

Guidelines and Requirements for Weddings at Christchurch

You are to be commended for desiring a Church wedding! The Lord Jesus said, *"...upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18). A Church wedding is a declaration saying we desire Christ to be the Lord of our home and we want it founded upon the Rock of a sure foundation. We believe according to Hebrews 13:4, *"Marriage is honourable in all..."* Our goal as Pastor and Church is to maintain the honor of marriage and to conduct ourselves in the ceremony in such a way that will bring honor and glory to God. *"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"* (I Corinthians 10:31). Here are the conditions we will perform a marriage under the auspices of Christchurch Baptist Fellowship:

1. You both must give testimony and evidence of being born again believers and members of the same church or having every intention of becoming members of the same church.

The Bible says, *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"* (II Corinthians 6:14). Some will interpret this verse as saying you both must be saved or lost. Although some ministers will perform the ceremony if both are lost, we will perform the ceremony of believers only, because we never perform a marriage ceremony that we believe will not last; i.e., if people do not know God, they do not know true love. *"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love (I John 4:8)*. It is also very important that you are members of the same church for the Scripture says, *"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"* (Amos 3:3).

2. You must have the blessing of all parents.

The Lord Jesus said, *"For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?"* (Matthew 19:5). Under what conditions does a marriage union culminate scripturally? Insight is given in I Corinthians 7:38a: *"So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well..."* The one who gives his daughter away is the father. Therefore, if the parents are not going to extend their blessing, this church will not attempt to nullify that pronouncement. The local church is made to operate in tandem with the home, never in opposition to the home. To attempt to build a home without parental blessing is getting off to a wrong start.

3. There can be no previous marriage by either partner.

Please understand, we have church members in good standing that have been married, divorced and re-married. Our goal is that our church members who are married stay married.

We have a personal conviction that marriage is permanent. Jesus said of the husband and wife, *“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder...He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so”* (Matthew 19:6,8). God’s ideal is for one man to be married to one woman for life. We make provision in our ministry for those who are into a second or more marriages and accept their union as valid. On the other hand, we have lifted a high standard for our youth to understand that marriage is for keeps. One way we reinforce this truth is by performing only those marriages of the first time partners. If I give the wedding vows to one who has already made those vows with another living spouse, I am party to “putting asunder” that which God has joined together.

4. There can be no alcohol served in the ceremony or reception on or off our property.

We believe the Bible teaches total abstinence. The Bible says, *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise”* (Proverbs 20:1). *“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright”* (Proverbs 23:31). Our Lord is making a difference between the unfermented wine or fruit of the vine and that which has become alcoholic in content. Not only did he say not to drink it, he said don’t even look at it!

Alcohol has done nothing to help a home. As a matter of fact, many a home has been dissolved by alcohol. It turns people into users and abusers. We don’t want to celebrate marriage with any substance or activity that promotes the destruction of the home.

5. There will be no dancing in the ceremony or reception on or off our property.

We desire at all times to bring glory to God in the wedding ceremony and celebration. Although most anyone who would opt to have a church wedding would not on purpose wish to introduce the sensual into this most reverent of all events. However, the dance as we know it in modern terms is not a physical expression of praise to our God, but social interaction having everything to do with the sensual pleasures of man. The old fashioned Baptist Church (of which we are not ashamed to be called) has always held this activity as off limits. We take quite seriously I Thessalonians 5:22: *“Abstain from all appearance of evil.”* We know in these days, the father/daughter first dance to say goodbye to Dad with the second dance given to the bridegroom to say hello to this new union has become quite fashionable in the world. But this is not the world; you may keep that tradition in the world. This is the Church of the Living God! Think of some

other sentimental way to say a goodbye salute to dear old Dad. And when you have bid your family and friends goodbye, you and your new spouse may go and hug in privacy with our blessings!

The music must also bring glory to God. We believe that songs of praise to God and those which speak of wholesome love to one another are fine, but we are not turning our weddings over to become rock concerts. All music therefore must be approved before performed in the wedding.

6. The attire of the bride, bridegroom and wedding party is to be modest.

The Bible says, *“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel...”* (I Timothy 2:9). A wedding does not give us permission to become immodest. Of all events in the church, the wedding should be showing forth virtue and holiness. I would encourage our young brides and wedding parties not to be talked into wearing something that reveals rather than covers. It is your wedding; make the right choices. There is nothing wrong in being fashionable, provided it doesn't cross the line. Our wedding coordinator will be available to discuss this most sensitive issue.

7. Your vows shall be biblical and traditional.

There is a push nowadays for writing one's own vows. If you desire to say something personal or special at this time you may present them to me for approval. I will be happy to include anything that doesn't violate Scripture or forbid me to reinforce the fact that we are making vows, not Facebook posts. For instance, a popular substitution for the vow, “to love and cherish, so long as we both shall live” is “to love and cherish so long as we both shall love.” This is ludicrous, for this introduces the option for divorce even before you start. Never forget, when divorce is considered as an option, no marriage is safe.

We believe Christchurch is a safe harbor to dock the ship of your marriage. We shall continue to do everything possible to see that it stays that way. Please know that our seven guidelines are not meant to be restrictive as much as to protect marriage as a holy institution founded and maintained by God's grace and good mercy. We believe the wedding is one of the finest opportunities to exemplify Christ and His bride. *“He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things [even the wedding ceremony] He might have the preeminence”* (Colossians 1:18).

-Pastor Pope-