

The Engagement Watch

Since ancient Rome, rings have been worn on the fourth finger on the left hand as a part of the wedding ceremony and to symbolize eternal love. It was believed that the fourth finger had a “vena amoris” or “vein of love, that led to the heart. Then came the engagement ring. Today, this is worn to demonstrate a commitment and intent to marry.

Have you ever heard about the engagement watch? According to Wikipedia, “The 'engagement watch' as a formal, modern proposal trend (where a watch is given instead of a ring) gained serious global popularity in the late 2010s to early 2020s. However, the tradition of gifting a watch as an engagement present has roots stretching back to mid-20th-century Japan.”

Over fifty-one years ago, my wife and I got engaged with a watch instead of a ring. There were two reasons for this decision. First, the denomination that I belonged to discouraged the wearing of rings, and secondly, we did not have the money to purchase a ring. However, it was quite popular among young people I knew in the 1960s and 1970s in The Bahamas. How did we do it? On the day of our engagement (when we agreed to get married) I gave her my watch to wear on her right hand. I was taught that engagement watches are worn on the opposite side. Also, if a new watch could be purchased, they would both exchange watches. That means the man would also wear the watch on the opposite side. I thought it was a great symbol at the time.

The practice of engagement or wedding watches has a long history. At first, it was considered quite a masculine gift for the husband or husband-to-be. Wikipedia also states: “Traditionally, the bride gives a prestigious watch to her future husband as an engagement gift. The wedding watch, considered as the masculine jewel par excellence, has become a tradition since the democratization of the wristwatch at the end of the 19th century.”

Let's return to the use of the engagement watch. Why an engagement watch? We are all aware that the circle of gold or silver represents the unbroken, forever love towards each other. The watch represents the passing of time and the promise of forever being together. While a good watch today might not be costly, many websites are promoting quite expensive, beautiful engagement watches. Some companies sell his and her engagement watches. The cost is often quite manageable; similar to rings, they can also be quite expensive. If a couple focuses on symbolism more than being ostentatious, the cost would not be prohibitive.

Note, I am not sharing this idea to oppose engagement or wedding rings. I am simply giving another option that many did not know they had. Many years ago, I attended engagement parties where watches were exchanged instead of rings. I encourage today's couple to think outside the box. Start the tradition.

Here are three reasons one might choose an engagement watch. First, it is a great symbol of the promise of forever time to spend together. Secondly, it might be very practical for people with

professions where a ring might get in the way. Thirdly, the watch has a function that makes it quite practical yet symbolic.

Once again, here's what to do. On engagement day, the couple simply exchanges their watches and wears them on the opposite side. Or they may purchase a special watch for the engagement. From now on, I will look for couples doing this. This could be fun to watch. As stated earlier, let's start a new tradition.

What to do during the engagement period. As mentioned in a previous article, engagement is the time to prepare for the wedding day and prepare for the marriage itself. Find a qualified counselor or pastor who can take you through the preparation process. Good preparation would need at least seven to nine sessions of counseling. Research tells us that good premarriage counselling reduces divorce by fifty percent.

I will close on this note. Several years ago, a couple came to me for premarriage counseling. I asked them if they were engaged. They didn't know if they were. I was confused. I asked them if they had a date to marry, and they said yes. Then I joyfully said to them, "You are certainly engaged because engagement is a date to marry." Their faces brightened with joy. They thought that the only time they could truly say they were engaged to marry would be when they purchased their engagement rings. They could not afford costly rings, so I encouraged them to get simple rings under \$50 value and use them as the rings. I also suggested that they could exchange their watches and wear them on the opposite side as a symbol of engagement. The next session, they came back smiling and happy. Here is the caution. Although it is good to have a ring or watch for engagement, it is not morally or legally required.

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