

# CITYCHURCH

Dear Couple:

Greetings from the pastoral staff and leadership team at **CITYCHURCH**! If you are reading this, it may be that you are considering marriage and want to know more about the marital process at our church. This information will hopefully answer any questions that you have and clarify the steps you need to take if you are seeking out a **CITYCHURCH** pastor to officiate your wedding and/or to be involved in your pre-marital counseling process.

We consider marriage to be a high calling of eternal significance and thus we take the marital process very seriously before the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God has entrusted us as leaders with an incredible stewardship and responsibility to care for and walk alongside those who are considering marriage. Our desire is to be able to have a clear conscience before Him that we have biblically prepared couples with the wisdom and tools necessary to walk righteously before him in their new lives together.

Please read over the enclosed materials carefully. You will find a philosophy of marriage and the church; a step-by-step pre-marital process; and guidelines for the pre-marital process. If you still have questions after reading through the materials or want to talk further about them, please contact one of our pastors at the church office to set up an appointment.

We hope and pray that God will be at work in your relationship during this most crucial season of preparation, and that you will avail yourselves of the resources God has provided you here. We look forward to walking alongside you through this marital process.

For Marriages That Will Honor Christ and Build His Church,

The Pastoral Staff at CITYCHURCH

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## **Marriage and Pre-Marital Counseling**

It is our church's policy that in order for a member of our pastoral team to marry a couple, a couple must entrust themselves to a pre-marital process under the authority of our local church body. It is through this process that the church leadership comes alongside a couple, affirming both the work of God in bringing the couple together and the biblical health of the proposed marriage.

Our position on pre-marital counseling flows from a biblical framework for understanding the role of the church in a believer's life. The tendency for some to view the religious and secular areas of life as separate and distinct often reveals itself in a couple's decision about how and where to marry. For example, couples may want to marry in a church and to have a pastor preside over their vows, while at the same time being reticent to have the church play more than a cursory role in determining the biblical health of their relationship and whether it is wise or biblical that they marry at all.

The crucial decision that we have made as a pastoral team is that we want to discourage this tendency for people to keep their personal lives distinct from the church. Instead, we want couples to embrace the God-ordained role of the church in helping to steward people's marriage relationships. To this end, we believe that our church must play a vital role in marriages within our own fellowship through the personal involvement of our pastors and leaders in counseling, mentoring, and holding accountable young couples.

Marriage is a creation mandate that is to be enjoyed by both believer and unbeliever alike, and thus should not be denied to those who want to be married through the civil authorities. However, for those believers who are asking the church to preside over their vows, a greater responsibility is placed upon the church for faithfully stewarding this awesome responsibility that has been entrusted to it. It is in this context that pre-marital counseling finds its rightful place.

The pre-marital process at **CITYCHURCH** includes several elements that are presided over by the pastoral leadership of the church. It is through this process that we pray that God will reveal his will to a couple about their proposed marriage and that the pastors can in turn affirm this decision by performing the marriage ceremony.

The pre-marital process requires several (4-8) meetings, and therefore we want couples to contact the church and register for the counseling at least four months in advance of the wedding if possible. Experience has taught us that the closer the couple gets to the wedding date, the less likely they will be able to sufficiently schedule the required meetings to effectively complete the process.

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## **Pre-Marital Counseling Cost**

**CITYCHURCH** utilizes trained lay counselors through the *Prepare and Enrich* Marriage Counseling Curriculum. The total fee for premarital counseling is \$75. This includes books, other materials, and a relationship assessment that you will work through with a mentor couple over the course of a few months. Compared to the cost of a wedding, this may be a small price for spiritually preparing oneself for marriage and thus should be considered a necessary part of the wedding costs.

## **Honorarium for Performing the Ceremony**

The suggested honorarium for the minister performing your ceremony is \$150- \$300. This should be paid directly to the officiating minister. We have found that couples are often confused about how to honor a pastor who marries them, and this fee is meant to standardize the decision making process.

## **Out-of-Town Weddings**

Some ministers will perform out of town weddings and others will not. You must discuss this with your minister of choice. Please keep in mind that if the wedding ceremony is taking place outside of Tallahassee, you need to make arrangements and financial provision for travel, lodging, and food for the pastor. This should be discussed in detail before the ceremony. Please understand that an out of town wedding is a significant commitment on the part of the minister!

## **Church Members Who Have Moved Away**

It is understood that there are a variety of personal situations that do not fit neatly into the pre-marital process. Ultimately, it is each minister's prerogative to assess these situations and to make a personal decision about whether to be involved in the marriage ceremony or not. Discuss your own situation with one of the ministers. Keep in mind that your minister may ask you to travel back to town periodically for pre-marital sessions or pursue counseling within another context.

## **Confidentiality**

Please keep in mind that the legal rules of confidentiality that govern therapeutic relationships in a private therapy or counseling context do not apply to the church. While we give couples assurances of "reasonable confidentiality", these rules do not apply in cases of intent to harm self or others, elder abuse or neglect, or unrepentant sin.

## **Wedding Licenses**

Each couple is responsible for securing and paying for their own marriage license. In Florida, couples receive a discount on the cost of their license if they complete a pre-marital process by an authorized agency or counselor. **CITYCHURCH** qualifies as one of these agencies. You will receive a counseling certificate at the end of the pre-marital process that you should present at the county courthouse when purchasing your license.

## **Wedding Venues**

The responsibility for finding a wedding venue depends on you. Be mindful that certain churches have restrictions concerning officiating ministers; so make sure to verify their policies and to make arrangements for sound/audio-visual/custodial issues.

## **Wedding Rehearsal and Reception**

The pastor will generally conduct the wedding rehearsal at the agreed upon rehearsal time. Regretfully, pastors are not always able to attend rehearsal dinners or receptions. It is our sincere hope that such inability is not taken as an offense.

## **Other Resources**

As part of the pre-marital process, the pastor might ask the couple to seek counseling help with someone else outside of the church to supplement the marriage process. Or, the pastor might recommend that the couple be assigned to an older mentor couple that can meet periodically for counsel, prayer, and accountability.