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After Every Wedding Comes a Marriage

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

They come Friday evening, filled with anticipation and high expectations. Most are engaged couples preparing for a first marriage, some are beginning a second marriage, and others are into the first year of their marriage. All want to mature and strengthen what they have begun.

At Adventist Engaged Encounter (AEE), couples are welcomed by a caring team of five married couples and shown to individual dialogue areas where they will spend time in personal reflection and couple-sharing during the weekend. They then meet the others attending, in a presentation room decorated with special touches. Throughout the weekend, which ends early Sunday afternoon, couples have opportunity to step away from preparing for their weddings to focus on preparing for their marriages.

Participating in an AEE weekend provides a Christian couple with a powerful opportunity to build a strong, healthy marriage. AEE allows couples to see a bigger picture of the potential of their relationships. For some, it is a welcomed confirmation that a Christian marriage still can be achieved. For others, it is the beginning of a lasting commitment to their relationship, now built on a firmer foundation of understanding and commitment. AEE can become a motivation for renewal, or even an opportunity for making the difficult decision to set aside current wedding plans.

AEE is based on four biblical principles: 1) Marriage is to be built upon a firm foundation (Luke 6:46–49); 2) Marriage is a continual walk together (Amos 3:3); 3) Marriage is a lifetime relationship (Matthew 19:3–9); and 4) Marriage is a solemn commitment made under the authority of God (Matthew 18:18). These principles, and how to live them, are illustrated by information and personal experiences shared by the married team couples who use their marriages for ministry as presenters at AEE. The times for personal reflection and couple-sharing exercises are based on biblical principles for relationships. Additional special touches enrich each couple’s experience throughout the weekend.

Begun in the spring of 1978, now second-generation couples seek the same opportunity as their parents before them. Recently, a couple attending the fall AEE traveled all the way from New York to attend. Why? They wanted to continue to build a strong foundation for their marriage, and her parents had attended an AEE weekend in 1988 and encouraged them to come.

Based on the evaluations from weekends, the common theme of what couples appreciate the most is the openness of the sharing couples, appreciating the chance to get to know each other in a deeper way, and feeling more prepared for the commitment of marriage. In a recent Facebook post, a husband wrote they still have their banner, hanging in their bedroom, that marked their dialogue area from their AEE weekend, and they have been married for 32 years! They say the message still rings true, “God always gives the best to those who leave the choice to him.”

AEE is an enrichment weekend, intended to complement premarital counseling. Some couples question if they need to attend a weekend. We would say, “You may not think you need it, but you deserve it!” Registration information for the March 6–8, 2015, and October 2015 AEE weekends is available by emailing aee@andrews.edu.

Susan E. Murray is a professor emerita of behavioral sciences at Andrews University, certified family life educator, and licensed marriage and family therapist. She and her husband, Don, started AEE at Andrews University in 1978 with three graduate student couples, and led the program for 28 years prior to their retirement. David Ferguson, director of Undergraduate Leadership Development at Andrews University, and his wife, CaryLynn Ferguson, coordinator of Alumni Engagement at Andrews University, now lead AEE.
101 Questions to Ask Before You Get Engaged

A Lasting Promise: The Christian Guide to Fighting for Your Marriage

Before You Marry: Know Everything! (Kindle edition) by Laurie Snyman | Self-published (2014)

Before You Say “I Do”: A Marriage Preparation Manual for Couples
by H. Norman Wright and Wes Roberts | Harvest House Publishers (1997)

Breaking the Silence

Fit to Be Tied by Bill and Lynne Hybels | Zondervan (1993)


Hook, Line, and Sinker
by Heather Marie Thompson | Review and Herald Publishing (2011)

Laws of Dating by Mike Tucker | PPJA (2007)
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PREPARE-ENRICH is the leading relationship inventory and skill-building program used nationally and internationally for pre-marital and marriage enrichment, customized to each couple taking the online assessment. Discover your strengths as a couple and identify and learn to overcome your issues by working with a trained counselor/pastor. Visit http://www.prepare-enrich.com for further information.

Preparing for Marriage by David Boehi, Brenton Nelson, Jeff Schulte and Lloyd Shadrach, and Dennis Rainey (editor) | Gospel Light (2010)

Saving Your Marriage Before it Starts: Seven Questions to Ask Before and After You Marry (Workbooks available for men, women and a version for second marriages) by Les and Leslie Parrott | Zondervan (2009)

Serious About Love by Kay Kuzma | PPJA (2009) A free copy will be shipped to the first 10 readers who email circulation@lakeunion.org.

*Available at Michigan Adventist Book Centers only.