



PREMARITAL

RESOURCE PACKET

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Introduction

Believing on Jesus Christ alone for eternal salvation is the most significant decision you will ever make and choosing to marry is second. This union of one man and one woman in marriage is an indescribable blessing from God (Proverbs 5:18; 18:22). In fact, God himself calls it “very good” (Genesis 1:31; 2:18-25). Not only does marriage provide the most meaningful human relationship, but it also provides the most meaningful example of the relationship between Christ and his church (Ephesians 5:22-33). In this way, God intends for your marriage to be a daily illustration of the gospel message, the good news of salvation and transformation through Jesus.

A prospective couple should therefore approach marriage with prayerful seriousness, laying a firm foundation for a lifelong, joyful, God-dependent relationship that is blessed by God. To this end, before a pastor of Brookdale Baptist Church may agree to marry a couple, they must participate in premarital counseling designed to provide crucial, transformational guidance from the Word of God. Both applicants must attend each session, complete all homework, and demonstrate agreement and alignment with the teaching that each session provides.

The pastor may adjust the number of required sessions based upon the preparedness and understanding of the couple. If the couple exhibits a vibrant Christian testimony and a biblical perspective, then the pastor may elect to combine sessions. And if one or both applicants live a long distance away, sessions may occur online through a video conferencing service.

In any case, no agreement to perform a wedding and no dates for wedding events should be confirmed until the counseling has progressed in a way that both the pastor and couple consider satisfactory. This provides the couple with freedom to seek God’s will without the additional pressure of fixed wedding plans.

Preliminary Considerations

A pastor may only consent to perform weddings consisting of one man and one woman (Gen 2:22-23; Matt 19:4; Mark 10:6). This excludes homosexual or polygamous marriages and marriages involving anyone living in an altered sexual identity that differs from his or her birth gender (Rom 1:26-27; 9:20). In some cases, a pastor will refrain from performing a wedding for anyone who has been previously divorced (Rom 7:3; 1 Cor 7:10-11, 39).

A pastor of Brookdale reserves the right at any time to decline to perform any wedding. Furthermore, for a wedding to occur on church property or use church resources, the bride or groom must be a current member of the church in good standing.

Premarital Inventory

Both applicants must complete a *Premarital Inventory* designed to evaluate their personal character and to provide helpful understanding about their backgrounds and

perspectives. This ensures that necessary conversations will occur and enables the pastor to adapt counseling sessions to meet specific needs.

Testimony of Regeneration

Applicants must provide a written, credible testimony of regeneration, which they should submit along with the *Premarital Inventory* at least one week prior to the first counseling session (2 Cor 6:14-15; 1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:23). (This requirement may be waived if both applicants are already members of Brookdale in good standing.) This testimony should also verify believer's baptism by immersion and membership in good standing of a gospel-preaching, Bible-believing church (Matt 28:19; Acts 2:41-42; Heb 10:23-25). If an applicant is the member of another church, the counseling pastor will contact the applicant's pastor to confirm the authenticity of his or her Christian testimony and baptism.

Divorce and Remarriage

If one or both applicants have been divorced but were the innocent party(s) (as the victim of abuse, adultery, or abandonment), a pastor may provide premarital counseling, recognizing that though God intends for no divorce, Scripture does allow for legitimate causes for grace and remarriage (Deut 24:1-4; Matt 5:31-32; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor 7:15).

Required Reading Assignment

Both applicants will be required to read the book entitled *Love and Respect: The Love She Most Desires; The Respect He Desperately Needs*, by Emerson Eggerich (ISBN 9781591451877). They may either read the book or listen to it in audio format. They should complete this assignment before Session 5.

Physical Purity

Both applicants must agree to abstain from physical intimacy between themselves until after marriage (1 Cor 7:1; 1 Thess 4:3-8).

Spiritual Maturity

Applicants should demonstrate general preparedness and maturity, giving witness to a consistent walk with God through prayer and Bible study (Deut 6:4-8; Luke 18:1) and through regular church participation (Heb 10:25). They should also demonstrate ability to meet the material and financial needs that marriage will require (Prov 24:27; 1 Tim 5:8).

Counseling Sessions Overview

Both applicants should complete the assigned Bible study and reflection worksheet prior to each session. Doing this will prepare them for a meaningful discussion. The couple should plan to spend 60-75 minutes in each counseling session.

Session One – Compatibility

This session will focus on the need for compatibility between marriage partners. Although every Christian marriage will require both spouses to navigate a variety of differences and difficulties for years to come, it is wise to explore any significant difficulties beforehand.

Doing this follows biblical wisdom and avoids shocking disclosures after marriage. This provides a basis for upcoming sessions, encouraging both participants to be honest and candid in sharing experiences and perspectives and in responding to feedback from their partner. If any disclosure seems prohibitive to a harmonious marriage, then prayerful discussion will follow. This session will refer to feedback from the *Premarital Inventory*.

Session Two – Gender Roles

This session will focus on God’s design for gender roles within marriage. Men and women display the image of God equally and share the mandate of spreading his influence in the world. In harmony with this mutual significance, a husband and wife enjoy distinct and important roles. A husband should provide unwavering, nurturing love to his wife, understanding and meeting her needs, just as Jesus sacrificially loves and leads the church. A wife should provide unwavering respect and affection to her husband, just as the church should follow the leadership of Christ. This session will establish biblical expectations for the roles of husband and wife in marriage. It will also explore practical, specific expectations that each spouse will have of the other, emphasizing a mutual commitment to follow Christ and to meet the needs of one another.

Session Three – Oneness

This session will focus on the exclusive nature of marriage. A husband and wife must separate from their families of origin to join with one another in a complete, wholehearted way. This requires both spouses to relegate all other relationships and obligations to a lower level of importance. In doing so, a husband and wife should focus on cultivating oneness by living together, praying together, serving one another, and sharing physical intimacy together. This session will explore expectations regarding in-laws and the ways that each spouse should transition away from dependency upon his or her extended family (and other relationships). This will be a good time to discuss strengths and weaknesses in marriage modeled by their parents. It will also provide an opportunity to preview the marriage vows.

Session Four – Money and Children

This session will introduce basic expectations for entering a shared financial arrangement. This is important, because money is a primary cause of marital discord. Therefore, a couple must agree on basic expectations for their shared financial arrangement. Scripture presents the husband as the source of primary income for a household. A wife may also generate income, though raising children in the home should be her foremost priority when the need arises. Together, the couple must agree to careful financial planning, generous giving, avoidance of frivolous debt, and a contented lifestyle. They should also agree with one another in their perspective on having and raising children in a biblical manner. This session will explore making a budget, what (if any) debt is appropriate, and what changes to make when a child is born.

Session Five – Communication and Forgiveness

This session will establish basic communication principles that teach the couple how to strengthen their marriage by their words and how to reconcile when conflict occurs. Communication breakdowns are a major cause of marriage dysfunction. Therefore, each spouse should commit to open listening and talking and should abstain from hurtful words. They should learn to practice quick and complete forgiveness whenever the other speaks hurtfully and should respond to other failures in a similar way, averting bitterness and resentment. Each partner must agree to take responsibility for his or her personal faults, to resolve heart issues that produce errant words, and to provide a safe and trusting relationship for personal growth together. This session will identify points of potential conflict and should establish basic guidelines for applying principles of repentance and forgiveness if conflict occurs.

Session Six – Preparations

This session is designed to complete the counseling cycle and will transition towards procedural preparations. The pastor will review important topics, address remaining concerns, and answer remaining questions. He will then open a discussion and answer questions about the rehearsal, ceremony, and reception guidelines, referring to the *Wedding Planner* guide. This discussion will establish the making it a priority to honor Christ in all wedding proceedings and to encourage the couple to make plans that celebrate the goodness and greatness of God (1 Cor 10:31; Col 1:18). This session will conclude by asking if the couple has any further questions, celebrating their upcoming marriage as a wonderful gift from God and offering a dedicatory prayer.

Premarital Counseling Inventory

This inventory is designed to help determine marital compatibility and to identify strengths and possible challenges in your prospective marriage. It also provides a helpful resource after marriage as a couple builds a strong and understanding relationships. To this end, be sure to answer each question honestly.

Instructions

1. Fill out this inventory for yourself. Do not talk to your prospective spouse until both of you have done so.
2. Circle any question or section that you believe will be especially important to discuss with your fiancé(e) or pastor.
3. Next, discuss the inventory together before you come to your first session. The pastor conducting your premarital counseling will be the only other person to read your responses.
4. Submit both inventories to your pastor at least one week before your first session.

General Information

Full name _____ Birth date _____ Age _____

Home Address _____ Email _____

Home Phone _____ Cell _____ Work _____

Schooling Completed _____ Occupation _____

At what church are you a member or regular attendee (name and location)? _____

Summarize the circumstances around meeting and getting to know each other _____

Why are you excited to marry your fiancé(e)? _____

Desired Wedding Date _____ Location _____

Your Walk with God

1. Do you normally spend time each day in prayer and Bible reading? _____

Describe what this is like for you on a normal day. _____

2. Are you an active, regular participant in weekly church worship on Sunday? _____

3. After marriage, where do you plan to go to church? _____

4. Will this church be a good place for you both to grow spiritually? Why or why not?

5. In what ways are you an active witness and ministry volunteer in public and at church?

The Impact of Sin and Stress

1. Check off any of these struggles, sicknesses or sins that you have experienced in the past or continue to wrestle with in the present:

Abortion	_____	Financial Problems / Debt	_____
Abuse	_____	Drug Addiction	_____
ADD / ADHD	_____	Pornography	_____
Adultery	_____	Obsessive Compulsive	_____
Alcohol	_____	Panic Attacks	_____
Anger or Aggression	_____	Rape	_____
Anxiety	_____	Same Sex Attraction	_____
Attention / Concentration	_____	Self-Harm	_____
Cancer	_____	Sexual Dysfunction	_____
Chronic Physical Pain	_____	Sexual Immorality	_____
Depression	_____	Sleeplessness	_____
Divorce	_____	Suicidal thoughts / attempts	_____

2. How do you react to stress? Which sins come out when you are stressed? _____

Family Background

1. Indicate your parents' attitude toward your fiancé(e):

Total acceptance _____ Acceptance with reservations _____ Disapproval _____

2. How do you perceive your prospective in-laws' attitude toward you?

Total acceptance _____ Acceptance with reservations _____ Disapproval _____

3. Compare your family backgrounds:

Yours

Fiancé(e)'s

Number and gender of siblings _____

Your place in your sibling birth order _____

Family's socio-economic level _____

Family's church / religious affiliation _____

Degree of church / religious involvement _____

Cultural / ethnic background(s) _____

Political party affiliation _____
Hereditary health problems _____

4. Have you been married before? ____ To whom were you married? _____

5. For what reason(s) did your previous marriage(s) end? _____

5. Describe the marriage you have observed which you most want to emulate. _____

6. List the strengths of your parents' marriage that you most want to have in your own.

7. What weaknesses in your parents' marriage do you wish to avoid? _____

Personality and Temperament

1. Indicate which of you tends more (in relation to the other) to be; mark "M" for the man, "W" for the woman, "B" for both, and "N" for no one)

The extrovert	_____	The home-body	_____
The introvert	_____	The party-person	_____
The talker	_____	Neater	_____
The listener	_____	Messier	_____
The thinker	_____	More ambitious	_____
The doer	_____	More complacent	_____
The planner	_____	More punctual	_____
The procrastinator	_____	More tardy	_____
The pouter	_____	More easy-going	_____
The shouter	_____	More quick-tempered	_____
The optimist	_____	More impulsive	_____
The pessimist	_____	More cautious	_____
The night person	_____	More spontaneous	_____
The morning person	_____	More organized	_____
The spender	_____	More manipulative	_____
The saver	_____	More compliant	_____

The leader	_____	More analytical	_____
The follower	_____	More emotional	_____
The helper	_____	More happy	_____
The artist	_____	More depressed	_____

2. List some of your fiancé(e)'s characteristics which are most attractive to you. _____

3. List some of your fiancé(e)'s traits, habits or mannerisms which you at least occasionally find irritating? _____

4. What do you usually argue about and when do you usually argue? _____

5. On the lines below, indicate the relative levels of maturity which you think you and your fiancé(e) have reached respectively as compared with your age group? On each line place an "M" for the man and a "W" for the woman at the appropriate spot.

	Immature	-----	Mature
Emotionally		-----	
Intellectually		-----	
Socially		-----	
Spiritually		-----	

6. Indicate how each of you tends to express the following feelings. On each line place an "M" for the man and a "W" for the woman at the appropriate spot.

	Internalize	Internalize, then Verbalize	Verbalize Quickly
Anger		-----	
Disappointment		-----	
Frustration		-----	
Guilt		-----	
Joy		-----	

7. How do you try to resolve conflict with your fiancé(e)? _____

8. What (if any) circumstances would you allow to bring about a divorce? _____

Your Relationship

1. List the most significant interests you have in common. _____

2. Name some relational strengths that you can bring to the marriage? _____

3. What is your greatest weaknesses as a prospective marriage partner? _____

4. What fears, concerns, or apprehensions (if any) you feel about being married? _____

5. How do you intend to deal with these concerns? _____

6. What are some matters about which the two of you have different opinions? _____

7. Are there any areas in which you are struggling to trust your fiancé(e)? _____

Your Sexuality

1. Are you a virgin? _____
2. If you are not a virgin, how would you describe your previous sexual experiences?
Numerous _____ Rare _____ Destructive _____ Abusive _____ Other _____
3. What are you doing to protect yourself from sexual temptation? _____

Your Future Outlook

1. If both plan careers, whose job determines where you will live? _____
2. If you should be unable to have your own, would you adopt a child? Why or why not?

3. How can you help your spouse to grow spiritually? _____

4. What would you like for him / her to say in answer to the previous question? _____

5. What do you intend to do to stay in love? _____

6. Have you ever struggled with forgiving someone? If so, give an example:

7. If you answered "yes," how can you prevent this from happening in your marriage?

8. What do you tend to worry about regarding your future? _____

9. Is there anything else you believe is important to discuss with your fiancé(e) and / or pastor which this inventory has not mentioned? If "yes," then include that here.

Compatibility in Marriage

Premarital Counseling Session 1

Session Overview

This session will focus on the need for compatibility between marriage partners. Although every Christian marriage will require both spouses to navigate a variety of differences and difficulties for years to come, it is wise to explore any significant difficulties beforehand. Doing this follows biblical wisdom and avoids shocking disclosures after marriage. This provides a basis for upcoming sessions, encouraging both participants to be honest and candid in sharing experiences and perspectives and in responding to feedback from their partner. If any disclosure seems prohibitive to a harmonious marriage, then prayerful discussion will follow. This session will refer to feedback from the *Premarital Inventory*.

Biblical Perspective

1. What does Genesis 2:18 verse teach about the relationship between a husband and a wife?

The Hebrew word order of this verse places the phrase “not good” at the beginning. This emphasizes that loneliness is not good and that marriage between a man and a woman is a God-given way to provide the close companionship that we need.

The phrase “helper comparable to him” describes a woman as someone who differs from the man in ways that meet his needs and makes up for his deficiencies. This applies to the differences between men and women in general, but also the differences between any husband and wife specifically.

2. What principle does Amos 3:3 and 2 Corinthians 6:14 teach that helps you make a wise choice about whom you should marry?

The word *yoke* describes two farm animals plowing a field together side by side. This made the work easier and more productive if the animals were the same kind, the same size, and the same strength. But if the animals were of a different kind, size, and strength, it made the work much more difficult.

3. What principle does Proverbs 22:3 and 27:12 teach that helps you to make a wise choice about whom you should marry?

The word *prudent* describes someone who makes good choices. The word *simple* describes an uninformed person who makes choices that he or she will deeply regret.

4. What areas of agreement and similarity are necessary for marriage?
5. What areas of agreement and similarity are wise to discuss before marriage, though they may not prohibit you from marrying?
6. What are some good differences between you and your spouse that may strengthen and enhance your marriage?
7. What questions do you have as result of this lesson?

Gender Roles in Marriage

Premarital Counseling Session 2

Session Overview

This session will focus on God's design for gender roles within marriage. Men and women display the image of God equally and share the mandate of spreading his influence in the world. In harmony with this mutual significance, a husband and wife enjoy distinct and important roles. A husband should provide unwavering, nurturing love to his wife, understanding and meeting her needs, just as Jesus sacrificially loves and leads the church. A wife should provide unwavering respect and affection to her husband, just as the church should follow the leadership of Christ. This session will establish biblical expectations for the roles of husband and wife in marriage. It will also explore practical, specific expectations that each spouse will have of the other, emphasizing a mutual commitment to follow Christ and to meet the needs of one another.

Biblical Perspective

1. What does Genesis 1:26-28 teach us about the ways that men and women are equal before God, in nature and purpose?
2. How does Genesis 2:18 indicate that though men and women are created equal by God in nature and purpose, they are also different from each other?
3. How does Ephesians 5:22-24 describe the role of a wife in marriage?
The word *submit* means to allow another person to provide leadership and to make final decisions.
4. What example does Paul give for how this works?
5. How does Ephesians 5:25-32 describe the role of a husband in marriage?
The word *love* means to hold a person (in this case a wife) in high regard and to make choices with her best interest in mind.
6. What example does Paul give for how this works?
7. How does 1 Peter 3:7 describe the way that a husband should love his wife?
8. How does Ephesians 5:33 summarize the distinct roles of husband and wife in a marriage?
9. Are you prepared [wife] to respect your husband by letting him make final decisions for your family and [husband] to give careful attention to the needs of your wife and make decisions with her best interest in mind?
10. What questions do you have as result of this lesson?

Oneness in Marriage

Premarital Counseling Session 3

Session Overview

This session will focus on the exclusive nature of marriage. A husband and wife must separate from their families of origin to join with one another in a complete, wholehearted way. This requires both spouses to relegate all other relationships and obligations to a lower level of importance. In doing so, a husband and wife should focus on cultivating oneness by living together, praying together, serving one another, and sharing physical intimacy together. This session will explore expectations regarding in-laws and the ways that each spouse should transition away from dependency upon his or her extended family (and other relationships). This will be a good time to discuss strengths and weaknesses in marriage modeled by their parents. It will also provide an opportunity to preview the marriage vows.

What does Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:7-9, and Ephesians 5:31 teach about the change that must take place in your relationship with your parents when you marry?

The fact that God repeats this principle at the beginning of the Bible, in the teaching ministry of Jesus, and in the later letters to the churches shows that this is very important.

2. What is one important way that God intends for you to do this (see the beginning of 1 Peter 3:7)?

The word *dwell* means “to live together in the same house.”

3. What is a second important way that God intends for you to do this (see the end of 1 Peter 3:7)?
4. What is a third important way that God intends for you to do this (see Proverbs 5:15-18 and Hebrews 13:4)?
5. What do we learn from 1 Corinthians 7:33-34 about how to bring about oneness in marriage?

The word *care* means “to focus on something” and the word *please* refers to meeting the needs of the other person and making him or her happy.

6. How will your relationship with your parents and in-laws (or other relatives) change after you marry? Do you agree about these changes?
7. How will you cultivate spiritual unity in your marriage?
8. Are you committed to sharing physical intimacy with one another (1 Corinthians 7:35)? What fears or concerns might you have about this?
9. What questions do you have as a result of this lesson?

Wedding Vows Preview

For the Husband

I _____ take you _____ to be my lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and in health, forsaking all others, to love and to cherish, until death do us part: according to God's holy ordinance: and thereto I pledge you my faithfulness.

For the Wife

I _____ take you _____ to be my lawfully wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and in health, forsaking all others, to love, cherish, and to obey, till death us do part: according to God's holy ordinance: and thereto I pledge you my faithfulness.

10. What important things do these vows communicate?

11. What, if anything, should you allow to break your vows (Malachi 2:16; Mark 10:6-9)?

Money and Children in Marriage

Premarital Counseling Session 4

Session Overview

This session will introduce basic expectations for entering a shared financial arrangement. This is important, because money is a primary cause of marital discord. Therefore, a couple must agree on basic expectations for their shared financial arrangement. Scripture presents the husband as the source of primary income for a household. A wife may also generate income, though raising children in the home should be her foremost priority when the need arises. Together, the couple must agree to careful financial planning, generous giving, avoidance of frivolous debt, and a contented lifestyle. They should also agree with one another in their perspective on having and raising children in a biblical manner. This session will explore making a budget, what (if any) debt is appropriate, and what changes to make when a child is born.

Biblical Perspective

1. What does the Bible teach about the husband's responsibility to provide for the financial and material needs of his wife and children (Genesis 3:16-19; 1 Timothy 5:8)?
2. What does the Bible teach about a wife's contribution towards providing the financial and material needs of the family (Proverbs 31:10-27; Titus 2:5)?
3. What perspective should you have as a couple towards spending, wealth, and financial expectations (Proverbs 15:17; Matthew 6:33; 1 Timothy 6:6-10; Philippians 4:12)?
4. In addition to meeting the needs of your family, what else should you do with the resources God gives you (Proverbs 3:9; Luke 6:38)?
5. What should be your approach to spending (Proverbs 21:20)?
6. What should be your approach towards debt (Proverbs 22:7)?
7. How would you describe your financial habits as a single person? How will you need to change when you marry?
8. Do you have any indebtedness going into marriage? What about credit cards?
9. Will you merge your finances into a shared account? Why or why not?
10. Who will be responsible for managing the financial records?
11. Will you have a budget?
12. Do you have any concerns or disagreements with your fiancé(e) regarding any aspect of finances?

13. What perspective does God intend for a married couple to accept towards having children (Genesis 1:28; Psalm 127:3)?
14. What do you believe is the best approach for teaching your children good behavior (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4; Titus 2:5)? Providing them with education? Meeting their needs at home?
15. What will you do in the event of an unexpected pregnancy (Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5)?
16. Do you have any disagreements with your fiancé(e) about having and raising children?

Communication and Forgiveness in Marriage

Premarital Counseling Session 5

Session Overview

This session will establish basic communication principles that teach the couple how to strengthen their marriage by their words and how to reconcile when conflict occurs. Communication breakdowns are a major cause of marriage dysfunction. Therefore, each spouse should commit to open listening and talking and should abstain from hurtful words. They should learn to practice quick and complete forgiveness whenever the other speaks hurtfully and should respond to other failures in a similar way, averting bitterness and resentment. Each partner must agree to take responsibility for his or her personal faults, to resolve heart issues that produce errant words, and to provide a safe and trusting relationship for personal growth together. This session will identify points of potential conflict and should establish basic guidelines for applying principles of repentance and forgiveness if conflict occurs.

Biblical Perspective

1. Have you completed your reading of *Love and Respect* by Emerson Eggerich?

2. Describe 2-3 things you learned from this book.

3. What kind of words should you speak to your spouse (Ephesians 4:29, 32)?

The word *edification* means “to build up, strengthen, and make someone better.”

4. What kind of words should you *not* speak to your spouse (Ephesians 4:29, 31)?

5. When you speak hurtful (unloving, disrespectful) words to your spouse, what can you learn about yourself (Luke 6:45)?

6. What should be your first response when you discover a weakness or failure in your spouse (Matthew 7:1-5)?

7. How should you respond when your spouse requests forgiveness from you (Matthew 18:21-35)? How many times should you do this?

The word *forgive* means to “let go” and not hold an offense against your spouse.

8. What happens to *you* when you refuse to forgive your spouse (Hebrew 12:14-16)?

The word *bitterness* refers to inner feelings of strong hate or resentment.

9. What kind of example has your parents provided for you in patterns of communication and conflict resolution in marriage?

10. How do you normally respond when someone sins against you? Do you find it easy to forgive?

11. Are you prepared to provide your spouse with forgiveness when asked?

12. What questions do you have as result of this lesson?

Preparations for Marriage

Premarital Counseling Session 6

Session Overview

This session is designed to complete the counseling cycle and will transition towards procedural preparations. The pastor will review important topics, address remaining concerns, and answer remaining questions. He will then open a discussion and answer questions about the rehearsal, ceremony, and reception guidelines, referring to the *Wedding Planner* guide. This discussion will establish the preeminence of Christ in all wedding proceedings and encourage the couple to make plans that glorify a holy, loving, and faithful God (1 Cor 10:31; Col 1:18). Attention will be given to: (1) prioritizing excellence and simplicity over extravagance, (2) presenting the gospel, (3) abstaining from alcohol and dancing, (4) ensuring modest attire, (5) establishing guidelines for musical selections, and (6) setting dates, times, and locations. This session will conclude by asking if the couple has any further questions, celebrating their upcoming marriage as a wonderful gift from God and offering a dedicatory prayer.

Biblical Perspective

1. Who should be the primary concern in all your wedding proceedings (Colossians 1:18)?

The word *preeminence* means “first place.”

2. What should all your wedding proceedings accomplish (1 Corinthians 10:31)?

The word *glory* refers to doing things that reflect the goodness and holiness of God and give honor and respect to him.

3. What kind of things should not be a part of your wedding proceedings (1 Peter 4:14)?
4. What is appropriate wedding attire (1 Tim 2:9-11)? Considering this and previous financial principles, should your proceedings be extravagant or modest?

Sample Wedding Preparations Guides

Brookdale Baptist Church of MN

The following instructions and guidelines describe a wedding conducted by a pastor of Brookdale Baptist Church and conducted at Brookdale Baptist using church facilities.

Marriage License

Important

To perform the wedding, the pastor must receive the marriage license beforehand. The rehearsal will be the ideal time to do this.

Instructions

You may refer to the online Minnesota Official Marriage System (<https://moms.mn.gov/application/Welcome>) to obtain your marriage license for being married in Minnesota.

Music

Choose wholesome music that emphasizes the sacredness and dignity of marriage. In most cases, please avoid pop and folk music for the ceremony. Coordinate your music with the coordinator assigned by the pastor.

Apparel

Please choose apparel for the wedding party that follows biblical principles of modesty and distinction, upholding the purity, sacredness, and dignity of marriage.

Wedding Program

You are responsible to prepare a wedding program that will be printed and provided for each guest on the day of the wedding. At a minimum, the program should include:

- The order of ceremony
- The names and relationships of the wedding party members and ushers
- Your home address as a couple
- The location of the reception and any related instructions
- An expression of gratitude to parents, church, friends and guests for sharing in your wedding.

Provide a sample of the program to the wedding coordinator assigned by the pastor (one week or sooner before wedding ceremony). If you would like help in designing this, the wedding coordinator may be able to recommend a church member who is able to help.

The Complete Schedule

Work together with the pastor and wedding coordinator to produce a complete schedule of events for the day of rehearsal and the wedding day. This schedule should include:

- Times for every important event
- Photography plans (preferably before the wedding for most wedding party photos) • Locations for events off site
- Adequate time for the wedding party, especially the bride and groom, the night before the ceremony □

Wedding Rehearsal

All wedding participants (ushers, bridal party, musicians, pastors and other active participants) must be present.

All decorations must be in place beforehand, including a gift and card reception table.

Provide clear instructions for what your ushers are expected to do.

- What seats will they reserve for families of the bride and groom?
- Will they strictly observe the “bride’s side, groom’s side” pattern of seating the guests, or will they lead people to the best available locations?
- Will ushers offer an arm to women guests in escorting them to their seats?
- Where and when and by whom will the parents be seated?
- Will all ushers participate in the bridal procession, or will one or two remain in the rear to respond to any emergencies?
- Will ushers be asked to check details like heat, light, air-conditioning, or ventilation?

Following the rehearsal dinner, the pastor will follow this rehearsal format, with the goal of providing an encouraging and efficient rehearsal that allows the wedding party to retire for the night at a reasonable time.

- Read through the ceremony in total
- Arrange the wedding party on the platform (and mark positions with electrical tape)
- Rehearse the ceremony in total (including full processional, but only intros for each subsequent musical selection and only the first words of any speaking part)
- Rehearse any elements that need to be repeated
- Pray and dismiss

Wedding Ceremony

PRELUDE (while ushers seat guests)

SEAT PARENTS (groom’s parents, then bride’s grandmother[s] and mother)

AISLE RUNNER (optional)

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC (groomsmen enter, bridesmaids, then ring-bearer and flower girl)

PROCESSIONAL (congregation stand and bride’s mother stands, bride and father enter)

PRESENTATION OF BRIDE (by her father or designated representative: Pastor, "Who gives this daughter to be wedded to this man?"; father, "Her mother and I.")

ASCEND PLATFORM

WELCOME/CALL TO WORSHIP

Example: We are gathered here to worship God and to witness the marriage vows of _____ and _____ (full names). Let your light so shine before people that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Let us worship God.

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN

CONGREGATION SEATED

DECLARATION OF INTENT

Example: "_____, will you take _____ to be your wife, and will you be faithful to her, love her, honor her, live with her, and cherish her, according to the commandments of God in holy marriage?" (Groom, "I do.")

"_____, will you take _____ to be your husband, and will you be faithful to him, love him, honor him, live with him, and cherish him, according to the commandments of God in holy marriage?" (Bride, "I do.")

PRAYER

SPECIAL MUSIC (optional)

SCRIPTURES

Examples: Gen. 2:18–23; Eccles. 4:19–21; Matt. 5:13–16; John 2:1; Eph. 5:21–33; Col. 3:12–17; 1 John 4:7–12; Song of Songs 8:6–7.

CHARGE TO THE COUPLE (Pastor, 7-10 minutes)

VOWS

For the Husband

I _____ take you _____ to be my lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and in health, forsaking all others, to love and to cherish, until death do us part: according to God's holy ordinance: and thereto I pledge you my faithfulness.

For the Wife

I _____ take you _____ to be my lawfully wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and in health, forsaking all others, to love, cherish, and to obey, till death us do part: according to God's holy ordinance: and thereto I pledge you my faithfulness.

RING

- Pastor, "_____, what token do you give of your love?"
- Groom, "A ring."
- Groom, "_____, as a symbol of my love and the vows I have made, I present you this ring, pledging my undying faithfulness and unconditional love; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."
- Pastor, "_____, what token do you give of your love?"
- Bride, "A ring."
- Bride, "_____, as a symbol of my love and the vows I have made, I present you this ring, pledging my undying faithfulness and unconditional respect; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

PRAYER

Example: Bless, O Lord, these rings to be a symbol of the solemn vows by which this man and this woman have bound themselves to each other in holy matrimony, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRONOUNCEMENT

Example: Forasmuch as _____ and _____ have consented together in holy union, and have witnessed the same before God and this congregation, and in so doing have given and pledged their vows to each other, and have declared the same by the giving and receiving of a ring, I now pronounce them man and wife together, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man put asunder. Amen."

"_____, you may kiss your bride." □

KISS

RECESSIONAL

DISMISS TO RECEPTION

The Reception

The reception will be a time of fellowship and celebration around the joy of your wonderful new union together. Music may be more festive, but please choose music that avoids

inappropriate lyrics and innuendos. If the reception will occur in Brookdale facilities, please coordinate your musical selections with the coordinator assigned by pastor and refrain from dancing and drinking alcohol (1 Cor 8:9; 1 Pet 4:3-4).

In addition to dining, consider providing a forum for family, friends, and guests to share impromptu stories and testimonies about the bride and groom from past experiences. In all that you do, remember that you are providing an example for a young generation of children and teenagers in your church and providing a witness to the lost for the goodness of Jesus Christ.

Clean Up

Confirm with the pastor the names of people who will be cleaning up the church building following the ceremony. Ideally, this will be a combination of church and family members. The facilities must be returned to a clean, functioning condition no later than the day prior to the next church service or event.

Good News Baptist Church of MI

WEDDINGS

Marriage ceremonies will be offered or conducted in accordance to our By-Laws.

Those who attend Good News Baptist Church, or immediate family of those who attend, may use the church facilities for weddings upon application to and approval of the Church Board.

Saturday weddings shall begin no later than 4:00 PM.

WEDDING REHEARSALS/DINNERS/RECEPTIONS

Those who have been approved for a church wedding may also use the church facilities for the reception and rehearsal dinner.

Smoking, alcohol, inappropriate music, dancing or unusual entertainment at any reception or group function is prohibited. The wedding party is responsible for the conduct of those present.

All decorating, removal of the same, cleaning of the kitchen, as well as the serving area are the responsibility of the wedding party and NOT the responsibility of church members, committees or staff.

It is the responsibility of the wedding party to clean the facilities used and put things back in order following a rehearsal dinner.

CANDLES

Candles used on table coverings, pew ends, window sills, and those carried down the aisle in a wedding must be enclosed. Candles used on the platform should have plastic beneath them. This is in accordance to Gaines Township regulations.

ARRANGEMENTS

- All requests or plans for special events should be submitted to Good News Baptist Church (pastor or secretary) to avoid any conflict. All arrangements should be made as early as possible.
- Please check with the Church Hostess regarding use of equipment. No kitchen equipment is loaned out for home use.
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to contact the custodian with any special requests regarding set-up. Areas used must be put back in order for the custodian to clean for regular services.

These materials were produced by Pastor Thomas Overmiller. This and other Bible study resources are available at www.ShepherdThoughts.com.

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