

Wedding/Marriage Prerequisites

Marriage is a sacred institution that was created by God to reflect the relationship of Christ to the Church (Eph. 5:25-32). God is concerned about every marriage relationship and the ultimate success of each marriage. We must also remember that the marriage decision is, apart from our decision to accept Christ in our lives, the most important and consequential decision that anyone makes because people must live with the consequences of that decision for the rest of their lives. How a couple starts out is very important if they are to have a rewarding life and a peaceful home. For this reason the leadership of the church takes every marriage seriously and strives to represent Christ and His word to every couple that seeks their involvement in their wedding.

In order for the pastoral staff of the local church to be officially involved in the wedding of any couple, the following prerequisites must be met:

A. The couple must be Christian and must be willing to submit to the biblical standards for a Christian throughout their courtship. This means that:

1. Both parties in the relationship must be born-again Christians. It is advisable that both be baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit as well.
2. Both parties must be biblically free to marry.
 - a. They are of legal age.
 - b. They are not already married.
 - c. If they have been previously married, they are biblically released to remarry (Mt. 19:1-10; Mark 10:1-12; I Cor. 7:10-16).
3. The couple must not be involved in fornication which is a sexual relationship outside of marriage (I Th. 4:3-8). If they have been involved in this way, they must cease immediately.
4. The couple must not be living together. If they are, they must separate immediately.

B. The couple must be willing to follow the prescribed premarital track set forth by the leadership of the church.

1. At least one of the parties must have been a regular attender of this local church for at least 3 months.
2. The parents of the couple must be in approval of the relationship and the wedding. Note: Under certain conditions, an exception may be made.
3. The couple must be willing to complete the Pre-marriage Questionnaire.
4. The couple must be willing to submit to three to four months of pre-marriage counseling with a leader of the church assigned by the pastoral staff.
5. The couple must be willing to complete any homework that is given as an assignment by their counselor.

C. The couple needs to be aware that there are other things that could be a factor when it comes to the involvement of the leadership of the church in their wedding.

In asking for the participation of the pastoral staff of the church in their wedding, each couple is acknowledging the fact that they are Christian, that they want to live their married life as Christians and that they want God to be honored in all that they do in conjunction with their wedding experience. A Christian is someone who is more concerned about pleasing God than pleasing man. A Christian is a Christian at all times whether they are in a church service, on the job or at play.

If God is to be honored in what is done, the wedding plans should not include elements that clearly violate the spirit of the Word of God. If there is a desire for God is to be honored, the wedding atmosphere should be in keeping with his holy nature. Remember that your wedding ceremony should be a Christian witness to the world. This position could affect several things:

1. Gowns

While the leadership of the church has no desire to speak to issues of dress, the Bible does hold up a standard of dress that reflects God's heart in this area. Christian apparel is to be modest at all times. This includes wedding ceremonies. No one who attends a wedding should be struggling with impure thoughts due to the immodest dress of the participants in the wedding party (1 Tim. 2:9-10). Brides and bridesmaids are encouraged to be discrete when selecting the official garments to be worn for the ceremony.

2. Bachelor Parties

Many bachelor parties are totally unchristian in their atmosphere and activities including such things as intoxication, strippers, and other clearly sinful behaviors. If the leadership of the church becomes aware of any such activity, they may refuse to perform the ceremony. It is the responsibility of the groom to inform the wedding party and friends that a Christian party is the only acceptable party. Note: This standard applies to the bride as well.

3. Wedding Reception

Because of the varying standards among Christians and the normal abuse of alcohol in relation to many wedding receptions, the leadership of the church would prefer that no alcoholic beverages be served at the official wedding reception. However, if they are served, they should be served in moderation to ensure that drinking does not lead to the sin of drunkenness (Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21).

Maintaining a Christian atmosphere at the reception may also have a bearing on other activities included in the program, such as music selection, dancing and entertainment. The following questions should be asked when doing all planning:

- Is it to the glory of God?

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
I Corinthians 10:31

- It is a stumbling block to others?

Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. I Corinthians 10:32-33

- Has it the appearance of evil?

I Thessalonians 5:22 says, “Abstain from all appearance of evil.” (KJV) The Knox translation says “all that has a look of evil about it.”

- Is its atmosphere good? Could you enjoy communion with God when engaging in this activity or would God be out of place?

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?
II Corinthians 6:14