

PASTORAL WEDDING POLICY

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Marriage is God's good gift to humanity. It is an institution intended for all people regardless of their faith in God or lack thereof. Christian people are able to enter into marriage with a clearer and richer understanding of the origins of the institution and of God's intentions for it and with a full reliance on God's help for them in seeking to live out their marriage in faithfulness to God's intentions for it.

FAITH AND CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Although marriage is for all humanity, I am only willing to perform a Christian wedding ceremony which by its nature is a service of Christian worship. Because this ceremony will from start to finish acknowledge the presence of Jesus Christ and will be conducted in explicit submission to his authority over the ceremony and the marriage that will result from it, and because the ceremony will necessarily include vows spoken in the name of God, I am willing only to preside over weddings in which both groom and the bride are confessing believers in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. To do otherwise would involve leading the couple into open hypocrisy by encouraging them to publicly submit to a God in whom they do not believe and to take vows in the name of a God whom they deny.

MARRIAGE AND SEX

Marriage is God's good gift to humanity and is designed by him as the only appropriate and healthy context for sexual intercourse. Therefore, before agreeing to perform a wedding, I will ask the couple to commit to abstain from sexual relations until after their wedding. Because in our current social context cohabitation is always understood to imply a sexually active relationship, I will require all cohabitating couple to alter their living arrangements so that they are no longer living together before I will agree to officiate over their wedding. Alternatively, the couple may also choose to enter promptly into a civil wedding and have me preside over a Christian wedding ceremony and blessing at a later date.

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PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING

All human beings suffer the consequences of our fall into sin. All of us live amid “the thorns and thistles” (Gen. 3:18) that are the fruit of that fall into sin. Therefore, all human beings live with serious brokenness in their character and personhood. Because of that brokenness, the marriage relationship can be deeply challenging for even the most mature and sanctified of people. Marriage also represents a wonderful context which God uses as a sort of workshop for creating a deeper, richer, fuller Christ-likeness in husband and wife, the Holy Spirit working through each in the life of the other and in them together as he creates through them a household of faithful discipleship.

In order to prepare for the challenges of marriage in a fallen world and in order to make the most of the opportunities for growth that marriage provides for couples, those who want me to marry them must be willing to work with me through a period of counseling involving no less and sometimes more than five sessions. The exact shape of that pre-marital counseling will depend on the needs and circumstances of each couple. Except for the most unusual circumstances, I will not agree to marry couples without this period of pre-marital counseling.

WEDDING AS WORSHIP

A Christian wedding ceremony is a service of worship. I will only perform Christian weddings. A wedding must include all necessary elements of Christian worship: prayer in the name of Jesus Christ and the reading and exposition of Scripture. Without these elements, a wedding would not be Christian worship. Nothing may be included in the wedding that in anyway undermines or diminishes an appropriate attitude of reverence and awe before the presence of Almighty God. Further, for a wedding to be Christian, it must include vows that explicitly acknowledge and submit to the authority of God over the marriage that those vows initiate.

CONCLUSION

I have prepared this short expression of my pastoral policies concerning weddings so that there will be no misunderstandings on the part of those who are considering asking me to marry them. God’s vision for marriage can be a rich blessing to all people. It is my great desire to help people who desire to receive that blessing as they embark on a life together as husband and wife.