



*A Planning
Guide for*

*Your Wedding
at Wooddale*

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Congratulations on your engagement and upcoming wedding! We at Wooddale Church hope this season of life will be a rich experience as you prepare to join together in Christian marriage.

We want to be helpful in your preparation for marriage and the planning of your wedding. This Wedding Information Booklet will be useful as you go through the process of pre-marital preparation as well as planning your wedding. It details the steps you will be going through and lists helpful information which will assist in preparation for your wedding day.

The Wooddale Church Wedding Coordinator will assist and guide you through the wedding process. She will be a valuable resource.

May God bless you in this exciting time of engagement and in your future married life.

The Wooddale Church Staff--

Prerequisites For Wedding Approval

Membership or regular attendance at Wooddale Church for at least six months prior to the wedding (attendance is recorded by completion of information cards in the worship services).

Complete premarital counseling offered through Wooddale Church. You will be able to secure a date on the church calendar **after** you have completed this four to six-week process.

If you live together and/or are sexually active read “Understanding Sex,” included in this booklet. Normally, couples who live together and/or are sexually active will be asked to separate and adopt a celibate lifestyle until marriage.

If formerly married, read “Statement on Divorce,” included in this booklet, prior to your initial meeting with a pastor.

Normally, meeting with the pastor and reserving of the building should be completed at least four months in advance of the wedding date.

Premarital Counseling and Securing a Wedding Date

1. Background Information

Read complete the “Background Information” questionnaire that was sent to you. Once completed, call the church office (952.944.6300) to schedule an appointment for both of you to meet with the pastor you desire to officiate at your wedding.

2. Initial Meeting With A Pastor

An informal time to get acquainted and talk over matters that relate to your marriage and wedding. You will be asked a number of questions about yourselves, such as:

- How long have you been together? How long have you been engaged?
- How long have you been attending Wooddale Church?
- Share a little about your Christian experience. (It is important to note that the Bible does not allow marriage of a Christian to a non-Christian.)
- Tell a little about your family backgrounds and your goals and plans for the future.
- Why do you want to get married?
- What can Wooddale Church and its staff do to help you prepare for your wedding and marriage?
- What questions do you have?

The PREPARE inventory is a tool designed to help you learn more about yourself, your partner, and your relationship. Both of you will be able to take the PREPARE inventory, individually. It is an online inventory that takes about one hour to complete. Please make an appointment with your officiating pastor to review the results.

3. Subsequent Meetings With Officiating Pastor or Professional Counselor

The officiating pastor or professional counselor will use the PREPARE inventory as the basis for at least four additional meetings designed to provide guidance and counseling to strengthen your relationship as you prepare for marriage.

4. Recommendation

Following the premarital counseling the officiating pastor and another pastor will consult and make a recommendation to you. **No wedding date will be confirmed on the calendar until all these steps have been completed.**

5. Date Confirmed on Church Calendar

6. Premarital Seminar

Both of you are required to attend all sessions of the one-day Premarital Seminar. The seminar should be completed about three months before the wedding. Please make arrangements with the church office regarding dates and attendance.

7. Securing a Wedding Date

Dates can be reserved **after wedding approval** with your officiating pastor. A confirmation letter and “Facility Use Agreement” will be sent to you from the church office. This form must be completed and returned to the church office with appropriate fees to confirm your reservation of the building and secure your date on the calendar. If not received within 60 days, your date will become available for another wedding.

- All weddings at Wooddale Church will be under the direction of a member of the pastoral staff.)
- Use of the Worship Center will be limited to a total of four hours with up to three hours prior to the ceremony.
- Wooddale Church reserves the right to reschedule rehearsal times, up to two months prior to your wedding date, to accommodate the church program or other weddings.

Policies

- No smoking is allowed in the Wooddale Church building/facilities.
- No alcoholic beverages may be brought to or consumed in the Wooddale Church facilities or on the campus.
- No rice, bird seed, potpourri, aerosol shooting string, etc. are to be brought into or used in the building, church entry area or church grounds.
- The church building does not open until 7:30 a.m. on Saturday.
- Weddings must maintain four hours between the start of another wedding and two hours prior to worship set-up rehearsal time.
- Eden Prairie Weddings

Friday Nights

Rooms available: Worship Center, Chapel, Great Rooms

Latest start time: 7 p.m. without reception, 4 p.m. with sit-down reception.

Saturday

Rooms Available: Worship Center (morning only), Chapel, Great Rooms

Latest start time: 11 a.m. in Worship Center, 7 p.m. without reception, 4 p.m. with sit-down reception.

Sunday

Rooms available: Chapel, Great Rooms

Earliest start time: 2 p.m.

Latest start time: 7 p.m. without reception, 4 p.m. with sit-down

- Edina Weddings

Friday Nights

Rooms available: Worship Center

Latest start time: 7 p.m. without reception, 4 p.m. with sit-down reception.

Saturday Nights

Rooms available: Worship Center

Latest start time: 5 p.m. without reception, 4 p.m. with sit-down reception.

Sunday

Rooms available: Worship Center

Earliest start time: 2 p.m.

Latest start time: 7 p.m. without reception, 4 p.m. with sit-down

Campus closes at 9 p.m. daily.

- Rehearsals for a Saturday wedding need to be scheduled 2 hours after a Friday wedding, if in the same room.
- Wedding rehearsals will have at least an hour-and-a-half between rehearsal start times.

The Wooddale Church “Building Use Policy” states:

Groups wishing to use facilities (particularly the Worship Center) around holiday seasons will be subordinate to the seasonal decorations put in place by the church’s decorating committee. Seasonal decorations will not be removed or substantially altered for events such as weddings, receptions or concerts. There are no exceptions. It is your responsibility to communicate these policies to your wedding party and to whomever else will need to know.

Planning Your Wedding Ceremony

Four to six weeks prior to the wedding you will meet with the officiating pastor to make final decisions for the service and program. You will need to be ready to discuss the order of service, persons participating, and any special themes, readings or poems. (See pages 12 - 14 of this booklet for sample ceremony and vows.)

Wedding Coordinator

The Wooddale Church Wedding Coordinator will assist you **after your wedding has been approved**. You will be contacted by the Coordinator who will assist you in planning the details of your wedding. She will coordinate with the church staff and your vendors, will attend the wedding rehearsal and wedding, and will be your resource and contact for any and all questions regarding your wedding and a Wooddale reception.

Wedding Coordinator/Bride Meeting

The Coordinator will review the Wooddale Church facility policies and procedures and answer any questions you may have. Four to six weeks prior to the wedding you will meet with the officiating pastor to make final decisions for the service and program. You will need to be ready to discuss the order of service, persons participating, and any special themes, readings or poems. (See pages 12 - 14 of this booklet for sample ceremony and vows.)

Final Wedding Plans

You will also need to meet with the Wedding Coordinator 3-4 weeks prior to your wedding day to discuss the final decisions of your wedding ceremony. This meeting should take place after your meeting with the officiating pastor to plan the wedding ceremony. The Wedding Coordinator will review all the details of your wedding with you and will communicate your decisions to the church staff concerning wedding and reception setup, cleanup, sound and light, and other designated requests.

Attend Rehearsal

The officiating pastor and/or the Wedding Coordinator will direct the rehearsal. The Wedding Coordinator will assist in providing tips on etiquette and activities of the wedding which include meeting with the ushers, organizing duties, coordinating starting time and protocol with the musicians. The wedding attendants and participants should be advised to attend the rehearsal. The rehearsal will last one hour. Musicians' rehearsals should be planned at a time other than during the one-hour rehearsal. You may desire to have them there during this time to learn their cues and order of service, but that is not necessary.

Attend Wedding

The Wedding Coordinator will arrive at the church four hours before the start of the wedding to check the room setup, turn on lights and assist as needed. The Coordinator will guide the wedding party to their changing rooms, will orient the photographer to the area and rooms, and assist the florist, if needed. The Coordinator will assist the wedding party with any last-minute details, and will line up the grandparents, parents and wedding party to ensure a timely start. The Coordinator will provide guidelines and coordinate your receiving line.

License

The Bride and Groom must purchase their wedding license. A wedding license may be purchased in any Minnesota county and be used in any Minnesota county within six months following application. There will be a five-day waiting period following the date of application for a license. The cost of a wedding license varies by county. You may apply at any County Government Center. Be sure to take birth certificates showing place and date of birth and full legal name. Call the County Center if you need more information.

Couples who have completed at least 12 hours of marriage preparation (Wooddale's process meets the requirement) can receive a substantial discount on the cost of the license. The pastor doing your wedding can provide you with a verification form.

Once you have secured a wedding license, give it to the officiating pastor at least two to three weeks prior to the wedding. The officiating pastor must have the license two weeks prior to the wedding ceremony.

Florist

The Wedding Coordinator may assist in the recommendation of florists. Your florist will need the following information:

- A list of available equipment is included in this booklet.
- All flowers, corsages, boutonnieres, bows, garlands, etc. should arrive 3-4 hours before the ceremony starts. When multiple weddings take place on the same day, in the same room, special arrangements must be made in advance to allow time for decorating.
- The Eden Prairie and Edina Worship Centers need a 75-foot aisle cloth. Weddings in the Great Room or Chapel at Eden Prairie need a 50-foot aisle cloth. Please use cloth or pelon type runner, not plastic. An aisle cloth is not provided by Wooddale Church.
- Decorations may be attached to the candelabra but not to the pews. The use of pipe cleaners is the preferred means to attach the decorations.
- All candelabras without globes must have plexiglass under them to avoid wax damage. Plexiglass is provided by the church.
- The florist or another designated person can be appointed to distribute bouquets and pin corsages.
- The Wedding Coordinator will designate where the flowers should be delivered and unwrapped or unboxed, to avoid wrappings in the Worship Centers, or public view.
- Furniture, plants and all other types of equipment from other areas of the Wooddale Church facility cannot be moved or used in any way.

Photographer

The Wedding Coordinator will be a good resource for your photographer before and during the wedding. The following information will be of help to you and your photographer as you plan your wedding:

- All formal pictures that are taken on either Wooddale campus, must be taken before the ceremony.
- All pictures must be completed 45 minutes before the ceremony. This allows sufficient time to lay the aisle cloth if used, and place flowers in time to open the doors to guests 20 minutes before the wedding. This also gives the wedding party time to relax and eat snacks they provide
- The candelabras and unity candle must be left in place.
- The kneeling bench, if used, may be moved.
- Natural light in the Worship Centers may affect your pictures. We suggest that your photographer visit Wooddale Church within a week of the wedding to check light exposures and sunlight.
- Time exposure pictures may be taken from the balcony during the ceremony but no flash is allowed once the bride has entered the room.
- During the ceremony we recommend the photographer be no further forward than the last row of the guests from the back in the center aisle.
- Weddings in the Great Rooms and Chapel require some special considerations.

Organist

The Wooddale Church organist will be used for all weddings held at Wooddale Church when the organ is used in the ceremony. The organist will arrange another organist if they are unavailable for your wedding. The organist's fee includes a consultation with the couple and ceremony. Additional rehearsals with soloists or ensembles and/or for wedding receptions are extra. (This fee is based on the current American Guild of Organists salary and fee schedule.) Requests for exceptions to this policy must be cleared through the Wooddale Church organist.

Music

Music Selection

Questions regarding music may be directed to the Wooddale Church organist, who can assist you in the selection of vocal and instrumental music. Music ought to be selected before your appointment with the officiating pastor to design your wedding ceremony. The officiating pastor will make the final decision on the lyrics and appropriateness of all music.

Music Copyright Laws

Wooddale Church belongs to an organization called "Christian Copyright Licensing International." This copyright information is listed below songs that are shown on the screens during worship. Printing this information along with our CCLI number allows us to use most choruses and hymns, but not every song is covered.

If you are planning to print songs in your wedding program, please be sure to give the information to the Wooddale Music Department. The copyright information must be included because Wooddale Church is responsible for reporting all printed music used during any service on the church campus.

Honoraria

An honorarium is normally given to musicians, the officiating pastor(s) and to any other professionals upon whom you call for assistance or preparation in your wedding ceremony. Custom dictates that this gift of appreciation should be placed in a plain envelope and given to the individuals before or shortly after the wedding ceremony by the Wedding Coordinator.

The amount usually given depends upon the individuals and the amount of time or work involved. When you expect more (rehearsals, extra solos, much practice or difficult service, etc.) the honoraria should be increased accordingly.

Soloist: Amount determined by soloist.

Pastors: Appropriate amount based on the premarital preparation, rehearsal and wedding preparation.

Please discuss with your Wedding Coordinator

The Facilities Use Agreement includes fees for the sound and light technician, custodians, and your Wedding Coordinator.

Sound and Light Technician

A sound and light technician will be assigned to your wedding to provide a basic setup and run the sound and lights during your wedding. Basic setup includes a microphone for the pastor and the groom, plus 1-2 microphones at a podium for the solos and/or readings. More complex audio setup can be arranged through the sound and light technician with an additional setup fee.

Audio and Video Recording

An CD recording of your wedding ceremony will be made and given to you at no additional charge.

Video recording of your wedding ceremony is permitted, although Wooddale Church does not provide a technician or equipment. If a video recording of your wedding is to be made, your technician will need to know:

- Video recording during the ceremony must be done from one of several predetermined fixed locations.
- During the ceremony, the person doing the recording will not be allowed to roam.
- Video lamps will not be allowed during the ceremony.

Facility Setup

The Wedding Coordinator will coordinate the setup of the Worship Center, Great Room, Chapel, dressing rooms and reception areas with the Wooddale Church custodian and staff.

- You have two options for candles in your ceremony. LED candles are free to use and wax candles are an additional cost.
- An aisle cloth is not provided.
- Furniture, plants and all other types of equipment from other areas of the building cannot be moved or used in any way.
- We suggest you plan to provide a light lunch to the wedding party sometime before the ceremony to help avoid light-headedness or fainting.

Worship Center — Eden Prairie

Available equipment for a wedding in the Worship Center includes:

2 large platform candelabra (7 candles each)

Unity candle (3 candles – can be provided by couple)

16 aisle candelabras (3 candles each)

2 aisle candle lighter/snuffers

(Note: LED candles are free to use and wax candles have an additional cost.)

Podium for guest book

Basic microphone setup

1 head mic for officiating pastor / 1 lapel mic for groom / 1-2 podium mics for solos and/or readings

Kneeling Bench

Platform furniture

75' aisle cloth needed, not provided

Great Room — Eden Prairie

Available equipment for a wedding in the Great Room includes:

2 black wrought-iron platform candelabra (7 candles each)

10 aisle candelabras (3 candles each)

Unity candleholder (3 candles – can be provided by couple)

2 aisle candle lighter/snuffers

(Note: LED candles are free to use and wax candles have an additional cost.)

Podium for guest book

Basic microphone setup

1 head mic for officiating pastor / 1 lapel mic for groom / 1-2 podium mics for solos and/or readings

50' aisle runner needed

Chapel — Eden Prairie

Available equipment for a wedding in the Worship Center includes:

2 large platform candelabra (7 candles each)

Unity candle (3 candles – can be provided by couple)

8 aisle candelabras (1 candle each)

2 aisle candle lighter/snuffers

(Note: LED candles are free to use and wax candles have an additional cost.)

Podium for guest book

Basic microphone setup

1 head mic for officiating pastor / 1 lapel mic for groom / 1-2 podium mics for solos and/or readings

Kneeling Bench

75' aisle cloth needed, not provided

Worship Center — Edina

Available equipment for a wedding in the Worship Center includes:

2 large spiral platform candelabra

Unity candle pedestal (3 candles)

10 aisle candelabras (3 candles each)

2 aisle candle lighter/snuffers

(Note: LED candles are free to use and wax candles have an additional cost.)

Podium for guest book

Basic microphone setup

1 head mic for officiating pastor / 1 lapel mic for groom / 1-2 podium mics for solos and/or readings

Kneeling Bench

75' aisle cloth needed, not provided

Reception

All receptions at Wooddale Church will be scheduled with the Wooddale Church Food Service Director. All receptions at Wooddale Church must use the Wooddale Church Food Service Director as your caterer. This must be scheduled directly with the Wooddale Church Food Service Director. Exceptions must be cleared by the Wooddale Church Food Service Director. Receptions at the Edina campus will often require an outside caterer.

The Wooddale Church staff wants every aspect of your wedding to be a delightful and beautiful experience. We will work with you and for you as we commit your wedding to God.

Sample Ceremony

The following is a sample ceremony. Your wedding coordinator will be able to give you additional ideas, as will the pastor who will be officiating at your wedding.

Lighting of Candles (by ushers or other designated persons)
Organ Prelude (seating of guests, groom's parents, bride's mother seated last)
Solo/Duet/Music (optional)
Processional (Men attendants, Groom and Pastor from side;
Child(ren) attendants, Women attendants, Bride and her Father/escort come down the center aisle)
Audience seated (if standing for processional - optional)
Welcome/Prayer
Question to Parents
Scripture Reading
Marriage Meditation by Pastor
Solo/Duet/Music
Question to the Bride and Groom
Exchange of Vows (see sample vows)
Exchange of Rings (see sample ring vows)
Unity Candle
Solo/Duet/Music
Prayer of Blessing
Pronouncement of marriage
Kiss
Presentation of the couple
Recessional

Sample Vows

1. Traditional

Groom: I John, take thee, Jane, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I give thee my love.

Bride: I Jane, take thee, John, to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I give thee my love.

2. Traditional, With Modernized Words

Groom: I John, take you, Jane, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge you my love.

Bride: I Jane, take you, John, to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge you my love.

3. Modern

Groom: Jane, I vow before God and these witnesses to love you. As I receive from God, I will lead, protect and provide for you both spiritually and physically. No matter what the cost, I will be loyal to you in all things and in all circumstances. With God as my strength, I will keep these vows until death.

Bride: John, I vow before God and these witnesses to love you. As I receive from God I will submit to your leadership, and be loyal to you in all things and in all circumstances. With God as my strength, I will keep these vows until death.

4. Modern

Groom: Jane, before God and these witnesses I take you to be my lawful wedded wife. I will always honor and cherish you and will love you as the Lord's own precious gift to me. I will also strive by my life, love and loyalty to lead you to a closer walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bride: John, before God and these witnesses I take you to be my lawful wedded husband. I will always honor and cherish you and will love you as the Lord's own precious gift to me. I will also strive by my life, love and loyalty to lead you to a closer walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Original

You may choose to write your own vows for your wedding ceremony. A draft of the original vows should be brought to the meeting with the pastor at least one month before the wedding. He will consult with you about approval and use of the vows which you have written.



Sample Ring Vows

1. "As a token and in pledge of the vows between us made, with this ring I thee wed."

2. "With this ring I wed you, Jane/John. And with this ring I pledge to you my life, my love and my undying faithfulness. In the name of God our Father, Jesus Christ our Savior and the Holy Spirit our guide. Amen."

Optional Question to the Parents

(Mother of the bride) and (father of the bride) this is a very special day for you. You are not only being asked to give a daughter but to receive a son. Will you commit today to accept (groom) into your family and to love him and treat him as a son?

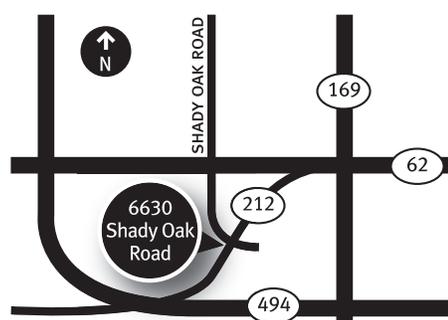
(Mother of the groom) and (father of the groom) this is a very special day for you. You are not only being asked to give a son but to receive a daughter. Will you commit today to accept (bride) into your family and to love her and treat her as a daughter? Who is it then that gives this women to be married to this man?

Map

You may use the map which is provided below in your invitation or in any other way you may need. Feel free to photocopy the map.



Edina Campus



Eden Prairie Campus

Dollars & Sense for Your Wedding

A Wedding Budget Checklist

The Wedding Budget Checklist is intended to help you plan financially for your wedding. With costs rising and budgets limited the checklist will help you evaluate the costs of your wedding.

Begin by deciding how much money you have to spend, then plan your wedding to fit that amount. Your agreement on values is vital. What means most to you? That is where you'll splurge, eliminating or scaling down other things.

Set your expense guidelines at the very beginning. Decide on your priorities and stick with them. Arrange your budget to highlight what is important to you.

On the Budget Checklist, cross off everything you will not include. Then write in fixed expenses like the marriage license and church rental fee. Now, for each remaining item estimate a reasonable cost. Juggle these figures until the bottom line is less than your agreed-upon budget amount. This will give you a margin for unexpected expenses that are sure to come.

A Wedding Budget Checklist

	Est.Cost	Final Cost	Est.Cost	Final Cost
Church:				
• Building rental	_____	_____		
• Minister's fee	_____	_____		
• Custodial fee	_____	_____		
• Candelabra rental	_____	_____		
• Guest book and pen	_____	_____		
• Aisle runner	_____	_____		
• Candles	_____	_____		
• Pew ribbons	_____	_____		
Printing:				
• Invitations	_____	_____		
• Reception cards	_____	_____		
• Announcements	_____	_____		
• Informals/thank-you notes	_____	_____		
• Postage for all the above	_____	_____		
• Wedding service bulletins	_____	_____		
• Personalized reception napkins	_____	_____		
• Cake boxes	_____	_____		
Clothing:				
• Bridal dress	_____	_____		
• Bridal headpiece and veil	_____	_____		
• Bride's accessories	_____	_____		
• Bride's trousseau	_____	_____		
• Groom's tuxedo or suit	_____	_____		
• Groom's accessories	_____	_____		
Flowers:				
• Church sanctuary	_____	_____		
• Bride's bouquet	_____	_____		
• Attendants' bouquets	_____	_____		
• Flower girl's basket	_____	_____		
• Ring bearer's pillow	_____	_____		
• Corsages for mothers & grandmothers	_____	_____		
• Corsages for friends assisting at reception	_____	_____		
• Boutonnieres for groom, male attendants, fathers	_____	_____		
• Centerpieces for buffet or head table	_____	_____		
• Cake table	_____	_____		
Photographs:				
• Formal portrait	_____	_____		
• Official photographs during wedding and reception	_____	_____		
• Candid photos taken by friends	_____	_____		
• Duplicates to give to friends/relatives	_____	_____		
Music:				
• Organist's fee	_____	_____		
• Soloist's fee	_____	_____		
• Other musicians	_____	_____		
• Purchased sheet music	_____	_____		
Catering and Food:				
• Rehearsal dinner	_____	_____		
• Wedding cake	_____	_____		
• Other foods	_____	_____		
• Beverages	_____	_____		
Reception:				
• Hall rental	_____	_____		
Equipment rental:				
• Punch bowl	_____	_____		
• Coffee service	_____	_____		
• Tables	_____	_____		
• Dishes, silverware	_____	_____		
• Keepsake knife for cake	_____	_____		
• Keepsake wedding cup or plate	_____	_____		
• Rice, rose petals or confetti	_____	_____		
• Table favors	_____	_____		
• Waiters/waitresses	_____	_____		
Gifts:				
• Engagement ring	_____	_____		
• Bride's wedding ring	_____	_____		
• Groom's wedding ring	_____	_____		
• Bride's wedding gift	_____	_____		
• Groom's wedding gift	_____	_____		
• Ushers' gifts	_____	_____		
• Bridesmaids' gifts	_____	_____		
• Gifts for friends serving at reception	_____	_____		
Miscellaneous:				
• Gynecological examination	_____	_____		
• Blood tests	_____	_____		
• Birth control	_____	_____		
• Marriage license	_____	_____		
• Tape/videotape of ceremony	_____	_____		
• Transportation of wedding party to church	_____	_____		
Post-Wedding Expenses:				
• Honeymoon	_____	_____		
• Setting up housekeeping	_____	_____		
TOTALS \$ \$				
	_____	_____	_____	_____

Understanding Sex

Wooddale Church values God's Word, the Bible, and healthy, growing marriages.

As Christians we have a commitment to take our lead in thought and action from the Bible and apply it to all areas of life. The Bible is clear that a sexual relationship is intended for marriage and that sex outside of marriage is wrong. We also know that a couple who is sexually active before marriage is more likely to experience marital dissatisfaction and divorce than one who is not.

This section looks at sex, its role in life, and why it ought to be experienced only in marriage.

. . . worth waiting for

When you wait, you enter marriage honoring God and each other. Our obedience to God strengthens our relationship with him and our spouse. You learn to control your passions. There are times within marriage when sex will be unavailable to you, during business trips, during or after pregnancy, or perhaps because of illness. Self-control developed before marriage will be useful during marriage.

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God." I Thessalonians 4:3-5

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." I Corinthians 6:19-20

. . .

We are already sexually active. What can we do now

Many who have been sexually active before marriage have committed themselves to a celibate life-style until marriage. It is not easy. However, the benefits are great. We never hear couples say, "I wish we had continued to be sexually active," or "Stopping our sexual activity before marriage destroyed our marriage." We do hear people say, "I wish we had waited," or "If we had stopped it would have helped." Why do they say this?

Why wait?

. . . to maintain an objective view of your relationship

Stepping away from sex in a relationship until marriage can provide a more objective view of your relationship. When a couple is sexually active before marriage, sex can become the focal point in the relationship. This diminishes or even destroys the growth of other vital aspects of the relationship. Because of guilt, your relationship with God is hindered. This impacts your relationship as a couple. Abstaining from sex before marriage allows an honest evaluation of the relationship. Without guilt about sexual activity, the couple feels the blessing of God and develops other vital aspects of the relationship. Everything is open for communication. There is no guilt or shame with which to deal.

. . . to develop other areas in your relationship

Waiting until marriage for sex brings growth in other areas of your relationship. Because God intends sex for marriage, we feel distant from God when we become sexually involved before marriage. Experiencing God's forgiveness and waiting allow us to develop our relationship with God from a pure heart.

Emotionally, waiting until marriage develops within us a better attitude about ourselves and our mate. We view each other as valuable for who we are and not primarily what can be physically experienced.

When sex is not the focal point of a relationship before marriage, communication is stronger and more fulfilling. Communication deepens the relationship. Sex can shut down meaningful communication because we are drawn to view each other primarily as physical beings, often ignoring emotional and spiritual aspects.

. . . to keep alive creativity in expressing love

Love is expressed in many different ways. However, sex before marriage tends to become the primary expression of love. When sex is saved until marriage, the couple must discover other ways to express love and commitment — ways that are often more fulfilling and satisfying — the importance of kind words; spending time together not because sex will be had, but because of the joy of being together; the special gift which says "I love you!;" sharing kindness through helping each other; and affection which communicates "I love you."

. . . to have a honeymoon, not just another vacation together

A honeymoon is intended to be a time of discovery and joy, a time to launch a marriage in the completeness of oneness. Sadly, for many, nothing is left for the honeymoon, and it is merely another vacation. Stepping away from sex until marriage can not erase sexual activity that has preceded it, but it can promise a fresh start and anticipation for the development of a sexual relationship within the oneness of marriage.

. . . to develop trust

The development of self-control within your relationship will create an environment of trust in your marriage. The ability to say "no" to sex now will prepare you for saying "no" to sex outside your marriage in the future. When your spouse sees that your passions do not control you, but you control your passions, he or she will respect you and trust you.

. . . to prevent pregnancy

A natural by-product of sex is pregnancy. Pregnancy before marriage creates incredible strain on the relationship before the marriage, and continued strain after.

Where do we go from here?

You have read this because you desire to be married at Wooddale Church. Our goal is to help you prepare for a successful, satisfying marriage. To do this, a couple ought honor God and his Word. The Bible is clear that sex is for marriage. Sex before marriage can actually harm a relationship. We want to help you succeed in your marriage.

What is our next step? Contact a pastor you know, or the church office, to set up an appointment with a pastor. He or she will sit down with you and discuss your situation and available options.

In preparation for meeting with a pastor, please be prepared to discuss the following questions:

- When did you become sexually active in your relationship? What led to this?
- What impact has your sexual activity had on your relationship?
- What would be the benefits of adopting a celibate life-style until your wedding night?

Statement on Divorce

by Leith Anderson

Many of the “taboos” relating to divorce and remarriage have been dissolved in the 20th century. Views have been liberalized and divorces have increased. The Christian Church has had to deal with the issue. Unfortunately, sticking with the “old ways” has been labeled “conservative” and changing to new ways has been labeled “liberal.”

We must be very careful as evangelical Christians that we are not swayed with such labels. Our stand must be based upon the Bible! While we want to relate to society and culture, we must do so without compromising the Bible’s teaching. So, whether labeled one thing or another, we must go with the Bible!

Basic teaching of the Bible in regard to marriage

Marriage is permanent! This rings clearly from Genesis 2:23-24, Romans 7:2-3, Matthew 19:6 and lots of other references.

Marriage is permanent for everyone. This is a natural God-given law which even predates the advent of sin into the world. The performance of marriage applies equally to Christian and non-Christian. It is not changed by fluctuations in emotions or compatibility. The performance of marriage is not changed by some unbiblical civil law, by “falling out of love,” by sickness, lack of support, or any of the other unbiblical reasons often given.

Collectively as the church and individually as Christians, we must make every effort to support and communicate the permanence of marriage. This needs to come through in our formal teaching as well as our informal behavior. It is the broad law to which there are to be few exceptions. However, we all do recognize that there are exceptions. The one exception that nearly everyone admits to is death. When one marriage partner dies, we recognize that the permanence of the marriage has been broken and there is a legitimate basis for entering into a new marriage which is to be regarded as permanent.

The rare exceptions: Biblical Divorce

However, the Bible also speaks of another exception . . . **Divorce**.

We must understand from the start that the Bible sees exceptions to the law of permanence in marriage to be rare. But the Bible does speak quite clearly about divorce as an exception.

Immorality is the primary biblical basis for divorce. Jesus told the Pharisees (Matthew 19:1-12) that *“Whosoever shall put away his wife, **except it be for fornication**, and shall marry another, committeth adultery” (Matthew 19:9). Jesus made a similar statement in Matthew 5:31-32. (The exception is omitted in parallel statements in Mark 10:2-12 and Luke 16:18).*

Some may not be willing to admit to immorality as an adequate basis for divorce. It is difficult to know exactly how to respond other than to point them to the clear declaration of Jesus in inspired scripture!

The Greek word translated “fornication” is *porneia* (from which we get our English word “pornography”). It refers to the practice of extra-marital sexual relations. Personally, I understand this term to normally refer to heterosexual relations but also to include homosexual relations.

Please note that such immorality **permits** (does not command) the innocent member of the marriage relationship to secure a divorce on the basis of the immorality of the guilty member of the marriage relationship.

If this right is exercised, the marriage is dissolved. If this right is not exercised within a reasonable period of time, I assume that the right is relinquished as long as the once guilty partner is faithful. In other words, forgiveness cannot be taken back. If a wife forgives her husband for his immorality she cannot later decide to divorce him on the grounds of immorality which she has forgiven.

Actually, Jesus’ teaching is not greatly different from the original Old Testament law. Such immorality was punished by death (see Deuteronomy 22:22). The spouse who committed immorality was executed, leaving the surviving widow or widower free to remarry. In the New Testament, Jesus keeps the same high view of marriage but no longer requires capital punishment for adultery. Adultery continues to have the same meaning and impact on the marriage without the same death penalty on the guilty partner.

Of course, when this happens God is not happy! Malachi 2:16 makes clear God’s basic attitude toward divorce: He hates it! Nevertheless, this same God has wisely and compassionately provided for divorce under the unusual and special circumstances stated above.

Desertion by the unsaved is the other biblical basis for divorce taught in 1 Corinthians 7:15. Here is the case of two non-Christians. The wife becomes a Christian. Her husband deserts her (kicks her out, perhaps) because she is a Christian. In such cases, Paul teaches that she is “no longer under bondage” (i.e., the marriage is dissolved).

Such cases are very rare. They must be totally a response to the wife’s Christian faith and not because of nagging, personality differences, or anything else. We may safely assume that the reverse applies as well; the newly saved husband who is deserted by his unsaved wife because of his Christian faith is also “no longer under bondage.”

Question: Does divorce allow remarriage?

A few people have taken the rather unusual position of acknowledging biblical divorce but forbidding remarriage. The legal definition of divorce is “a legal dissolution of the marriage relationship.” It means that legally it is as if the marriage had not existed. The very basic idea and concept of divorce is that it puts a person in a position of free singleness where he or she may enter into marriage on the basis of the other guidelines and restrictions taught in the Bible. This new marriage is to be lived by biblical guidelines and is regarded by God as permanent.

Practical Implications

How does the church apply these biblical principles? To be sure, it is not easy! In so many ways it is easier to just say, “Divorce is wrong and remarriage is forbidden.” While this may be far easier, it is most difficult to justify from the Bible.

Instead, the church should seek to recognize and communicate the Bible’s teachings on marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

When the biblical basis for divorce is the actual basis for a divorce, the church must then recognize the right of the innocent party to remarry. It is only logical that the church should provide for the wedding ceremony and give full recognition and legitimacy to such marriages.

The screening process is not easy. It is inevitable that mistakes will be made. Such is the price for seeking to faithfully translate biblical truths into practice in an imperfect world!

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