

Brian and Barbara Edwards

No longer **Two**

A Christian guide for engagement and marriage

A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.

Matthew 19:5–6

No Longer Two **1**

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Dedication

To the many couples at Hook Evangelical Church,
Surbiton, and elsewhere, who helped to shape this guide.



Preface

When this guide to Christian engagement and marriage was first published in 1994, we had no idea that it would still be in print fifteen years later. Not infrequently a couple will approach me to let me know that they used the book, or are currently working their way through it, and many churches have made it their standard guide for marriage preparation. The comments have been more than encouraging and especially so in a day when even our Christian marriages are under threat.

In November 1998, after a long battle against a painful disability, Barbara entered from death into life. Someone commented that they had thought of us ‘as one collective noun’ — that was an unusual way to describe a marriage, but it was not inappropriate. Our work, our home, our interests and our love were each shared equally between us and certainly our love grew deeper and the bonds stronger as the years passed.

The encouragement of so many to keep this book in print led to this revised edition. It was time for a new design, for the wording to be updated, and for a careful overhaul to be sure that it was still fit for purpose in the modern age. With the help of my good friends David and Diana Fortune, we have done just that. I am especially grateful for their suggestions regarding layout and wording, and for Diana’s input as a medical doctor, together with some of her colleagues. I am grateful also to the couples who have used *No Longer Two* and who provided the picture illustrations at the start of each chapter.

A new generation of young people can be assured that the strong principles that are based upon the Bible remain unchanged, for they come from the Creator who planned that ‘a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one.’

Brian Edwards
March 2009

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An important introduction

'Marriage, according to the law of this country, is the union of one man with one woman voluntarily entered into for life to the exclusion of all others'.

This is the legal definition of marriage set down by Lord Penzance in 1866. Sadly, however, the law and the practice have become two very different things. With ever-increasing pressures upon the standards that are traditionally Christian, and with a growing percentage of Christian marriages breaking up, there is an urgent need to ensure that couples are adequately prepared for this great step into their future together.

This book grew out of more than thirty years' experience of counselling couples before their marriage, during their marriage and sadly at times, when their marriage was all but destroyed. We have turned our experience into this marriage preparation course. Many couples either gratefully enjoyed or graciously endured it whilst we fine-tuned it. Others have since used the course in their own counselling. We also talked with couples after their first year of marriage to improve the value of the course still further.

Many books on this subject are intended to be read just as a book — it wouldn't matter whether you read the book alone or together; whether you talked it through with anyone or not; or whether you read it in two days or two years. This book is different. As you will see from this introduction, it is a workbook. A successful marriage has to be worked at, so why not start now? We give you work, called 'Preparation' (we will use a capital 'P' to draw attention to it), and also a Bible Study at the beginning of each chapter.

We actually encourage you to discuss this book with others and actively discourage you from reading it alone. It is not an idle-hours reading book, but a disciplined, and at times demanding, study work book. The margins are so that you can add your

no ordinary
book

write in margins
circle or
highlight words
and phrases

An important introduction

own notes as an aide-mémoire: some notes have already been added to give you a start. This book is not designed to be kept in pristine condition. Scribble your thoughts, discussions, agreements, and conclusions all over it — it is a work book. Ideally you will need to have a book each, or else copy the Preparation pages to complete on your own.

Preparing for a successful marriage is like most things in life, if your input doesn't cost you anything then your achievement is probably not worth anything either.

lay foundations

No Longer Two is intended to lay some foundations. It will help you to think about some of the things that may have escaped your notice and, as far as possible, help you to prepare for the future. We try to cover every significant area of marriage. We start with engagement and discuss the joys and dangers of this important time. Even if you are already married, it's advisable to read this chapter because it begins to open up the vital subject of communication.

outline of the book

We then move on to study the basis for marriage as we find it in the Bible, and this is followed by a discussion of challenges relating to the wider family, the different role of husband and wife, and the incompatibilities that can so easily come between you. We also try to project ahead into some of the crises which may come into your life together, and how you will cope with them. We discuss the delicate area of the intimate physical life of a husband and wife and help to prepare you for the possibility of starting a family. Inevitably we must consider the subject of money and how you will organise your finances.

refer back
review

We have included a review one year into your marriage, or if you are already married, one year from completing the first seven chapters. In fact, to keep this guide close to hand and frequently dip into it may prove very helpful throughout those twelve months. Having it by you will act as a reminder that there is one chapter still to go. Don't read it before time — but don't forget it on time either!

wedding day
preparations

Finally, at the end of the book, there are two postscript on wedding-day preparations for those of you who are engaged. They are packed with practical help and suggestions that cover virtually every area of your preparations. If your wedding date is already fixed then we recommend that you go straight to these chapters.



Our approach has in mind those who follow Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and therefore want to be obedient to his word, the Bible. However, since we believe the principles found in the Bible concerning marriage are universally relevant, we commend our course to all who want to find a strong foundation for their marriage. With almost three out of five marriages contracted in the United Kingdom heading tragically for the divorce court, wisdom demands that you should take time to ensure that your marriage does not add to that tragedy.

Perhaps this book has been given to you and you are not Christians and do not go regularly to church. We would encourage you to buy a New King James Bible or a New International Version of the Bible to take with you into your married life. Do work at the Bible Studies. There is a contents page near the front of every Bible so you can find your way around. The Bible is totally relevant for today.

If you don't know your way around the Bible look at its contents page.

How to use this book

You will get the best out of this book if you follow the pattern we adopted in preparing the course. We strongly encourage you to find a mature Christian couple who are prepared to invest some time with you. Their experience and insights will prove to be a valuable help. They do not need to be an elderly couple, but should have five years or so of marriage behind them; they should work through this course themselves and be in general agreement with it. Above all, they need to be a couple whom you respect, and whose marriage you know to be happy and secure. You will also need to be relaxed with them and willing to talk freely; naturally they will treat your discussions in total confidence. A pastor, vicar or elder and his wife would normally make an ideal team as helpers.

We need to add a note of caution, because what is intended to be a helpful course can end in tragedy. All counselling should be done as a foursome, or if one partner wants to talk alone it must always be with the same sex; there should never be any opposite sex meetings alone. Don't give the devil a foothold.

If it is not possible to find experienced and wise helpers, then there is no reason why you should not just work through the book together; but you will need to be disciplined so that once started you work steadily through to the end.

8 No Longer Two



ground rules



An important introduction

You will need to plan a disciplined programme together. It is advisable to work through the book one chapter at a time, including Preparation and Bible Studies, ideally over a period of not more than two or three weeks. This period will include an evening of discussion with the couple who are helping you. If you take much longer than this over each chapter, your minds will not be concentrated and you will lose the value of thinking through each section carefully.

Get out your diary!

Plan to succeed

Plan each fortnight like this:

Set aside an hour or so to work on the Preparation for each chapter; generally these require you to work on your own and not as a couple. Then plan an evening when you can work together on the Bible Study for each chapter; make this unhurried so that there is time to let your conversation and discussion run on if you want it to, especially where you see the ‘time out!’ logo. This same evening, read through the chapter in the book and discuss your Preparation at the relevant time. Where you see the ‘check it out’ logo, always get your Bible and read it together.

time out!



check it out



Finally, on another evening meet up with your helpers. They will have read the chapter, and may even have attempted the Preparation and Bible Studies for themselves! Let them set the agenda for the evening and take you through the chapter. There is no need to read it again on this evening, but you can all stop off and discuss areas that are of particular importance to you.

Group Work

This workbook can also be used in a group setting. Here is what one pastor did in his church for those who had been married for some years.

1. A group of sixteen including himself and his wife.
2. The meeting took place in a home.
3. All were expected to do the Preparation work.
4. The first part of the meeting comprised a talk from the pastor covering the material in the chapter.
5. The large group then divided into four groups with an elder and an elder’s wife leading each group.
6. The session concluded with feedback from the elders to the large group.



Basic ground rules needed for Group Work.

1. A husband or wife should not share anything that will cause the spouse embarrassment or hurt.
2. Some things are shared by mutual agreement that encourage weaker marriages.
3. Things shared within the group must remain private to the group members.
4. Feedback to the larger group is with the consent of members of the smaller groups.

The result: Some who had very weak marriages were able to gain confidence by knowing others faced similar challenges but found answers through God's model plan.

Practicalities

don't skip ahead

Please don't be tempted to read the book and miss out the Preparation and Bible Studies. They are all carefully integrated into the chapters, and are planned to help you pray, talk and work together. As you read the chapters you will understand the real value of these. It is essential also that you follow the directions and work on your own for the Preparation when requested to do so; this will enable you to think on your own and without the pressure of giving the expected answer to your partner. Perhaps you should make a note in your next year's diary to remind you to work through the final chapter together.

individual work
plus
working together

The Bible translation we have worked from in this book is the New King James Bible, though occasionally we have indicated a preference for a translation from the New International Version.

We have deliberately not included 'model answers' to the questions, partly because in many instances there is no right or wrong answer, and partly because the chief purpose of the Preparation and Bible Studies is to encourage you in the habit of communicating and studying the Bible together. It will also help you to think deeply about your relationship. However, each chapter will contain some pointers to the studies you have completed.

This marriage preparation course is both practical and personal. At times it may make you feel uncomfortable as your partner learns of some of your deeper thoughts and attitudes.



An important introduction

But always remember that honesty and openness are two of many keys to a successful marriage. Digging foundations is never light work, but the resulting construction can be very satisfying. Remember also, it is God's ideal you are aiming for, and he wants to help you achieve it.

honesty
and
openness

Although the book is especially valuable for engaged couples as a marriage preparation course, others have found it very useful in the early years of marriage, and still others who were not raised in a Christian home have found it an immense help to find a biblical foundation for belief and practice within marriage.

engaged or
married

Please don't bypass the first chapter if you are already married; there are many important principles laid down in chapter one.

P.S. We know that the word 'partner' has been cheapened today to cover a variety of relationships; however it is used consistently in this book in the biblical sense of working together in a Christian marriage. The word is too meaningful to surrender.

Complete this on your own, without reference to your partner

1

Preparation for chapter one

Now we are engaged

Communication

1. Place a ✓ in the first box if you have discussed this subject in depth. Place an ✗ in the second box if you are in strong disagreement on this subject.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> The Christian faith | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Bringing up children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> How many children you would like | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Your separate roles in the home | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Your love for each other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Hobbies and sporting interests | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> War and terrorism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Politics | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> The feminist movement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> The sexual side of your marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Books and television |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Holidays | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Favourite movies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Your in-laws and parents | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Euthanasia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> The style of house and furnishings | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Your health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Family prayers | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Current news items |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> The third world and its problems | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Your relationship to the
opposite sex. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual gifts | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Clothes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> The kind of food you prefer | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Your church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Fears and phobias | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Your finances and tithing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Your views on alcohol | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Your daily employment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Styles of Christian worship | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Pets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> The Bible | |

To define love

2 In one sentence define the kind of love that qualifies for marriage.

3 When you don't feel a romantic love for your partner what is it that you still love about them?

4 What will you get out of marriage that you will not get if you remain single?

5 What are you hoping to bring to your marriage to make it work?

Complete this together

Bible Study for chapter one

Now we are engaged



Find some unhurried time, perhaps the same evening that you plan to read the chapter together. It is important that you complete the Bible Study together before you read the chapter.

Read 1 Corinthians 13

Paul is writing to the church, but we can also apply this chapter to marriage.

1 In verses 1–3 Paul lists a number of things which in themselves are excellent, but his point is that they are no substitute for love. What good things can people put in the place of love in their marriage?

2 In verses 4–8 Paul lists sixteen phrases to describe true love. Work through these one by one, writing down just one word or short phrase to explain them. Use your own words rather than simply repeating Paul's.

1 _____	9 _____
2 _____	10 _____
3 _____	11 _____
4 _____	12 _____
5 _____	13 _____
6 _____	14 _____
7 _____	15 _____
8 _____	16 _____

3 Why does Paul claim that love is 'a more excellent way' (12:31) and is greater than faith and hope (13:13)?

Now we are engaged

This is what we will be discovering in this chapter:

- Why engagement?
- Dangers in engagement
- Good foundations
- A personal testimony
- Why marriage?
- Motives for marriage
- A more excellent way
- 7 Steps in communication

go to page 12 

You are in love! But what does that mean? Before you read any further, go back to your preparation and find out what you each answered to the section: **To define love.** Many writers have struggled to find the meaning of love. For our purposes, we suggest that there are two types of love.

romantic love

First there is the **romantic love** which is the excitement, thrill and day-dreaming of two people engaged to be married. It won't last in quite the same form, but that doesn't matter. Of course there needs to be excitement in every marriage, and throughout the marriage. But it isn't there all the time without interruption; and it changes from the heady, heart-throbbing, cloud-nine, thought-consuming love of a young couple who see stars whenever their loved one coughs!

This kind of love that often brings a couple together is not the kind of love that is needed to keep them together.

spiritual love

Second there is what we call **spiritual love.** By this we do not mean religious, but two minds meeting and two people merging into one in thought, interests, purpose and emotions. It is the love that longs for commitment more than for mere pleasure and is prepared to give as much as receive. This spiritual love is strong and durable. It is substantial, with its feet on the ground rather than its head in the clouds. It is mature and wise, not sloppy and sentimental. It is the love that offers security through sacrifice and does not merely grasp at pleasure without price.

Why engagement?

You may have wondered: if we are in love, why bother with an engagement? Well, for a start, engagement focuses the mind on marriage. It is a commitment; the first step to the final commitment. During engagement you are learning to live within a commitment but without the commitment. This one may be broken—the next one must not.

Engagement time is also talking time. It is time to get to know one another with your eye on the future. Because of the engagement the relationship has a goal and therefore a purpose. You both know where you are going. There is no gentle skirting around the subject. All your friends and relatives know where you are going and that you are going there together. So engagement makes planning easier because everyone expects you to be planning. The commitment draws you closer. Engagement is an exciting time; a time when all your hopes and dreams begin to be shaped into reality! Couples just *drift* into living together, but you *plan* for marriage.

But there are dangers in engagement

Avoid an exclusive relationship. If you are in a youth group, now is not the time to be leaving. Keep your relationship in the group. Of course you will want to spend time together, but a sudden withdrawal into your own lives will hurt your friends, especially your single friends. Remember, you have something most of your single friends ache for. Don't add to their pain by leaving their company. Attend all the meetings and invite some of your friends to share your happiness by sharing your company.

Avoid kissing and hugging members of the opposite sex. You should always avoid this at all times, but it is even more important during engagement. We are well aware that this is a bit 'old fashioned' today, but the old ways are not always wrong. If your partner is constantly flirting, there are one of two reasons, and both should alarm you: Either they are trying to make you jealous, or they are not enjoying the relationship with you. Be sure of this: if a partner flirts now, the flirting will continue after you are married; if they hug and kiss others now, they will continue to do so later. Keep your distance. You show