



**Dating is a beautiful time.** A time when we feel anxiety for meeting with the other person, when some of us show our sweetest side, which can have terrible manifestations, depending on the “seriousness” of the situation, when the soul seems to give a 180-degree turn every time you think or listen the other, there are a lot of surprises and memories, and everything seems to be love.

At the same time, alongside this flutter of feelings, **dating is a process for preparing and maturing, when a couple discovers itself and walks toward a lifetime commitment.** And in this process, partly dangerous and partly sublime, we are not afraid to make promises that, for others, could seem risky; because “forever” becomes very short when you are with your beloved. But can “forever” be possible?

**How can you know if this “forever” is likely to be?** Here are some questions that every groom should be able to answer before starting this adventure called marriage.

### **1. Why do you love me?**

This question can be very disconcerting to many because, if we are together it is because we love each other! Right? But, what do we mean by love? One of my friends taught me the best definition of love, simply defining it as “the capacity of doing something for others”. If this concept is well assimilated, everything is easier to understand. You learn to give up a personal preference, to sacrifice, even if, many times, this doesn’t come with butterflies or happiness: “I’m not saying this, because I love him, I choose what he prefers, because I love him, I’m not making a ace, because I love him, I won’t make this unnecessary expense, because I love him/her/my children”, and so on... there are endless examples. **The person who is willing to love is, in short, who is willing to put their shoulder to the wheel to build a relationship, even when they “don’t feel like” or “is not feeling anything”,** who is willing to completely surrender and receive the other person in all their dimensions, not only in parts or moments.

## ***2. Will you stay in love when the routine catches you?***

**This is not hard when you are dating; the hard thing is being apart. But over time, the routine, the excess load of worries and fatigue make it difficult to do the things that say “I still love you, you are the most important one to me, I only have eyes for you”. It is important to express this affection, even when it may imply an extra effort every day. But love is sacrifice. In that sense, the husband has to love his wife and show it to her. As St. José María Escrivá, and also Mother Teresa of Calcuta, once said: “Love, to be true, must cost”. Yes, it is sometimes difficult, but it has its reward.**

## ***3. Will you stay with me during the most difficult moments?***

**Marriage is not an eternal honeymoon, and the “hard times” don’t only refer to the death and illness of the spouse. They are hidden many times in the ordinariness, in the tiredness after work, in a bad mood after many discussions, in exhaustion caused by staying awake to take care of a sick child... even in the indescribable pain experienced when you lose someone. I could keep citing many other examples, but I think it is understood: there will be hard times. We would be fooling ourselves if we think that because we love each other everything will be perfect. St. Francis said: “Courtesy is the sister of charity, it extinguishes hatred and kindles love” In the face of adversities, a smile, a “let me help”, or a small gesture are a big and concrete manifestation of love.**

## ***4. What kind of parent do you want to be?***

When dating, it is important to talk about the expectations of parenthood. **It is not only about wanting to be a good parent, because it is a fact that everyone wants that. What do you understand by “good parent”? What values would you like to teach your children?** Under which principles would we raise them? What is your position regarding the openness to life? Will you endeavor to be present in their lives? How will you set your priorities for your personal projects and family? **These are some questions that should be asked and discussed when dating.** In case you didn’t know, parenthood comes along with marriage.

## ***5. Will you ask for forgiveness if you are wrong, even if it is hard?***

In one occasion, Pope Francis advised couples to do the following:

“In life we make so many errors, many mistakes... We learn to recognize our mistakes and apologize. ‘Sorry if I raised my voice today,’ ‘I’m sorry if I went without saying goodbye,’ ‘I’m sorry if I’m late,’ ‘if I have been so unresponsive this week’, ‘if I talked too much without ever listening’, ‘excuse me, I forgot,’ ‘I was angry and I’m sorry I’ve taken it out on you’... this is how a Christian family grows. Jesus, who knows us well,

teaches us a secret: never end a day without asking for forgiveness, without peace coming back to our house, to our family. It is normal that there be a quarrel between husband and wife, but there's always something to do about it. We had a fight... maybe you're angry, maybe a plate flew, but please remember this: never finish the day without making peace! Never, never, never! This is a secret, a secret to protect love and to make peace."

And, of course, sometimes destructive habits make it necessary not only to forgive again and again, but also support your spouse in their path to healing. Consider, for example, pornography addiction, which ensnares so many men and women and seriously harms their marriage. As a spouse, you have the challenge and the blessing of helping them in a variety of ways—for example, directing them towards counseling or installing an internet filter such as Covenant Eyes

### ***6. Would you be willing to put up with me when I can't even do it myself?***

**There are many ways to understand this question. Emotionally**, will you have the patience to put up with me when not even I can do it? When, for any reason, I'm frustrated, angry, depressed... How much time do you think you could be by my side without asking for something in exchange? (Because, let's be honest, I will probably not have anything else to offer you than the willingness to overcome and move forward). **Economically speaking**, if I get ill, if I lose my job, if things don't come out as we expected, do you think you will be able to provide a future for me and our children? Work for the both of us? One does not plan to lose a job or get sick... it's tough and we don't know how we would react. But, what do you think you will be willing to do?

### ***7. Do you really think it's necessary for us to marry?***

We hear everywhere that marriage is just a "paper", a social convenient act. Does it really mean that to you? A bureaucratic step? It is important to know what marriages means to the other person, because it is something more (way more) than a mere certificate. It is a vocation, elevated to a sacrament, a path to sanctity, a total and irrevocable dedication of the spouses, who decide to become the fundament and origin of a family. **This cannot be contained in a simple "paper", but that legal bond represented in that "paper" is huge; it is the symbol that comprises their full dedication and acceptance of the other.** St. John Paul II said that "The person who does not decide to love forever will find it very difficult to really love for even one day".[1] Why? Because "forever" is built by a succession of "nows". We must be faithful in little things, the day by day, to be faithful forever.

### ***8. Are you going to pray for me?***

**Do we love our partner with the same heart that we love God? They are not incompatible loves: the more we love God, the more and better we can love the other;** the more committed we are with God, the more we will appreciate and take care of the other. He teaches us Love, he teaches us about devotion, about humility, generosity, and patience... so, to cultivate love when dating or during marriage, **the first step will always be to cultivate your relationship with God, and pray for the other person, so both can walk the path towards Him.** The sanctity of your spouse is part of your responsibility in marriage.

### **A final warning!**

No one sets out to run to the finish line without prior training. **And dating is exactly that: training.** Maybe someone, after reading all of this, could think: “but this is difficult, who would want to marry then?” Well, **this isn’t about being afraid of marriage; it is about marrying knowing that not everything is going to be easy, that it will not be all rosy, but it will be wonderful.** It’s good for the couple to know this, so they won’t panic if these difficulties appear during marriage.