

CHRIST FELLOWSHIP MARRIAGE POLICY

Christ Fellowship is committed to preparing couples to build Christ-centered marriages that will last a lifetime. It is the desire of Christ Fellowship that your marriage will be all that God intends. As God designed the marriage relationship, He tells us through his Holy Word how to build and maintain your marriage covenant. Throughout God's Word, there are basic principles which must be understood and applied to experience maximum joy and fulfillment in married life. Abiding in these principles will result in personal and spiritual growth, mutual fulfillment, companionship, and a life-long committed relationship.

Committed to building healthy marriages that will last a lifetime, we present the following guidelines:

1. Successful completion of the Preparation for Marriage Program is required for all couples being married at Christ Fellowship or by a Christ Fellowship Pastor.

This includes a Preparation for Marriage study and participation with an assigned Marriage Mentor couple:

- 6 weeks of foundational Biblical teaching through our "Preparation for Marriage" study (12 hours of class time).
- 6 weeks of Marriage Mentoring with a trained marriage mentor couple who have been married for 10 or more years, who will guide the couple through an assessment of the relationship using a premarital inventory (12 hours of mentoring).

2. A one-year dating relationship is recommended before marriage.

Even though progress toward building a committed relationship occurs at different rates, there really are no shortcuts to building intimacy, trust and great communication.

3. Divorced persons may be considered for marriage at Christ Fellowship if they meet one of these biblical criteria:

- a. The former spouse is now deceased. (Romans 7:2, 1 Corinthians 7:39)
- b. The divorce occurred because of sexual unfaithfulness by spouse. (Matthew 19:3-9)
- c. Desertion by an unbelieving spouse. (1 Corinthians 7:15)
- d. The former spouse initiated divorce and has remarried. (Matthew 19:9)
- e. The divorce occurred prior to one's conversion to Christ.

If none of the above criteria apply to your situation, a meeting with a pastor may be arranged to consider your individual situation. We acknowledge that other extenuating circumstances sometimes apply in divorce situations. If you are in a situation where you are experiencing physical, sexual or emotional abuse or your partner is engaged in substance abuse or illegal activity, 1 Corinthians 5:9 -11 may reference your situation. Again, we would recommend counsel with a pastor to determine the most biblical response in such a situation.

Additionally, remarriages after divorce of a spouse can be performed only after one year has passed from the time the divorce is finalized. A divorce recovery program must be completed either at Christ Fellowship or another church. We believe a new relationship should not be pursued until the potential of a healthy reconciliation has been exhausted and significant healing has taken place.

4. A one-year period of time is encouraged before remarrying following the death of a spouse.

Widows, widowers and their fiancé must attend a grief recovery class, or attend individual counseling, before they consider marriage again. It is important to have adequate time to grieve the loss and fully get to know a new person before making a marriage commitment.

5. Christ Fellowship Pastors will only marry couples that are “equally yoked” spiritually.

(1 Corinthians 7:39b, 2 Corinthians 6:14)

Both people must have surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and be committed to establishing a Christian home.

6. The couple must be celibate and not live together prior to the wedding.

(Acts 15:20, 1 Corinthians 6:9, 18; 10:8, Galatians 5:19)

The pastor will not perform the ceremony if the couple is living together. This is a protection for you against divorce, as research has found that couples who live together have a higher divorce rate than those who do not.

Here then, is the three-fold Premarital Covenant you will be asked to profess:

- We are committed to God’s ways in preparing for our marriage. We agree to abstain from sexual intimacy until we share our marriage vows together. We believe it is God’s will for our life and marriage to be sanctified, to be set apart for pure and holy living. *“It is God’s will that you 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...For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you His Holy Spirit.”* 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8
- We also understand that, if we are in Christ, God does not hold our past mistakes against us. He understands our weaknesses and is always willing to forgive us and help us start over again. As we ask God to forgive us, He views us as a completely new couple in His family. *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”* 1 John 1:9
- We seek to trust God and honor Him by upholding His parameters of sexual intimacy within the context of our future marriage. We believe that with God’s power, we will be able to keep this covenant and be greatly blessed by our obedience to Him.

These guidelines have been created based upon Christ Fellowship's belief in God's plan for marriage, and are meant to encourage, protect, and strengthen the couple's commitment to Christ. Due to the nature of interpersonal relationships and individual levels of maturity, there may be some exceptions to these guidelines, as determined on an individual basis by the Pastors in conjunction with the Elders of Christ Fellowship. For questions regarding the CF Marriage Policy, please contact Pastor Tim Popadic, at timp@cftoday.org or 561-799-7603 x1138.