

# **Wedding Policies and Procedures for Brentwood Baptist Church and affiliated campuses**

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## Wedding Policies for Brentwood Baptist Church and all affiliated campuses

Brentwood Baptist Church affirms that the marriage of a man and a woman is sacred in the sight of God and blessed by God. Marriage was God's idea. It was the Lord who said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him as a helper as his partner. Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and together, they become one flesh." Therefore, the institution of marriage should not be entered into lightly.

The wedding ceremony is an important event as couples begin their married lives together. Brentwood Baptist Church believes that the ceremony is a worship service and dedicates worship space for this purpose. The policies that are listed below are intended to reflect this intent and purpose. They are not intended to be restrictive or exclusive in any way. Rather, they are intended to preserve the sacredness of the event.

### Policies

1. Individuals who are seeking to have a wedding ceremony at Brentwood Baptist Church or any of her affiliated campuses must be members of the church, regular attendees of the church, or the children or grandchildren of members of the church.
2. Regular attendees of the church must have a letter from an ordained minister of the church that validates their active participation. If no minister is known by the regular attendees, an attendance form obtained from the facilities office must be signed by a Brentwood Baptist minister indicating that the couple has attended Brentwood Baptist Church at least four (4) times prior to the wedding.
3. If a couple lives out of town or out of state, it is understood that they will be able to meet the following expectations:
  - The wedding couple or, at a minimum, the bride or the groom, will meet in person with the Facilities Administrative Assistant to review and sign the wedding policies. Surrogates such as the parents of the wedding couple, may not complete this task for the wedding couple;
  - The wedding couple or, at a minimum, the bride or the groom, will meet in person with the Wedding Coordinator to review the wedding plans. Surrogates such as the parents of the wedding couple, may not complete this task for the wedding couple;
  - The wedding couple will complete all requirements for premarital counseling (see note below)
4. Couples must complete premarital counseling prior to the wedding. If the counseling is not done at Brentwood Baptist, the couple must have a form obtained from the facilities office signed by their minister stating that they have completed premarital counseling.
5. Couples who are living together prior to marriage must abstain from sexual relations and move apart until the time of the wedding ceremony.
6. Because God has ordained marriage and defined it is as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and Himself, Brentwood Baptist Church will only recognize marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. Further, our pastors and ministers and the staff of Brentwood Baptist Church shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriages between one man and one woman. Finally, the facilities and property of Brentwood Baptist Church (and its campuses) shall only host weddings between one man and one woman.
7. Brentwood Baptist wedding coordinators and assistants will be required for all ceremonies (coordinator fees are included in the wedding fees). Outside consultants may be used, but must

defer to the decisions and interpretation of policies of the assigned wedding coordinator. Outside consultants must sign the “Outside Consultant Agreement” Obtained from the facilities office.

8. A security deposit of \$500 is required in order to reserve a wedding date on the calendar for all campuses.
9. The fees for wedding ceremonies will be established by each campus and must be paid in full at least 60 days before the wedding in order for the wedding ceremony to take place.
10. Couples must meet with the Facilities Administrative Assistant and complete a wedding application form before a date can be set for a wedding ceremony.
11. A trained and authorized sound tech is required to operate the audio and video equipment of the church.
12. Dates and times for weddings and rehearsals must be calendared through the facilities office.
13. Any changes to dates and times must be made **2 weeks prior** to the wedding. No changes will be considered after the 2 weeks prior deadline.
14. Any changes to scheduled times must be communicated **by the coordinator** directly to the facilities office.
15. Rehearsal and wedding start and end times must be adhered to closely.
16. Seating is limited to the number listed on the policy. Fire codes prevent seating in the aisles and hallways.
17. Guest seating is not allowed in the Baskin Chapel sound booth. Only photographers, videographers, or musicians are allowed in the Baskin Chapel sound booth. There are no exceptions.
18. When requested, the elements of the Lord’s Supper will be served to the bride and groom only and not to the wedding guests.

**WEDDING APPLICATION**  
**BRENTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH**  
and all affiliated campuses

**I affirm that:**

1. I understand that the church does not allow its facilities to be used in a way that contradicts its faith or by persons or groups holding beliefs that contradict the church's faith.
2. To the best of my knowledge the purpose for which I am requesting use of church facilities will not contradict the church's faith, and I commit to promptly disclose any potential conflict of which I am aware or become aware to church staff.
3. I understand that Brentwood Baptist Church will only recognize marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. Further, our pastors and ministers and the staff of Brentwood Baptist Church shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriages between one man and one woman. Finally, the facilities and property of Brentwood Baptist Church (and its campuses) shall only host weddings between one man and one woman.
4. I understand that Brentwood Baptist Church will not perform a wedding ceremony for couples who are currently living together unless they agree to move apart until the time of the wedding.
5. I understand that upon approval of my facilities use request, I will need to provide a security deposit in the amount of \$500 and any other fees required by the church.
6. I understand that the church does not allow its facilities to be generally available to the public, and that my use of these facilities is subject to the executive pastor's approval, which is conditioned in part on my agreement to the requirements in the "Church Facility Use Policy," a copy of which I have read and understood.
7. The church believes disputes are to be worked out between parties without recourse to the courts. See, generally, Matthew Chapter 18 and 1 Corinthians Chapter 6. Accordingly, users of the facility agree to attempt resolution of any disputes through Christian mediation.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Bride's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Member of BBC?** Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ (OR)

**Regular Attendee of BBC?** Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Work #** \_\_\_\_\_ **Cell #** \_\_\_\_\_

**Birthday** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**Groom's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Member of BBC?** Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ (OR)

**Regular Attendee of BBC?** Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Work#** \_\_\_\_\_ **Cell#** \_\_\_\_\_

**Birthday** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Bride's Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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**\*The time allowed for weddings will be 8:00-12:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. on Saturdays.\***

**WEDDING REHEARSAL:** DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ DAY \_\_\_\_\_ TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

**WEDDING:** DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ DAY \_\_\_\_\_ TIME \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*FIRST CHOICE OF WEDDING LOCATION:** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*SECOND CHOICE OF WEDDING LOCATION:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Once a location, day, and time have been selected, no changes can be made after two (2) weeks prior to the wedding. Changes that are requested before the two (2) week prior deadline will be considered, but cannot be guaranteed.**

**REFUNDABLE SECURITY DEPOSIT OF \$500 IS REQUIRED TO CONTINUE APPLICATION PROCESS AND TO CONFIRM THE DATE ON THE CHURCH CALENDAR**

**MINISTER TO PERFORM THE CEREMONY:**

## COMPLETION OF PREMARITAL COUNSELING

This certifies that \_\_\_\_\_ have completed the required premarital counseling as required by Brentwood Baptist Church.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Minister (please PRINT)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Minister (signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

Please return this form to your wedding coordinator;  
David Hayes  
Brentwood Baptist Church  
7777 Concord Rd.  
Brentwood, TN 37027

# BRENTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH

## CATERING POLICIES

1. There will be no decorations affixed to the walls, moveable partitions or surfaces in any room. Signage or decorations pertaining to church business will not be removed from any location within the church.
2. **Brentwood Fire Codes prohibit use of open flame candles at receptions.**
3. No alcoholic beverages or items containing alcohol may be served at the reception or any other wedding related activities on the church premises.
4. A Wedding Coordinator must be present for receptions. No exceptions.
5. The caterer and their employees must refrain from the use of irreverent language, discourteous actions and smoking inside the building.
6. The caterer may arrive 4 hours prior to the ceremony to begin set up. Tables may be requested to be set up in hallway outside Wilson Hall for food prep stations.
7. **Absolutely** no food or drink is to be taken into the Worship Center or Baskin Chapel.
8. The Beverage Area may be used for preparing beverages for ice and coffee service only. The full kitchen may be used for events requiring food preparation, however a Food Service Employee must be present in order to monitor and oversee the operation of the equipment. Additional fees will be incurred.
9. The use of church buildings for all wedding activities must conclude no later than 8:00 pm. There are no exceptions to this policy. The church Facility Maintenance personnel will be setting up the rooms for the next days' activities. After 8:00 pm, there will be a surcharge of \$100 for the facility and \$50 per hour per person for the Wedding Coordinators.
10. To use the church food service as your caterer or use the kitchen for catering, please contact Craig Bradshaw at [cbradshaw@brentwoodbaptist.com](mailto:cbradshaw@brentwoodbaptist.com)

We agree to comply with the rules and regulations of Brentwood Baptist Church regarding decorations, conduct, etc., as described above for weddings.

Caterer \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Wedding Date and Time \_\_\_\_\_

Bride's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign this form and mail it to the Wedding Coordinator at least one week prior to the wedding.

David Hayes  
Brentwood Baptist Church  
7777 Concord Road  
Brentwood, TN 37027  
Attn: Wedding Coordinator



# BRENTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH

## FLORIST POLICIES

1. All flowers and decorations must be removed immediately after the wedding. The church has no place to store these items and anything left will be discarded.
2. If flowers are to remain at the church for use on Sunday in the foyer, they must be in moveable containers. The Facilities Office must be notified of these arrangements.
3. No set up of flowers is allowed in the baptistry. No nails, screws, tacks, glue or cellophane tape may be used on the walls carpet, floors, stage, furniture or woodwork. Protective covering must be placed under the Unity Candelabra. Only dripless candles are to be used in the candelabras
4. Our church facilities staff will be responsible for removing and returning all church-supplied brassware to the wedding closet.
5. The florist and their employees must refrain from the use of irreverent language, discourteous actions and smoking inside the building.
6. **Absolutely** no food or drink is to be taken into the Worship Center.
7. No real petals are to be dropped in the church aisles. Silk petals must be picked up after the service. If berries are used, special attention must be given to avoid carpet stains.
8. The florist may arrive 30 minutes prior to the beginning of pictures to place decorations, which should be no more than 4 hours prior to the ceremony.

We agree to comply with the rules and regulations of Brentwood Baptist Church regarding decorations, conduct, etc., as described above for weddings.

Florist \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Wedding Date and Time \_\_\_\_\_

Bride's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign this form and mail it to the Wedding Coordinator at least one week prior to the wedding.

David Hayes  
Brentwood Baptist Church  
7777 Concord Road  
Brentwood, TN 37027  
Attn: Wedding Coordinator

# BRENTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH

## MUSICIAN POLICIES

1. BBC Worship Ministry must approve all music used during the ceremony. It is the Bride's responsibility to email the Music and Worship Minister ([dworley@brentwoodbaptist.com](mailto:dworley@brentwoodbaptist.com)) a complete listing of musical selections which will be used during the ceremony 30 days prior to the wedding date. The list must include song title, composer, and lyrics where applicable.
2. The harp, organ, and all electronic/electric instruments are available for use by approved musicians only. If you desire to use any of these instruments with an outside musician, this request must be made in writing to the Worship Ministry.
3. It is the Bride's responsibility to contract with any musicians being used for wedding ceremony; therefore musicians must consult Bride directly with any music related questions. A list of "Special Event Musicians" is available from the facilities office or the Music and Worship office. (See full wedding policy)
4. No flowers, ribbons, or other decorations may be affixed in any way to any church-owned musical instruments.
5. No church owned musical instruments may be removed from the church building. Neither can any church instruments be moved within the church building without the approval of the Music and Worship Minister.
6. Musicians and any of their employees must refrain from the use of irreverent language, discourteous actions and smoking inside the building.
7. No food or drink may be taken into the wedding venue.

We agree to comply with the rules and regulations of Brentwood Baptist Church regarding Wedding Ceremony Music as described above.

Lead Musician \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Wedding Date and Time \_\_\_\_\_

Bride's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign this form and mail it to the Wedding Coordinator at least one week prior to the wedding.

David Hayes  
Brentwood Baptist Church  
7777 Concord Road  
Brentwood, TN 37027  
Attn: Wedding Coordinator

## **BRENTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH**

### **OUTSIDE CONSULTANT AGREEMENT**

Each wedding held at Brentwood Baptist Church will be assigned a Brentwood Baptist Church Wedding Coordinator who will be present during all activities scheduled for the wedding.

The Outside Consultant agrees to do the following:

1. Ensure that all communication and special requests with the church go through the Wedding Coordinator.
2. Defer all decisions and interpretation of policies to the assigned wedding coordinator. Outside Consultant and Wedding Coordinator will go over the policies of the Church and the Consultant will be responsible that all wedding attendees follow the policies.
3. Provide names and phone numbers of any vendors providing services to the wedding party at least two weeks prior to the event, with a description of services to be provided.
4. Provide information on technical needs directly to the Wedding Coordinator.
5. Ensure bride provides a list of wedding/ceremony music to the Wedding Coordinator and Worship Ministry at least 30 days prior to the wedding for approval by Music and Worship Minister.
6. Understand that under no circumstances will the Outside Consultant move any furniture, flowers, plants, instruments, panels, cameras, or ask technical staff to move them without first consulting the Wedding Coordinator.
7. Ensure that the wedding party stay confined to only those areas which have been reserved for the wedding. Non-compliance to this request may result in additional fees or loss of security deposit.
8. Ensure that the wedding ceremony begins and ends on time.
9. Ensure that they and their employees refrain from the use of irreverent language, and discourteous actions.

I agree to comply with the rules and regulations of Brentwood Baptist Church as set forth above.

Outside Consultant \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Wedding Date and Time \_\_\_\_\_

Bride's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign this form and mail it to the Wedding Coordinator at least one week prior to the wedding.

David Hayes  
Brentwood Baptist Church  
7777 Concord Road  
Brentwood, TN 37027  
Attn: Wedding Coordinator

# **BRENTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH**

## **WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY POLICIES**

1. NO FLASH photography will be allowed during the ceremony. The ceremony begins when the bride arrives at the end of the aisle. Timed exposures ONLY are allowed from the balcony. You may photograph the bride and groom as they recess using a flash.
2. The use of tripods, stands, and other equipment is allowed as long as their use does not deface any of the church furnishings and does not interfere with the movement in the aisles.
3. Any trash should be placed in its proper receptacle or be removed from the church when you leave.
4. Photographer and their employees must refrain from the use of irreverent language, discourteous actions and smoking inside the building.
5. No food or drink may be taken into the wedding venue.
6. All those assisting the Photographer are expected to abide by these same guidelines.
7. Should you choose NOT to follow these guidelines, you will be added to our UNAPPROVED list of photographers.

We agree to comply with the rules and regulations of Brentwood Baptist Church regarding Photographer as described above.

Photographer\_\_\_\_\_Telephone\_\_\_\_\_

Wedding Date and Time\_\_\_\_\_

Bride's Name\_\_\_\_\_Telephone\_\_\_\_\_

Please sign this form and mail it to the Wedding Coordinator at least one week prior to the wedding.

David Hayes  
Brentwood Baptist Church  
7777 Concord Road  
Brentwood, TN 37027  
Attn: Wedding Coordinator

## **BRENTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH**

### **VIDEOGRAPHY POLICIES**

1. Videotaping is permitted, but is not provided by Brentwood Baptist Church.
2. The Church Wedding Coordinator and/or Media Director can help direct your Videographer as to suitable locations for setup.
3. The Videographer may schedule an appointment with the Wedding Coordinator to view the facility at least two weeks prior to the ceremony. This may result in additional fees to the bride.
4. The use of tripods, stands and other equipment is permitted as long as their use does not deface any church furnishings.
5. The use of any BBC video equipment is not permitted.
6. Videographer and their employees must refrain from the use of irreverent language, discourteous actions and smoking inside the building.
7. No food or drink may be taken into the wedding venue.

We agree to comply with the rules and regulations of Brentwood Baptist Church regarding Videography as described above.

Videographer\_\_\_\_\_Telephone\_\_\_\_\_

Wedding Date and Time\_\_\_\_\_

Bride's Name\_\_\_\_\_Telephone\_\_\_\_\_

Please sign this form and mail it to the Wedding Coordinator at least one week prior to the wedding.

David Hayes  
Brentwood Baptist Church  
7777 Concord Road  
Brentwood, TN 37027  
Attn: Wedding Coordinator

## BASKIN CHAPEL WEDDING POLICY

1. The Baskin Chapel on the Brentwood campus is available for weddings not to exceed 250 attendees.
2. The time allowed for weddings will be 8:00-12:00 PM, 2:00-6:00 PM and 4:00-8:00 PM on Saturdays. The time allowed for Sundays is 2:00-6:00 PM.
3. Sunday weddings will only be considered if both of the previous Saturday time slots are filled.
4. Sunday weddings will be billed at double the normal rate.
5. The bride's room will be scheduled for 4 hour time periods. Requests for longer time periods will not be permitted.
6. No musical instruments, technical equipment, furniture or greenery located throughout the building may be moved or rearranged. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES MAY THE ORGAN OR PIANO BE MOVED BY ANYONE OTHER THAN FACILITY PERSONNEL. FAILURE TO ADHERE TO THIS PROVISION WILL RESULT IN A CHARGE AGAINST THE BRIDE'S DEPOSIT EQUAL TO THE AMOUNT OF THE FACILITY RENTAL.** If staging necessitates the moving or rearrangement of musical instruments, technical equipment or furniture, it may be done **ONLY** with prior approval of the Music and Worship Minister and **ONLY** under the direction and supervision of the Wedding Coordinator, Facilities office, and Media Technical Staff. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL CANDLES BE PLACED ON TOP OF THE ORGAN OR PIANO!**
7. Chairs may not be removed from the Chapel.
8. It is the bride's responsibility to ensure that the florist and/or equipment vendor follow the policies of Brentwood Baptist Church for removal of flowers and/or equipment.
9. If the bride wishes to leave the wedding flowers for use in the church, she will need to notify the Facilities office. The Facilities office will notify the correct Ministry.
10. No nails, screws, tacks, glue or tape of any kind may be used on the walls, carpet, floor, stage, furniture or woodwork.
11. Use of candles in the aisles and windows is prohibited.
12. Lighting the candles will be done under the supervision of the BBC Wedding Coordinator.
13. Confetti, rice, sparklers or other materials are not to be thrown in the church building. **NO REAL FLOWERS MAY BE DROPPED BY ANY PERSON OF THE WEDDING PARTY.** Silk petals may be dropped down the main aisle. However, it is the responsibility of the wedding party to pick up ALL petals immediately after the ceremony.
14. Aisle runners will not be allowed.
15. Cost for this venue: \$1,350.00

## WORSHIP CENTER WEDDING POLICY

1. No musical instruments, technical equipment, furniture or greenery located in the Worship Center should be moved or rearranged.
2. The time allowed for weddings will be 8:00-12:00 PM, 2:00-6:00 PM and 4:00-8:00 PM on Saturdays. The time allowed for Sunday's is 2:00-6:00 PM.
3. Sunday weddings will only be considered if both of the previous Saturday time slots are filled.
4. Sunday weddings will be billed at double the normal rate.
5. The bride's room will be scheduled for 4 hour time periods. Requests for longer time periods will not be permitted.
6. Movable wooden panels are available to conceal musical instruments, music stands and the choir loft. These are to be moved by our church custodians **ONLY**. **TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF ALL INVOLVED, UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES ARE THE WOODEN PANELS, ORGAN, OR PIANO TO BE MOVED BY ANYONE OTHER THAN FACILITY PERSONNEL. FAILURE TO ADHERE TO THIS PROVISION WILL RESULT IN A CHARGE AGAINST THE BRIDE'S DEPOSIT EQUAL TO THE AMOUNT OF THE FACILITY RENTAL. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL CANDLES BE PLACED ON THE ORGAN OR PIANO!**
7. If staging necessitates the moving or the rearrangement of musical instruments, technical equipment or furniture, or if greenery is moved from other areas of the building, it may be done **ONLY** with prior approval of the Music and Worship Minister and **ONLY** under the direction and supervision of the Wedding Coordinator, Facilities office, and Media Technical Staff.
8. Chairs may not be removed from the Worship Center, stage or choir loft.
9. It is the bride's responsibility to ensure that the florist and/or equipment vendor follow the policies of Brentwood Baptist Church for removal of flowers and/or equipment.
10. No nails, screws, tacks, glue or tape of any kind may be used on the walls, carpet, floors, stage, furniture or woodwork.
11. Use of candles in the aisles is prohibited.
12. Lighting the candles will be done under the supervision of the BBC Wedding Coordinator.
13. Confetti, rice, sparklers or other materials are not to be thrown in the church building. **NO REAL FLOWERS MAY BE DROPPED BY ANY PERSON OF THE WEDDING PARTY**. Silk petals may be dropped down the main aisle. However, it is the responsibility of the wedding party to pick up ALL petals immediately after the ceremony.
14. No aisle runners are allowed
15. An additional sound tech fee of \$35 will be incurred if changes are made after the original request is confirmed.
16. Cost of this venue is \$1,550.00

## WILSON HALL RECEPTIONS

1. Wilson Hall on the Brentwood campus is available for receptions and may be reserved at the time the wedding is scheduled.
2. The capacity of this area should not exceed 1,000 people at any time.
3. The wedding party will be required to use Brentwood Baptist Church furniture.
4. There will be no decorations affixed to the walls, moveable partitions, stage, or surfaces in the rooms without the consent and approval of the Facility Management Office.
5. **Brentwood Fire Codes prohibit use of open flame candles at receptions.**
6. Catering policies will be discussed in detail with our church Wedding Coordinator. Refer to Vendor Instruction Packet.
7. No alcoholic beverages or items containing alcohol will be served at the reception or any other wedding related activities on the church premises.
8. The wedding party and their guests must refrain from the use of irreverent language, discourteous actions and smoking inside the church building.
9. All food service must be coordinated through the Facility Management Office, and Wedding Coordinator. Special arrangements are necessary within 60 days of event, if the kitchen and/or serving areas are requested.
10. Neither the use of electronically based bands nor dancing is permissible at the reception. Acoustic instruments may be played and song list should be approved by the Worship Ministry.
11. Use of the piano must be coordinated in advance through the wedding coordinator
12. The wedding party must vacate the area by 8:00 p.m. on Saturday evening due to the required set up time for Sunday morning worship.
13. Special arrangements must be made 30 days in advance for special audio, video, and lighting technical support with the Technical Director. Tech Support is \$30.00/hour for all receptions.
14. A Wedding Coordinator must be present for receptions.
15. Cost of this venue for a reception is \$500



# **THEY'RE LIVING TOGETHER—THEY WANT ME TO PERFORM THEIR WEDDING ONE MINISTER'S RESPONSE MIKE GLENN**

The first meeting I have with a couple planning their wedding ceremony is usually routine. I find out basic information from the bride and groom. Nothing fancy—where they work, how they met, and phone numbers and addresses. That's when I find out a couple is living together without being married. Both the groom and bride-to-be give me the same address. What am I to do with this situation?

First, I must acknowledge that I am a Christian minister. My perspective on marriage and how we approach this relationship is formed from the clear teachings of Scripture. I am compelled to approach marriage from a distinctively Christian perspective. Christians are different from the rest of the world. We follow Christ's guidance and counsel in our relationships and with that, we look forward to God's blessings in our marriages.

For believers, the issue is not whether or not a couple should be married. The question of marriage is answered in the same context as every part of the believer's life. Will our marriage bring glory and honor to God? In a Christian marriage, the marriage partners express their relationship with Christ in their relationships with each other. As a couple prepares for their wedding, both must ask if their present lifestyle is one that will bring glory and honor to God. If the couple's lifestyle is not one that currently honors God, is it reasonable to expect the marriage relationship to bring glory to God?

The Scriptures plainly teach that a couple should live together as husband and wife only after they are married. Living together before marriage harms the people involved and ignores God's vision for the marriage relationship.

In the wedding service, we use such words as "holy" and phrases like "seeking God's blessings." When I am involved in a marriage service, the service will be distinctively Christian. Not only will the marriage ceremony be distinctively Christian, but as a Christian minister, I expect the couple's marriage to be distinctively Christian. The Bible clearly articulates Christian principles for both husbands and wives. These principles are to be part of the couple's married life together. Living together without being married is evidence that the Christian principles of marriage are not yet understood.

## **HERE ARE SOME OF THE CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES INVOLVED:**

1. **We are precious to God.** Jesus Christ gave His life for us on the cross. Living together takes what is precious—the groom and his wife-to-be—and makes them common. God has created each person uniquely in His image. Living together without marriage debases each person. The woman is not honored as being the husband's wife; she becomes simply a woman who is living with a man. The man becomes a man who is living with a woman. Neither are honored or built up. In fact, each one is torn down, made less than God intended.
2. **Living together erodes the foundation of a lasting marriage which cannot easily be repaired.** Commitment—the total and willful decision of a man and a woman to remain together until death—is the foundation of a successful and Godly marriage. The scriptural principal involved in commitment is sacrifice. Living together in marriage requires a great deal of self-discipline and sacrifice. Living apart before marriage demonstrates that you are not capable of exerting this self-discipline and sacrifice. Especially in the face of today's culture, it is a greater statement of commitment to say, "I will restrain myself until we are married."

3. **Sex outside of marriage is always wrong.** Sexual relations without the binding commitments of the total persons involved as exhibited in marriage cheapens the relationship and the people involved. For the sake of the persons who are living together and seeking to be married, and keeping with our obedience to God and His Word, I cannot scripturally nor logically support this arrangement. Supporting two people living together without marriage violates the principle of love for the couple and the integrity of the Gospel we proclaim.

**I WILL WORK WITH THE COUPLE WHO ARE LIVING TOGETHER WITHOUT BEING MARRIED UNDER THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:**

1. That they enter into premarital counseling with a recognized minister or counselor.
2. That they move apart until the time of the wedding, and abstain from sexual relations. Moving apart until the wedding will restore some understanding of the sacredness of the marriage event. The time will also give both individuals an opportunity to evaluate where they are in their own pilgrimages as Christians. It also shows their future partners that they are willing to do whatever is necessary for their marriage to survive. To be quite honest, there will be times when remaining in the marriage will be hard, not merely inconvenient.

Please do not misunderstand my position. The stand I take is taken out of great love for the couple and out of great respect for God and His Word. I simply cannot silently stand by and watch as a couple does things that hurt their lives, damages their prospects for a successful marriage, and ignores God's desires for their lives.

I trust the couple will prayerfully consider the redemptive remedies I have offered. I am deeply committed to living with integrity the claims the Gospel of Jesus Christ makes upon my life. Also, I am deeply committed in my love for each person contemplating marriage. Sometimes, love means having to be painfully honest with the one who is loved.

God has offered marriage as a great gift to us. I want each marriage to be all that the couple hopes it will be. I want each marriage to be all God wants it to be. When it comes to a Christian marriage, I am not comfortable in settling for anything less.

## Regular Attendee Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Service Attended	Minister
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Date	Service Attended	Minister
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Date	Service Attended	Minister
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Date	Service Attended	Minister
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This form must be signed by a minister of the church on the date of attendance.