



Wedding Packet

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MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROCESS

Marriage preparation is required for all couples married by pastors at CCCC. A key part of the process is the completion of a marriage preparation study with a mentor couple. Couples also complete an online study called FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study). Couples meet weekly for approximately six weeks with assigned mentors to review and discuss materials. A \$50.00 couple fee covers the costs of all materials.

Below are steps for completing CCCC's Marriage Preparation Process:

- Review policy, complete/return Wedding Information Form with \$50.00 check to CCCC. Mail to: Clear Creek Community Church, Attn. Marriage and Family, 999 FM 270, League City, TX 77573.
- When we receive your form and check we will contact you to let you know we are purchasing your online session. After you complete your session, you will be notified.
- We will then print your report, prepare your packet, and notify your mentors. Your mentors will pick up your packet and contact you to schedule your first session.
- Your mentors will contact us before your last session to request your certificate of completion. This certificate will give you a \$60.00 discount on your marriage license.
- If one of our pastors have agreed to officiate your wedding, contact us to schedule an appointment to meet with the pastor to discuss the details of your ceremony about four weeks prior to your wedding. This meeting completes the marriage preparation process.

It is our hope that as you work through the materials and meet with your mentors you will develop a friendship and a resource to begin your marriage relationship as well prepared as you can be.

Please NOTE the following before submitting request:

If any of the following situations are present we want very much to meet with you and talk about your relationship and your marriage. We want the best for you and we believe the Bible's instructions and commands about marriage are rooted in God's love and wisdom, so we want to help in any way we can.

- CCCC pastors will not agree to perform a ceremony before receiving and reviewing the Wedding Information Form and meeting with couple.
- CCCC pastors will not officiate weddings for couples who are living together. (See Appendix A)
- CCCC pastors will not officiate weddings for followers of Jesus who are planning to marry and non-believing person.
- If you have been previously divorced we need to meet with you and discuss the circumstances around your divorce. (See Appendix B)



WEDDING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Agreements

- The following agreements are required for couples married by pastors at CCCC:
- Complete FOCCUS.
- Complete CCCC's marriage preparation process prior to wedding.
- Live apart until marriage.
- Plan and prepare a wedding ceremony that honors God.

Officiating Fee and Payment Information

A suggested honorarium is a minimum of \$200. Please make check payable to officiating pastor and mail to Elizabeth Garcia prior to wedding.

Pastor's Services

The pastor's services include two meetings with pastor, participation at rehearsal and officiating the ceremony.

Ceremony

The wedding ceremony is a worship service that recognizes God's leadership in the marriage of the couple. Everything included in the ceremony should befit a worship service.

Vows

Officiating pastor will review wedding vows and ceremony. Any special ceremony requests should be submitted in writing to officiating pastor before second meeting.

Music

Music in wedding ceremony should befit worship service. Numerous music selections, appropriate for weddings, are available through local Christian books and music stores.

Photography

Photos and videos should be done with the least amount of distractions possible.

Location

Our pastors officiate wedding ceremonies for members of the church. The location of the wedding is the responsibility of the couple. Viable options are churches, hotels, gardens, wedding chapels, and homes. Officiating pastors reserve the right to deem a location inappropriate.



Arrival of Pastor

The officiating pastor will arrive 20 to 30 minutes prior to the wedding.

Marriage License

A marriage license is required and can be attained at the county courthouse. Give marriage license to officiating pastor just before wedding ceremony. The State of Texas requires pastor to have license at ceremony. \$60.00 Discount on Marriage License - Texas offers free marriage education classes around the state and in turn gives couples who complete classes a \$60.00 savings on marriage license and waves 72 hour wait period. CCCC's Premarital Prep Program is state approved; therefore, couples who complete CCCC's Premarital Prep Program qualify for this savings and waiver of 72 hour wait. A certificate will be provided to you at the completion of your mentor sessions.



APPENDIX A: LIVING TOGETHER

Recent Statistics on Cohabitation in the United States

It is not surprising that cohabitation is a frequent issue with people who attend CCCC. Moving in before marriage is now the norm in the US. The data says nearly 50% of women have, or do, cohabitate with their partner, an increase of 35% in last 20 years. And, 74% (3 out of 4) 30 year olds say they have, or do, cohabitate with their partner.

But here is some more data to consider. The data below are from secular agencies or government statistics. The data has painted the same picture for thirty years as cohabitating has become more and more the norm.

- 50-60% of couples who live together before they marry... never do marry.
- The median duration of a cohabitation relationship is 22 months – they tend to be very short term arrangements.
- 20% of women who enter a cohabitation relationship get pregnant in the first year. Less than 1 in 5 get married to that partner after the pregnancy.
- For the 50% of people who cohabit first and then do marry, the divorce rate is 50% - 70% higher than for people who do not cohabit before marriage - and the divorce tends to happen in the first three years of marriage.

The Culture Versus the Bible

The number one reason given for cohabitation before marriage is economics. Almost without exception, people explain their reasons for cohabitation as financial. It is true that one mortgage is less expensive than two mortgages. But, as you can see from the data mentioned above, couples who choose to cohabit for financial advantage are unwittingly letting finances take precedent over their relationship with God and with each other, and the negative consequences far outweigh the benefits.

Many couples begin preparing for their wedding ignorant of the bible's teaching about marriage and sex, and are therefore surprised or offended by Clear Creek Community Church's (CCCC) refusal to perform weddings for couples who are living together. We do not seek to condemn people who are living together. Instead, we want to lead you to an understanding of how very different the culture's view of sex and marriage is from the marriage covenant God established and communicates to us in the bible.

The elders of CCCC are committed to bringing glory to God by submitting to his Word, the bible, in all areas of life including marriage. We also believe strongly that a marriage relationship established under and submitted to God's design will be lasting, joyous, intimate, and secure far beyond any substitute arrangement our culture offers. The elders of CCCC want to offer our help and guidance in preparing you for a God glorifying, life giving, and



lifelong marriage. We want you to understand our reasons for choosing not to perform wedding ceremonies for people who are “living together.” They are:

1. We believe a wedding ceremony is a worship service that celebrates a couple's devotion to God and submission to God's will for their marriage. The purpose of a wedding ceremony is to invite God's presence into the marriage while calling for God's blessing and provision for the couple. It is not possible to host that kind of ceremony for two people who are ignorant of, or who have willfully refused to obey God's direction for marriage.
2. Strong marriages are built on a foundation of faith in, and submission to, God. A rejection of God's design for the marriage relationship is a precursor to many relational consequences that ripple through families, children, and the church. We want to do everything we can now to establish your marriage so that it blesses you and your family and CCCC for a lifetime.
3. Our deepest hope and desire is for couples to live in God honoring, joy filled, intimate relationships where they are continually growing in intimacy with each other and with God. We want to do everything we can to make that possible.
4. As pastors and shepherds over people God has entrusted to us, we are accountable to God for how we lead. We insist on having a clear conscience before the Lord when it comes to the marriages we participate in.
5. The bible teaches very clearly that living together is wrong, it is a sin. We want to lead people away from a relationship that produces destructive consequences and into a kind of relationship that is God glorifying, healthy, and lifelong.

A Biblical Perspective on Marriage

The following gives you a summary of what the elders of CCCC believe the bible teaches us about marriage. We believe the Bible teaches that marriage is a sacred covenant between two people to which God is witness, and that the covenant is for a lifetime.

Genesis 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Marriage is an institution whose terms are given to us by God and rooted in God's creation order and authority. The boundaries God established in the marriage covenant provide a husband and wife with structure and security. Couples who set aside God's boundaries for marriage must then create the terms and qualities of their particular relationship, and those terms are by nature self-centered and transient (as attested to in the



statistics referred to above). When people reject God's design for marriage and arrange their relationship on their personal terms it is always susceptible to redefinition, reconstruction, and termination.

To live together seeking to share the benefits and responsibilities of the marriage covenant before you commit to God and to one another is to set aside God's design for marriage and replace it with your individual design. The elders of CCCC insist that you do not set aside God's authority over the marriage relationship, but choose to build a marriage God's way. We understand this to mean:

- **As Children of God** - The bible describes (in Ephesians 5 and elsewhere) marriage as a reflection of Christ's relationship to his church – Christ being the bridegroom coming for his pure bride the church. Ephesians describes a husband's responsibility to his wife as a reflection of Christ's wholly devoted sacrifice for his church and a wife's submitted response to her devoted husband as a reflection of the church's faith in and dependence on Christ.
- **Following God's Leadership** - The bible describes the marriage relationship as a "chord of three strands." It is God, husband, and wife. Marriage is dependent on God's authority and presence. The character qualities the bible describes as being produced by genuine faith in God are the qualities that are to shape the relationship of husband and wife.
- **Coming from Two Different Places** - Following God's leadership begins before we come to the wedding ceremony. It means that the couple maintains sexual purity before they marry. It means that they don't make economics a higher priority than the God glorifying, long term health of their relationship.

Our Commitment

The elders of Clear Creek Community Church are committed to helping you prepare for a marriage that will glorify God and bring you a lifetime of joy and security. We want to walk with you through whatever process is necessary to help you separate and begin to build your marriage on a biblical foundation. We look forward to the opportunity to serve you in this season.

Living Together: Q & A

Question: If we are already living together won't getting married fix the problem?

Answer: No, not necessarily. If your relationship was established and has been experienced outside of God's plan for marriage - having a wedding ceremony won't change that. If you truly want to repent and begin to follow God's design for marriage there are healthy pre-marital processes you should go through before you wed. In the mean time you should obey God and separate while you prepare for marriage.

Question: Is it OK if we live together but commit not to have sex? Can we sleep in separate rooms?



Answer: No. It is a question of accountability. Even though you may be honoring your commitment to not have sex there is no way for the people who are spiritually responsible for you to know whether you are or not.

A second important consideration is found in Ephesians 5:3, “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.” (NIV) Your life and lifestyle influences other people. As followers of Jesus we should avoid situations that communicate to a sinful world that a sinful lifestyle is acceptable among those who follow Christ.

Question: Even though we haven’t had a wedding, can’t we be married in our own hearts and minds?

Answer: Marriage is a God ordained institution that is public by nature. The commitment we make to our spouse in marriage is a public commitment. The public nature of the commitment allows the church to help sustain, encourage, correct and protect you. If you simply declare yourselves to be “married” privately, outside of God’s design and outside the church, you isolate your relationship from the possibility of encouragement, correction, and protection.

Question: What do we do if we really can’t afford to live in two separate places?

Answer: There are many possibilities for separating. Friends, family, and your small group are all possible sources for creating a sustainable situation for separating as you go through a healthy pre-marriage process. CCCC will do everything we can do to help you find a solution. We have had great success helping people with the logistics of separating before they marry. Please discuss your situation with your Campus Pastor or CCCC elder. We will do everything we can to help find a solution.

Question: How long do we have to live apart before you will perform our wedding?

Answer: There are many variables that impact timing, such as the length of time necessary to demonstrate true repentance and a desire to obey God’s will for your marriage, the time required to complete a healthy pre-marriage process, etc. This is a discussion you will need to have with your Campus Pastor or CCCC elder.



APPENDIX B: DIVORCE & REMARRIAGE

What the Elders Believe About Marriage

- Marriage is a reflection of Jesus' relationship to the church
- Marriage is to be a lifetime commitment
- Marriage is to be with another follower of Jesus
- Marriage is to be with someone from the opposite sex

What the Elders Believe About Divorce

Divorce is never a part of God's original plan for marriage. Thus, repentance from sinful behaviors and reconciliation is the most God-glorifying path for those facing the possibility of divorce. Reconciliation highlights the gospel truth God has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, thus we are to be reconciled to one another – especially those joined together in the covenant of marriage.

What the Elders Believe About Remarriage After Divorce

The Bible describes some specific situations where remarriage is permissible, (through remarriage is not required and may not be the best alternative.) The Bible teaches remarriage is permissible:

- Where a spouse has died.
- Where divorce has taken place due to adultery and the offended spouse's heart is hardened to the point where they refuse to seek reconciliation.
- Where divorce has taken place because an unbelieving spouse deserts the believing spouse.

Christ-loving, Bible-honoring, Gospel-centered leaders hold differing views on Jesus' teaching about divorce and on remarriage for situations that are not specifically described in the biblical texts that discuss divorce.

Request for Remarriage

Request for remarriage of a divorced person require a presentation of the specific circumstances of the divorce. The request will be considered by at least two elders and the pastor requested to perform the ceremony before a decision is made.

What if an individual realized he/she was divorced on unbiblical grounds but now has remarried?

The elders would counsel the individual to recognize God's Word concerning marriage and divorce, repent of any sin (e.g., seek to repair relationships hurt by your divorce, confess your sin to your ex-spouse, etc.) and honor God in their current marriage, trusting God's gracious work of forgiveness in the gospel.

