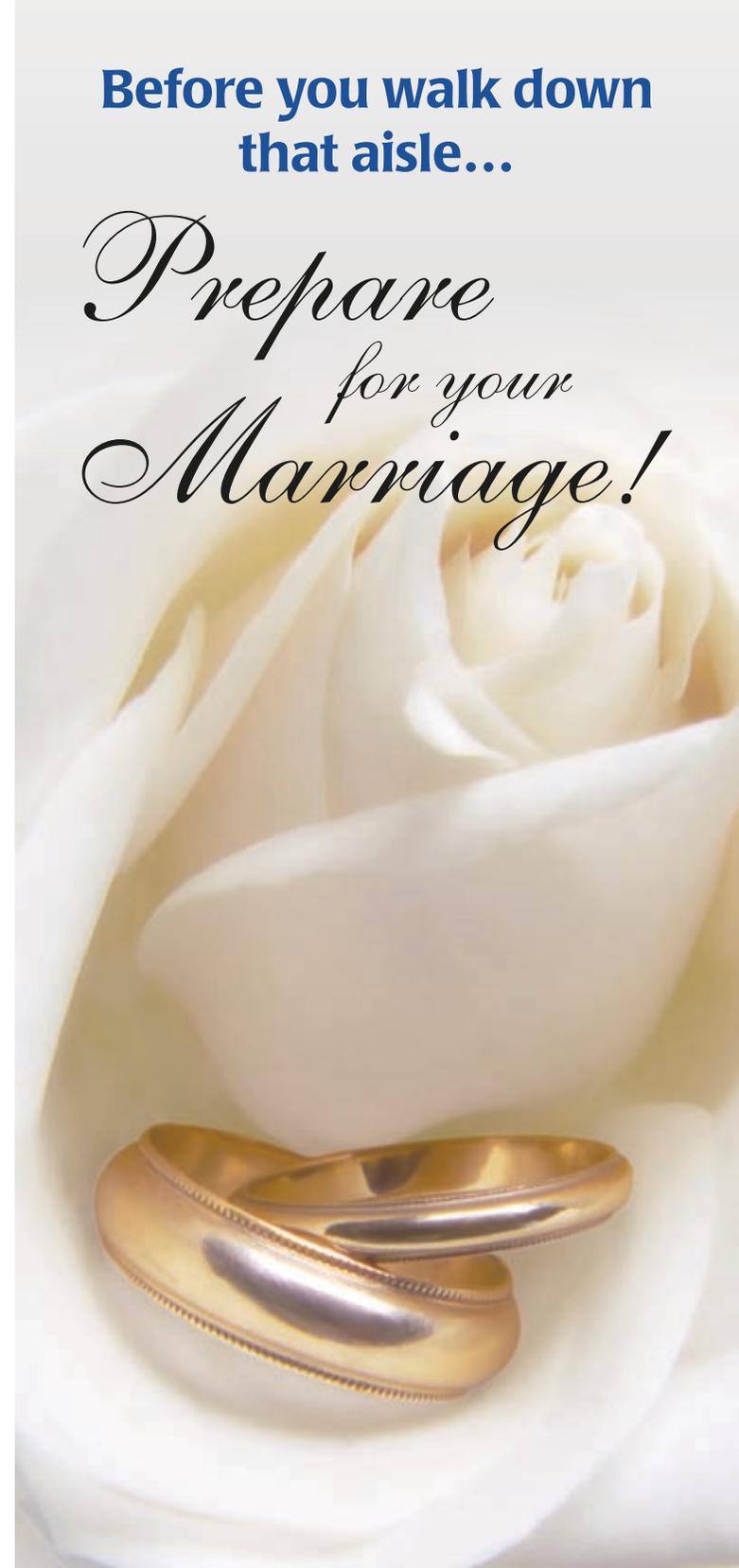
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**Before you walk down
that aisle...**

*Prepare
for your
Marriage!*



*M*any engaged couples are too excited or too busy planning their wedding to think about attending a premarital enrichment program or simply don't consider it because they "aren't religious," don't want to be married in a church, or don't even see the benefit. If you are one of these couples, keep reading!

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THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
Colleges of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences & Family and Consumer Sciences

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What is a Premarital Enrichment Program?

A premarital enrichment program (or class, workshop, retreat) helps to prepare couples for a healthy, lasting marriage by:

- providing a “roadmap” of things to expect in their marriage;
- teaching communication and conflict management skills;
- building on the couple’s strengths to develop new skills to help them deal with future challenges; and
- setting clear personal, couple, and family goals.

These programs are gaining popularity! **Couples who participate in these programs and use the skills they learn report higher marital satisfaction and have a stronger chance for a stable marriage and healthy family!**

What to look for...

The focus of premarital enrichment programs varies based on the type of program and the instructor. A good program will cover topics like marital roles and expectations, communication, managing conflict and stress, and strategies to enhance couple time. Other topics may include managing money, family planning, religion, sexual relations, and setting goals. These programs are offered in a variety of locations such as community centers, religious settings, schools, and therapy offices. Look for classes facilitated by educators who have been trained in the program or licensed therapists or counselors.

Who should attend?

Premarital enrichment programs are for all couples! Couples, with or without children, can attend these relationship enrichment programs. Importantly, **both partners should attend EVERY class together**. This is extremely important because the couple needs to share this fun, learning experience in order for their relationship to benefit from it. During the program, the couple’s role is to be open to new ideas, honest with each other, and motivated to learn ways to prepare for a successful marriage!

What should we expect?

The way that classes are set up depends on the program. Some programs require couples to complete an inventory to help identify their relationship strengths and growth areas. During classes, couples explore ways to build on their strengths and learn new skills that will allow them to grow together as a couple. Class topics change weekly depending on the type of program and the needs of each couple. Sometimes “homework” is given to reinforce and practice the skills just learned and to prepare for the next class.

Are there any downsides to this?

Research shows that premarital enrichment programs help! Couples learn new skills that, when used, strengthen their marriage. For some couples, these programs may reveal some individual or shared concerns about the relationship. In these cases, couples may want to seek help from a licensed therapist before moving forward with their wedding plans.

How much time will this take?

The length of the program depends on who is offering it and the type of program being offered. Some are really brief with only 1 class (lasting 1 to 2 hours) and some are 6 or more classes. In some cases, weekend or one-day retreats



are available.

Of course, **the longer the program (between 9-20 hours) and the more time you invest in practicing the skills learned, the more likely your relationship will benefit.**

What’s the cost?

Like all types of education and enrichment programs, costs vary. Fees often cover class materials, instructor costs, space and refreshments.

In Georgia, couples planning to marry can earn a discount on their marriage license if they receive at least 6 hours of premarital education before filing for their license. In many cases, the discount you receive on your marriage license pays for the cost of enrolling in the program. Be sure to ask whether your premarital enrichment provider offers a certificate you can take with you when you file for your marriage license.

Ways to ask your partner to attend a premarital enrichment program...

- Honey, like you, I am committed to making our marriage last. It would mean a lot to me, and to our marriage, if we attend a marriage enrichment class together.
- Dear, did you know that we could save money on our marriage license if we attend a premarital enrichment program? And, we can have fun learning some new skills together!
- Sweetheart, we have a great relationship. I think a premarital enrichment program would make it even stronger! How about it?