



Newman Sweethearts 2023

Karl and Cheyanne Kofmehl

How did you meet?

We met during our first year at Iowa. Cheyanne was a sophomore transfer student, and Karl was a freshman. We met in the spring of 2005, when Cheyanne joined as a vocalist with the Newman Singers, although Cheyanne knew of Karl when she played Trumpet for the orchestra in the Newman Singers Christmas concert that previous December. Karl was dating someone else at the time, although Cheyanne admired him from a distance. Karl thought Cheyanne was weird at the time.



Do you have any special Newman memories that you experienced as a couple?

We were not romantically involved during our college years, even though we both studied at the Newman Center quite a bit and were involved with the Newman Singers. We were at very different stages in our faith and life journeys during that time. Looking back, we both agree that had we dated in college, we probably wouldn't have gotten married or ended up together! God had to do a lot of work in us before He was ready for us to be together!

A couple years after college, we reconnected at St. Patrick parish in Iowa City, where mutual friends had asked us to help them volunteer with the adult choir and youth ministry. During this time, our friendship grew. This time around, Karl admired Cheyanne from a distance and no longer thought she was weird. Eventually Karl asked Cheyanne to be his girlfriend and after praying about it for a few days, Cheyanne said, "yes".

A few months into our relationship, we knew this was something very special and felt we may be called to the vocation of marriage someday, so we asked Father Jeff Belger if he could meet with us every few months while we discerned as a couple. Unlike past relationships, we knew this was different. We wanted God to be in the center of it all so we could build our relationship on a solid foundation. Over the two years of our relationship prior to marriage, we began attending different faith formation activities at the Newman Center to grow in our faith as a couple, and Father Jeff continued to mentor us as we continued to discern and keep God and His will as priority throughout our courtship. When we did get married, Father Jeff was our priest for our Nuptial Mass!

Throughout our marriage we have returned to the Newman Center for several amazing experiences as a couple: the Alpha Course, various book studies, the annual fundraising Gala, a Newman Singer reunion, etc. We also love going to Mass at the Newman Center when we are in town. Since we were students at the Newman Center, we can really tell there has been a spiritual renewal and increased passion for our faith and the mission of the Newman Center. It is so exciting to witness! The Newman Center has been a great source of faith formation, fellowship, encouragement, and support for us and countless others-throughout college and beyond. We are so thankful it is still here doing the same for countless others!

Any advice that you have for Newman couples as they are dating/starting out?

1. If you dream of being married, hope to get married, feel called to the vocation of marriage someday....whether you're single or dating, start practicing being a good spouse NOW. Begin today! Be the spouse YOU would want to marry. Practice honesty and integrity-even when no one is watching. Practice staying patient, kind, and calm during difficult moments or conflict with others. You can even practice being a good spouse by being a good roommate-be intentional about cleaning up after yourself, help clean up after meals, put your things away where they belong, and even take care of roommates when they are sick or injured. Be thoughtful toward them.



2. Pray for your future spouse and that God begins preparing their hearts for marriage, too.

Newman Singers from when Cheyanne and Karl were part of the group!

3. Practice being faithful to your future spouse by remaining chaste until marriage. If you have not been doing so, please go to confession and let Christ's love and mercy renew you and help you recommit yourself to chastity today-it is not too late to start over and we promise that saving intimate relations for your future spouse is worth it-both from a spiritual standpoint and from a health standpoint. Building and maintaining a good marriage is easier if you are already practicing healthy habits. During marriage, couples have seasons of abstinence due to illness, long-distance situations, etc. Learning how to have a healthy relationship and how to convey your love to your spouse without sexual intimacy is very important.

If you need more information and encouragement on living chastely, we recommend the book [If You Really Loved Me: 100 Questions on Dating, Relationships, Sexual Purity](#) by Jason Evert. If you are recommitting to chastity, we also recommend reading [The Other Side of Beauty](#) by Leah Darrow.

4. We admire athletes that achieve excellence and expertise in their sport. We admire them because of their persistence and commitment to years of practice and preparation, both mentally and physically. Living the vocation of marriage is similar. If we feel called to marriage one day, we should practice and prepare for that in how we live our lives leading up to marriage, too.

If you feel called to marriage and want to better prepare yourself to be a good spouse, here are some big questions to ask yourself as you begin:

Do you struggle with virtues like honesty, patience, gentleness, self-control, etc? None of us are perfect, but we can all work on these. If you are struggling with some of these things (who isn't?!), we highly recommend the book [The Art of Living](#) by Edward Sri. We read it as a couple recently and really wish we had read it a long time ago! All of these virtues are vital when it comes to being married to another person. Working on these virtues will also help you set a good example as a parent someday!

How is your prayer life? Do you set aside time each day for prayer and faith formation?

Are you disciplined with finances?

Am I a good roommate? When living in community with others, am I considerate, tidy, and kind?

Do you take good care of your health? Are there health problems you have because of unhealthy habits that you can address now as a single person?

Do you struggle with or use pornography?

Are you addicted to video games?

Do you rely too much on unhealthy behaviors when life gets challenging or difficult?

Are there issues from your past that you need healing from?

5. Our secular culture gives us this idea that marriage is a sort of "escape" that will automatically free you from issues that you haven't dealt with yet, but it will actually bring those issues to the surface in ways that will now affect both of you and possibly your children one day. You cannot expect your spouse to provide the healing your soul needs. That's God's job and when appropriate, the job of a good therapist and/or spiritual director. It is hard, important work and can take a long time. Marriage is a vocation and a calling....not a way out. Start doing that work on yourself now so that you can truly come to the altar well prepared to love your spouse well and completely free to say "I do!"

What do you do together to keep your faith a priority in your marriage vocation:

We go to Mass every weekend as a family-even when we're traveling we try to find a Mass online close to where we are staying when we're planning our itinerary, so we know it is kept priority. It's also really neat getting to experience Masses at different parishes all over the country and it reminds us how universal the Catholic Church/Body of Christ really is!

We try our best to make it to Confession once a month/as often as we can. This sacrament is so powerful, but even more so as a married couple! We need the graces of this sacrament because marriage is like holding up a magnifying glass to the sins we struggle with. When things aren't "good" with God and if we're not seeking regular reconciliation with our heavenly Father, we forget how important it is to humble ourselves and seek forgiveness from our spouse, too. Confession also keeps us constantly aware of the vices and sins we're trying to overcome so we can watch out for them and make better choices. It's much like having an accountability partner when we're exercising or training for an athletic event! Confessing our sins with a priest is also a tangible reminder that God is always there with us, rooting for us, and giving us all the graces we need on our path to sainthood. Again, when we work on our own relationship with God, we are also working on our relationship with our spouse.

Every night we do a "Couple's Examen" that we learned from Greg and Julie Alexander of Alexander House Ministries. Every night after our kids are asleep, we sit next to each other to reflect on our day as a couple. We each take turns doing the following:

First: We thank the other person for anything- big or little-that they did for us. Acts of service like doing the dishes, making us a meal, taking out the trash, being patient with the kids, even ways they were a positive example for us...anything we can think of.

Second: We apologize for any of our shortcomings or ways we failed them as their spouse. Then, we give them a couple of minutes where they also get to add to this list. It is very important that we give them this space to acknowledge any way that we hurt or failed them. During this time, we don't get to defend ourselves or justify our actions-we simply listen. This is very humbling! Then, we ask for their forgiveness for hurting them or failing them in any way. SPOILER ALERT: We always forgive each other! Side note: If you or your spouse keeps bringing up something that is hurtful to you and your marriage, and if this same thing becomes extremely hard to forgive, please don't hesitate to reach out to a marriage therapist or counselor to help you work through it.

After we have forgiven each other, we end our time in prayer together.

We have found that doing this every night helps us to go to bed in peace and free from any resentment that is building up from that day-especially if it was a hard day! There have been times when we just needed space to process difficult times or conversations and didn't do the examen, but we do it as soon as we're both ready because we know how much better we feel when we've forgiven each other. It's kind of like hitting the "Reset" button so we can start tomorrow on a clean slate!