



Don't You Dare Get Married Until You Read This! The Book of Questions for Couples

By Corey Donaldson

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The Book to Read Before You Say "I Do"

If you're headed for the altar -- or you're in a serious relationship that could lead to marriage -- you probably already know that issues like love, sex, money, religion, kids, in-laws, and even who has to walk the dog can become potential landmines if you and your partner don't discuss your feelings openly before you take the plunge. Now, Corey Donaldson has put together more than 500 questions -- ranging from playful to provocative -- designed to get you and your partner talking frankly and communicating effectively before you walk down the aisle. Donaldson covers hot topics such as:

- * Does it matter to you who earns most of the money?
- * What does my family do that annoys you?
- * What is the difference, for you, between love and romance?
- * What place do you believe religion has in the world?
- * How long do you want to wait before having children?
- * If I wanted to move away from our families for work, would you support me?
- * Who cleans the house?

Perfect for couples in the midst of planning their nuptials, a duo considering "I do," or even partners in established relationships who just want to get to know each other again, **Don't You Dare Get Married Until You Read This!** is a must-have for anyone who wants to make their marriage last.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Women who are sure they've found the right man better not count their blessings until they've consulted one man in particular, the happily married Corey Donaldson. Having consulted 1,500 other people, he now feels confident in stating *Don't You Dare Get Married Until You Read This!: The Book of Questions for Couples*. Many of these lists of probing questions are about sexuality ("How would it affect you if you never had sex again"), which, the author found, is often a bigger problem in marriage than most people are comfortable admitting.

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About the Author

Corey Donaldson Corey Donaldson is a native Australian who now lives with his wife in Ogden, Utah.

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Why Is This Book Necessary and What Research Is Behind It?

There is very little optimism left in this world when it comes to the institution of marriage.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports the following statistics:

* Since 1970 there has been a decline of more than one-third in the annual number of marriages per one thousand women.

* People are marrying later: The average age at first marriage today is twenty-five for women, twenty-seven for men, whereas twenty years ago, it was twenty-two for women and twenty-four for men.

* The percentage of adults in the population at any one time who are married has also diminished. However, the number of unmarried cohabitating couples continues to increase (865 percent since 1960).

* The percentage of adults who are presently divorced has quadrupled since 1960.

* The number of intact married couples who rate their marriage as "very happy" has decreased. (In 1973, 67.4 percent said their marriages were "very happy." That percentage decreased to 61.9 percent in 1996.) It has been estimated that after ten years only 25 percent of first marriages are successful (i.e., intact and reportedly happy).

* The percentage of children in single-parent families has risen from 9 percent in 1960 to 28 percent in 1998. Thirty-five percent of children now live apart from their biological fathers.

* Out of 41.6 million men, 15.8 million are unmarried. Of those, 11.9 million have never married, 3.8 million are divorced, and 124,000 are widowed.

* Out of 42.1 million women, 13.7 million are single. Of those, 8.6 million never married, 4.7 million are divorced, and 394,000 are widowed.

The reason this book is necessary should be abundantly clear without reference to any statistics or reports. In today's society, divorce is playing a part in everyone's life. It has become the solution to a problem that could have been resolved long before. Divorce is not (in most cases) the result of a bad marriage; it is the punishment for not preparing before the marriage took place.

It seems that we as human beings prefer to repeat our own mistakes over and over again regardless of the clear lessons laid out before us. Otto von Bismarck said, "The fool learns from his own mistakes. I would rather learn from the mistakes of others." Certainly there are many people who are plagued with mistakes of their own from which even they do not learn. I propose that we become more observant of the lessons in life that must be learned. Look at other people and vow not to repeat their stupidity, or emulate their fine example as the case may be.

While compiling this book, I have made every effort to observe the lessons taught by the experiences of others. From the point at which I began the first version of this book until now, I have interviewed more than fifteen hundred people. I have made a genuine effort to get as wide a cross section of people as possible. I have interviewed and spoken with divorcées, singles, teenagers, married people, engaged couples, lawyers, social workers, TV reporters, and radio personalities. The question I asked these people most was, "If you could only ask one question of your partner before you got married, what would it be?" Their answers are in this book. Obviously I do not have anywhere near fifteen hundred questions in this book because many gave the same answer or something similar to it.

This book also benefits from a significant input from journalists such as Jeff Zaslow of the Chicago Sun-Times. Jeff asked his readers to send in questions they thought should be considered before a marriage takes place. Hundreds of questions were sent in, but I already had most of them. Nevertheless, this book includes up to forty innovative and intriguing questions from Jeff's readers. Thank you to Jeff and his loyal following!

It will become clear very quickly that the number of sex questions far outweighs any of the others. This is not because I have some abnormal preoccupation with sex, nor do I want to be your aid in exploring your sordid fantasies as far as they relate only to yourself. Rather, my purpose is to help you to understand your sexual relationship with your partner and your own unique sexual dimensions and limitations. It will be of interest to you to know that the overwhelming majority of the sex questions came from letters written by readers of the self-published version of this book, which I released in 1998. Many letters talked about how this book injected some wisdom into their minds and helped them prepare for making such a big decision, but they also discussed the shortfall of sex questions. Sex is a major problem in many marriages, and my readers felt the need for a more in-depth exploration of the sexual relationship and therefore offered questions that should be included in the book.

As you read the questions in this book, remember that they are here because of other people's mistakes and triumphs in life, or perhaps because of the lessons they have learned from others. Either way you look at it, please realize that preparing for marriage matters. Marriage matters because happiness matters. This is one of those moments in life where your perspective, attitude, and focus really count. You do not get a second chance to get it right the first time.

A Courtship from Across the World

I have no reservation in declaring that the time from January to October of 1996 was one of the most significant stages in my life. This was the time of my engagement to Phaidra Benincosa. This time period was especially important because I was preparing for one of the most critical decisions of my life: marriage.

After writing back and forth for a number of years between Salt Lake City, Utah, and Melbourne, Australia, Phaidra and I finally met in December 1995. At the beginning of January, we announced our desire to spend the rest of our lives together. We were engaged to be married.

The decision was one made on faith because so many problems and challenges confronted us. My roots were in Australia, and Phaidra's were in Utah. She was studying at school; I had work. We both had friends and family who meant everything to us. What could we do? Phaidra returned to Salt Lake City three days after our engagement with no wedding date set. Any goals we had together seemed unrealistic and obscure. We had no idea how we were going to marry and where to do it. We knew only that we wanted to.

The next few months provided opportunity for more growth than either of us had ever experienced. First came feelings of doubt since we were now apart and without each other's support. Questions arose in our minds. Did we really know each other? We had only seen each other in a vacation atmosphere. Anyone can fall in love on vacation. We didn't know what the other person was like in a day-to-day normal life. Would our different cultures cause problems? In which country would we live and raise our children? How could either of us afford to leave his or her native country and then get married? Would homesickness prevent the peaceful longevity of the relationship? Furthermore, how would each family feel about losing a son or daughter to the other?

Unanswered questions were not the only frustrations we experienced during these first few months. Although doubts and difficulties remained, we missed each other intensely. We felt a genuine kinship and love for each other, feelings that we knew needed further development. The best medium available to assist in developing our relationship was letter writing, which we agreed to do once a week. We acknowledged the need to get to know each other more intimately, spend more quality time together, and ask each other questions that revealed more about ourselves.

The value of asking questions became immediately apparent because it helped us identify with each other and further develop our love by accepting the idiosyncrasies of our personalities. How else could I find out that whenever Phaidra eats fries, she stirs up a mixture of mayonnaise and ketchup, usually on hamburger wrapping paper? How else could I learn that she likes twelve pillows on the bed instead of just two, or that I have to match my clothes; that she likes to be romanced on days when I don't feel like it, that I have to remember birthdays and anniversaries and be on call to administer foot rubs at her request? How else could I discover that she dislikes my colored clothing being washed with her whites, that the bathroom has to be cleaned every week, or that dishes have to be washed immediately after dinner (even if Monday Night Football is on)?

Phaidra and I understood that the decision to marry should not be taken lightly. The knowledge we gained, the information we received, and the emotions we shared by writing letters proved very worthwhile. However, although letter writing had its merits, it also had obvious limitations.

At the end of March, it was decided that I would leave Melbourne and join Phaidra in Salt Lake City. The decision was made only a week before I left. This was the longest week of my life. So many thoughts were running through my head. I could not wait to see Phaidra. I spent every moment thinking about my reunion with her at the airport. I had an image in my mind that I would see her as I was coming off the plane; romantic music would echo in the background as we bounded toward each other, in slow motion of course, like the movies. Our embrace would be cut short only by a yearning for that first kiss, making up for three long, lost months.

So much for dreams and images. As it turned out, I was deliberately the last one off the plane. Somehow the

anticipation, nervousness, and excitement had a restraining effect on me. When I finally saw Phaidra, there was no romantic prelude music, and she was conversing with some stranger. Once our eyes met, there was definitely no slow motion. We embraced each other as if there were no tomorrow, basking in the exquisite joy of being in each other's arms.

Finally we were in an environment where, because we had decided to make our home in Utah, we could begin to plan our marriage in a practical manner. We knew that planning our lives beyond marriage was important, that planning the wedding itself was important. Nevertheless, nothing took priority over making efforts to know each other in day-to-day life. Now we could see each other under stress. Now we could see each other in different situations. It was so important to experience all of these conditions if we were to know each other. In addition, we never stopped asking questions, talking to each other, and thoroughly enjoying each other's company. Yes, there was a time to just have fun, talking, joking and being jovial, but the moments to be serious were also essential.

As time passed, the questions we asked became more probing. Occasionally they even led to confrontation. However, rather than resulting in painful arguments, these questions led to a mutual respect of each other's feelings. At times it was difficult to deal with the answers some of the questions demanded. The irritation and frustration seemed so unnecessary when we were going through it. Why should we deal with issues that might not even arise during our marriage? Phaidra and I reasoned that such emotions were better to experience before marriage, not after, but we decided to keep tension to a minimum by concentrating on the most predictable issues. The central focus of our questions to each other during our engagement was determining our compatibility, deciding whether we were even suited for marriage in the first place. To some extent, the decision to marry a person is more important than what happens afterward.

Our love and consideration for each other grew tremendously. In the beginning, we felt that marriage should not take place until we knew each other so well that it was as if we were already married. In October of 1996, we were finally prepared. We knew each other and what we should and should not expect.

Throughout our engagement, through thick and thin, we felt the kinship of our souls. What a joy it was to have peace of mind and soul on our wedding day. I knew Phaidra and I were to be one. It was the happiest day of my life.

Why You Should Ask Questions Before You Get Married

He who asks the questions cannot avoid the answer.

— Cameroon proverb

Phaidra and I still have much to learn; indeed, learning from each other will never cease. It surprises me to see how many marriages among young couples break up. I wonder if it is rare for couples really to know each other before they are married. I have noticed that there are couples who prepare very poorly for a decision that will have tremendous impact on their lives. Each couple has its own reasons for breaking up. Some divorces cannot be helped. Some scenarios that couples face in marriage cannot be predicted, so they cannot be prepared for. On the other hand, I have known couples to confess that they knew their marriages would not last even before they were married, and yet they got married anyway. Is it any wonder we have so many personal and social problems when we cannot even get our relationships right from the beginning?

If engaged couples were more assertive in asking relevant questions of each other, they could prepare more thoroughly for what the future holds. I agree with the wise words of author Anthony Robbins when he said, "Relationships flourish when people ask the right questions about where potential conflict exists and how to

support each other instead of tearing each other down."

Do we ever ask ourselves if we really know the person we are going to marry? Many claim they do, yet once the marriage occurs, that knowledge proves to be ignorance that evolves into a lifetime of despair. Such ignorance needs to be overcome by asking questions that extract attitudes and opinions. Without taking this initiative, how can we

* expect to know the person we want a commitment with?

* realize the significance of knowing a person we want to spend our lives with?

* give careful thought to the questions we must ask to obtain the information we need to make a decision that has lifelong consequences?

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