



Marriage Packet

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Section 1: Prerequisites for Marriage

Because we are committed to building strong Christian marriages, we want to share the following guidelines and Scriptures. We have no desire to condemn or reject anyone, but we want to live within God's principles for marriage. Therefore, EBC's pastors uphold the following policies for performing a marriage ceremony:

1. We require couples to complete Premarital Counseling with an EBC pastor prior to any marriage.

Please note that it is not mandatory that the EBC pastor who officiates your wedding service also be the same pastor who conducts your premarital care. Also, if you receive premarital care from an EBC pastor but plan to have a pastor from a different church officiate the ceremony, we reserve the right to reach out to the pastor performing the wedding service with any relevant concerns.

2. If a divorce has previously occurred, we will need to explore the nature of the divorce and determine if there was a biblical basis for it. (Mathew 5:31-32)

If this applies to your situation, please indicate this on your premarital registration form. A previous marriage and divorce do not necessarily exclude you from remarriage. We recognize there are a host of situations and circumstances that make each situation unique. Upon receiving your premarital registration, an EBC pastor will meet with you, hear your story, and determine if we can perform the wedding service.

3. Unfortunately, we cannot marry a couple if one person is a follower of Jesus and the other is not. (1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14)

We believe that marriage is a gift from God given to all people. When men and women marry, whether they know the Giver or not, they receive this gift. Marriage unites two people into one and we believe that because of the weight of this union, Scripture commands all those who know the Lord to not marry outside the faith.

4. If a couple is unwilling to refrain from living together, or being sexually active, until they are married, then we cannot perform the wedding. (1 Corinthians 7:8)

We believe Scripture teaches about the importance of keeping the physical intimacy of sexual relations within the confines of a committed and biblical marriage. This can be a challenging discussion, and very possibly may come across as judgmental, but our heart behind this policy is to establish proper expectations of marriage before the marriage and to do so based on biblical principles. As pastors, we frequently counsel husbands and wives who struggled with this during their engagements, and who must then deal with the negative consequences within their marriages. (We have included a further exploration of the cohabitation piece at the end of this packet.)

5. If either person does not have the blessing of their parents, we will need to explore the reasons why. If parental concerns are legitimate, we will not be able to marry the couple. (Exodus 20:12)
We think Scripture is clear in its call to honor our parents. Should this be a potential issue with your current situation, please communicate this to the EBC pastor who may officiate your wedding service. The pastor will seek to understand the circumstances, recognizing that age and background may strongly impact this situation.

6. If either person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs (other than those prescribed by a doctor) before or during the rehearsal or wedding, we will not be able to marry the couple. (Romans 12:3; Ecclesiastes 5:1-5)

Scripture reminds us to be sober minded and to let our “yes be yes,” and “our no be no” (Mathew 5:37). There is no greater covenant that we enter into in our life than the marriage covenant, and so we should seek to be clearheaded and sober-minded when making marriage vows.

NOTE: If you have questions about any of these six statements, we would love to sit down with you and talk through them. This is not meant to be an end to all discussion, rather we pray it may open the door for you to think through your current situation and upcoming marriage through a biblical lens you may not have previously considered.

Section 2: EBC's Perspective On Marriage And Weddings

EBC believes that marriage is the union created by God between one man and one woman in order to glorify God through community, reliance, and the provision of the future through children. Christian marriage should be between two believers. It is intended to be a life-long commitment, as the couple follows Jesus together. Marriage can be a wonderful and deeply satisfying commitment, yet a great marriage does not simply happen. It requires much intentional effort, including willingness from both parties to work at fostering intimacy, nurture, and care. The foundation of Christian marriage is the love of God as expressed through Jesus Christ. The relationship of Christ and the church is emblematic of marriage. His pursuit of, provision for, and purification of His church are seen in the Bible as parallel to marriage between a husband and wife. We learn about the joys and even struggles of life-giving love that ultimately comes from God. Faith in, and openness to, God strengthens a couple's marriage.

A WEDDING IS A WORSHIP SERVICE

A Christian wedding is a worship gathering and a time of great excitement and joy, as two people express the solemn commitment that underscores a very special relationship. Through the use of ritual, the Christian wedding service gives expression to the love, respect, and lifelong commitment between two persons who desire to express their commitment in such a way before family, friends, and God. The following policies and guidelines are designed to enhance communication between the couple, the wedding coordinator/planner, and the church staff. We truly want you to have a wonderful and meaningful wedding.

Since the wedding is a worship gathering, all details concerning the wedding and related arrangements should conform to such practices and standards of good taste that are consistent with the Christian faith and EBC. As you plan and organize your wedding, it is important to keep your officiant properly informed and to make your plans as early as possible. We are open to celebrating weddings in a variety of ways as long as approved by the officiant in advance. A sample wedding vow, along with possible components used by other couples, is available from the EBC office upon request.

Section 3: Planning your wedding at EBC

PASTORAL AND STAFF HONORARIA

Please know that pastors and staff of EBCC celebrate your decision to covenant before God. No one with EBC intends to make money from your celebration. We love being a part of wedding ceremonies for people in the church, and an honorarium simply recognizes the time, energy and expense to those involved. In many cases, in addition to investing a notable amount of their time over the course of your premarital sessions and wedding service planning, the officiating pastors are missing the bulk of their weekend that would normally be spent with their own families to be with yours. The suggested honorarium ranges from \$200 to \$500, plus any additional travel costs if the ceremony will be held elsewhere. Honorarium checks should be made out directly to the pastor involved (not to EBC). A list of fees is provided in section 4 of this packet. If these suggested fees will be a severe hardship, please let us know and we can come alongside you to determine a more feasible amount. To help determine the extent of the hardship, we may ask for additional information about your wedding expenses, and offer financial counsel on wedding budgeting if you so desire.

WEDDING COORDINATOR/PLANNER

You are welcome to retain the services of a wedding coordinator or planner. If this is your desire, you should find someone (this can be either a professional or a family member/friend who volunteers in this capacity) whom you feel confident will be able to handle the ceremony with graciousness and ease due to their organizational skills, experience, and desire to serve. If you are having your wedding at EBC, you will also be assigned an EBC wedding facilitator who is familiar with EBC policies, building usage, and items available for your use. They will work with your planner or may be willing to be a sole coordinator.

MUSIC

A wedding ceremony should celebrate God's goodness to the human family and lift our love and gratitude to God. Music is often a celebratory component of the wedding service. Music should be selected for suitability to a worship gathering of praise and thanksgiving. The music should seek to convey the message that in a Christian marriage ceremony, the bride and groom stand there not simply as a couple, but as a couple before God. It is meant to be sacred, exhilarating, and a uniquely memorable event.

If you are interested in asking musicians of EBC to participate in your ceremony, or if you are interested in using instruments and sound equipment of EBC, you must make the request and coordinate this in advance. Please know that musicians of EBC are not employees, and therefore if you choose to ask EBC musicians to participate in your wedding, you should expect to compensate them for their time and travel, in addition to the pastoral honoraria.

REHEARSAL

A rehearsal for a wedding is essential and attendance at the wedding rehearsal is mandatory for all members of the wedding party, including parents of the couple and any readers, soloists or additional musicians. Usually, a rehearsal occurs the night preceding the wedding or at a time most convenient for all parties involved. You should communicate the date and time of the rehearsal to your officiant. The rehearsal should start promptly at the stated time and should be organized and run by the wedding coordinator/planner. Please keep in mind that some participants may have to travel from work, so we advise not scheduling a rehearsal too early in the evening. Please respect everyone's time by communicating very clearly to all participants the start time.

Your wedding coordinator/planner should expect to lead the rehearsal with some assistance from the officiant pastor at appropriate times. During this rehearsal, expect to practice the processional and recessional with the corresponding music, and become familiar with the venue and its amenities. Soloists or readings will be practiced at the discretion of the couple and the comfort level of the person performing his or her assigned part. Know that the wedding vows, the teaching, and other personal pieces will not be practiced during the rehearsal so as to not take away from the actual wedding ceremony.

The marriage license, which is obtained by the engaged couple prior to the rehearsal, should be given to the wedding facilitator at the rehearsal. We will not be able to perform the ceremony without the license.

SEATING CAPACITIES

- The main floor of the MPB will seat 400 with a center aisle.
- The chapel will seat up to 175.
- We have 21 round tables that can seat up to eight each and 21 8-foot rectangular tables that can seat up to 10 each. No more than 24 tables TOTAL may be set up at one time.

MISCELLANEOUS

- No red juice or punch may be served.
- No alcoholic beverages or drugs are allowed on the premises.
- Bird seed or rice may be used but must be swept up before leaving the grounds. Any item thrown must be biodegradable.
- All rented items or furnishings brought in must be removed on the same day as the event.
- Only an EBC A/V Tech may operate or adjust settings to the A/V system.

- All minors must be supervised at all times.

SCHEDULING PROCEDURES

The officiating pastor will work with the couple and the office to schedule your ceremony. The building fee will be due upon approval of the date and time. Please note that Saturday weddings without a reception must begin by 4:00pm and those with a reception must begin by 2:00pm to ensure guests are out of the building by 5:00pm.

Section 4: Breakdown of Costs

	Church Family	Non-church family	✓
CHAPEL USAGE (175 capacity)	\$0	\$200.00	
Custodian	\$75.00	\$100.00	
Sound Technician	\$75.00	\$100.00	
Wedding Facilitator	\$100.00	\$100.00	
		<i>Total:</i>	
MPB USAGE (400 capacity)	\$0	\$300.00	
Custodian	\$100.00	\$150.00	
Custodian (using both buildings)	\$150.00	\$200.00	
Sound Technician	\$75.00	\$100.00	
Wedding Facilitator	\$150.00	\$150.00	
Wedding Facilitator for reception	\$50.00	\$50.00	
		<i>Total:</i>	
SUGGESTED HONORARIUMS			

Pastor	\$200.00--\$500.00		
Pianist, Soloist or other Musician	\$75.00	\$75.00	

Section 5: Further Explanation of Cohabitation

THE DANGEROUS LURE OF LIVING TOGETHER BEFORE MARRIAGE

By Steve Hoppe¹

According to a recent article published by NBC News², 75% of women ages 15-44 have lived with a boyfriend before turning 30. Seventy. Five. Percent. I trust the number is similar for men. Sadly, in my experience doing premarital counseling for hundreds of Christian couples, I have found the percentage isn't much lower for professing believers. Why is this the case? Why are so many unwed Christians living under the same roof? Why has premarital cohabitation become the new norm in the Church? There are at least three reasons.

WHY CHRISTIAN COUPLES COHABITATE

It Makes Logical Sense

I'll admit that living together before marriage makes sense — at least from an in-the-moment human perspective. It provides a greater body of data for evaluating if this is “the one.” It saves money as couples typically split rent, groceries, and basic apartment necessities. It eliminates the dreaded midnight drive home after a stay-in date night. It allows a couple to grow exponentially closer as they do life side by side. It provides these and many other benefits. It makes logical sense — from a shortsighted human vantage point.

Society Celebrates It

Second, premarital cohabitation has become common in the Church because many Christians have made today's secular values their own. Our society cherishes “trying before buying,” convenience at any cost, sex without rules, companionship without commitment, and relationship without responsibility — everything premarital cohabitation provides. Instead of questioning such values — if not downright opposing them — countless Christians have adopted them. It's no wonder so many of them are living together before tying the knot.

Church Leaders Ignore It

Finally, premarital cohabitation has become commonplace in the Church because Christian leaders have been relatively silent on the issue. Pastors hint that they disapprove of couples living together during premarital counseling, but they still joyfully officiate their weddings. Small group leaders know they should confront their cohabitating members, but they turn a blind eye because they feel they lack the relational capital needed to address such a “personal issue.” Mature Christian friends and family members — even godly parents — don’t want to rock relational boats, so they sweep their loved ones’ sinful lifestyles under the rug. For a range of reasons, most of which are rooted in fear, church leaders are ignoring the proverbial elephant in the room and allowing unwed couples to bunk up.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF COHABITATION

Predictably, this growing phenomenon of premarital cohabitation comes with a plethora of negative consequences. Here is just a handful:

The Dreaded Breakup

Let’s just say that a cohabitating couple breaks up. By living together, they will have created a bond so strong that it can only be severed with a heart-slicing knife, resulting in intense — sometimes lifelong — pain for both partners. Furthermore, should either partner later get married to somebody else, their spouse will experience the pain of knowing they’re the 2nd/3rd/4th/5th person on their spouse’s list of live-in partners.

The Fear Factor

Premarital cohabitation puts a couple in a vulnerable situation. On the one hand, each person is giving their mind, body, emotions, material possessions, time, and living space to their boyfriend or girlfriend. On the other hand, they have absolutely no assurance that the person will stay in the relationship long-term. This creates an unspoken and often suppressed environment of insecurity and fear.

Setting the Bar Too High

When a couple is living together before marriage, they’re their best selves. They stay in shape. They cook, clean, and take out the trash without being asked. They selflessly “serve” each other between the sheets. Why? They want to impress each other. The problem with this? Let’s say they get married. Once they walk down the aisle, they’ll no longer need to impress each other. So they’ll take their feet off the gas and let themselves go. The result? Disillusionment. Marriage (and sex, in particular) will fall flat compared to the exciting yet unrealistic days when they lived together before their wedding day.

Just another Monday

Perhaps the saddest thing a recently-married couple told me was this: “Because we lived together before marriage, the day we got back from our honeymoon felt like ‘just another Monday.’” Premarital cohabitation sucks the novelty, joy, and surreal feeling out of the weeks, months, and years following the big day. Nothing’s really new except the jewelry on your fingers.

The Real Tragedy

But the biggest tragedy for cohabitating Christian couples is that they’re living outside of God’s will. According to Genesis 2:24, when a couple gets married, they become one flesh. The order is important here. First, they get married. Then they become one flesh. Premarital cohabitation, however, either reverses this order or eliminates the marriage component altogether. This isn’t God’s design. It isn’t His will. In fact, it’s sin. And nothing good ultimately happens when we live in sin.

BUT THERE’S HOPE

Most people think that a cohabitating couple is on a moving train that can’t stop. Wrong. By God’s grace, I’ve been able to convince many Christian couples to do the unthinkable — to move out. Yes, it’s terribly inconvenient. Yes, it’s expensive. Yes, it makes no sense whatsoever to the unbelieving world. But I’ve seen faithful followers of Jesus take this beautiful step of obedience, and not one has regretted it. Not. One. Those who eventually broke up experienced far less pain following the breakup. Those who got married rejoiced on their wedding day as they experienced a redeemed sense of novelty and wonder.

MY CHARGE

Pastors, counselors, and fellow believers — will you do the hard thing? Will you graciously, gently, and lovingly encourage unmarried cohabitating Christian couples to stop living together? Will you confront your fears of losing their approval and speak truth into their lives? It will be hard. It will be awkward. It might ruffle their feathers. But it will be a true demonstration of love. And if you’re living with your significant other and you’re not married, may I gently and lovingly encourage you to move out? I promise you won’t regret it.

¹ Hoppe, Steve (2018, August 31). “The Dangerous Lure of Living Together Before Marriage”. Biblical Counseling Coalition; accessed 1 2018, November 14. <https://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2018/08/31/the-dangerous-lure-of-living-together-before-marriage/>

² Jonel Aleccia, “‘The New Normal’: cohabitation on the rise, study finds,” NBC News, April 4, 2013, <https://www.nbcnews.com/healthmain/new-normal-cohabitation-rise-study-fnds-1C9208429>.

