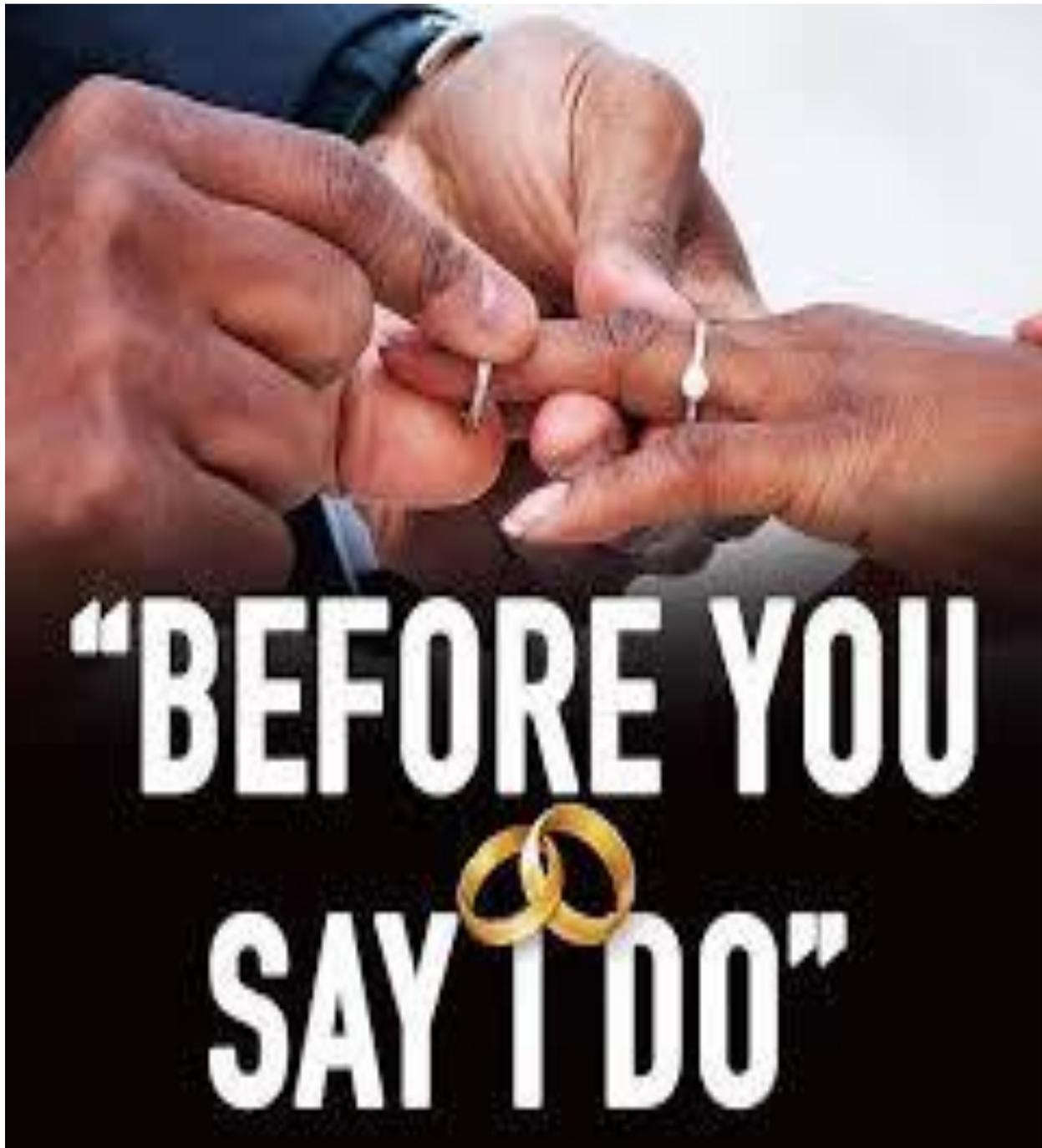




Calvary Baptist Church “The City of Refuge”



Pre-marital Counseling Packet

Preparing for a Wedding at Calvary Baptist Church

The pastors wish to help people confirm their readiness for marriage by asking probing questions which will help them gain deeper certainty about whether this is the right time and right person for marriage, and to what extent the relational skills are present for success and happiness. The pastors further reserve the right at any time to advise against marriage or require additional counseling sessions if unexpected needs or problems come to light.

Basic requirements for a wedding with one of the CBC pastors in the Calvary Baptist Church facility:

1. Evidence of personal maturity on the part of both persons sufficient to sustain them through the normal periodic stresses of a permanent relationship.
2. Agree with the Scriptures in II Corinthians 6:14 which state that believers should not be yoked together with unbelievers. We cannot officiate in a wedding where one is a born-again believer and the other is not.
3. Any previous broken marriage must be thought through in light of Scripture and repented of.
4. The couple must be committed to the biblical standard of sexual purity, agreeing that it is God's plan to reserve the sexual relationship exclusively for marriage. If a couple has been sexually active, they will be expected to adapt a biblical lifestyle of sexual abstinence until marriage. If a couple is living together, we will need to discuss ways to resolve the appearance of a compromise from biblical lifestyle before proceeding further with pre-marriage conferences. For further explanation, recommended reading: Moral Purity by Charles Swindoll.
5. Because God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman and Himself, Calvary Baptist Church will only recognize marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. **NO EXCEPTIONS!** Further, the pastors and staff of Calvary Baptist Church shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriages between one man and one woman. Finally, the facilities and property of Calvary Baptist Church shall only host weddings between one man and one woman.
6. A signed premarital contract is to be submitted.
7. The cost for premarital counseling is \$200 for four mandatory sessions. The pastor will commit himself to officiate at your wedding only after several important components are covered in the pre-marriage conferences.

The pastor's commitment to officiate at your wedding will be maintained in accordance with your commitment to the homework assignments and your commitment to the six (6) basic requirements stated above. Church facilities reservations are considered tentative until the pastor has committed himself to officiate at your wedding. Most weddings on the Calvary campus are in the Sanctuary, but may take place in the Chapel if necessary. The CBC pastors would also be happy to officiate at your wedding at an off-campus location.

A guest officiating pastor may preside at the CBC facilities providing a copy of Certificate of Ordination or Licensing to the ministry is submitted, they are current and in good standing in the status, and they are in agreement with the Calvary Baptist Church Statement of Faith. When a guest officiator is used, an equivalent pre-marriage counseling series is still required.

What Do the Pre-Marriage Conference Sessions Include?

The number of sessions and the content will be outlined at the first session by the pastor you choose. The goal is to stimulate communication between you as a couple bringing a deeper mutual understanding by exploring the similarities and differences in your personalities and backgrounds. Resources will be selected from the following list: So You Are Getting Married, by Norm Wright Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts, by Les & Leslie Parrott The Five Love Languages, by Gary Chapman The Total Money Makeover, by Dave Ramsey Intended for Pleasure, by Ed and Gayle Wheat

If There Has Been a Previous Marriage

The pastoral staff of Calvary Baptist Church desires to reach out with sensitivity and compassion realizing that divorce is one of the most painful and devastating experiences in human relationships. Our goal is to help people use biblical principles to deal with what has happened and offer a biblical basis for the choices they are making, enabling them to move into the future with a solid foundation, standing tall and straight before God and with a deeper inner peace which can insulate from human stigmas and prejudice. Our experience has found the following guidelines helpful...

- As believers in Jesus Christ as Savior, we accept the Bible as our sole authority in faith and practice. Therefore, the dissolution of a previous marriage must be thought through in the light of Scripture passages on this issue to discern whether there is a biblical basis for entering into another marriage. (See Matthew 19:1-12; I Corinthians 7:10-15; II Corinthians 5:17)
- We consider persons to be still married until the divorce is final and therefore believe consideration of another marriage is inappropriate until the dissolution of the previous marriage is complete. We will not proceed with premarital counseling before a divorce is final. The Pastor may ask to see the final divorce papers.
- Since the divorce rate for second marriages is higher than first marriages, it is all the more important that there be adequate time for healing from past hurts as well as a thorough appraisal of maturity in this new relationship. We therefore advise at least one year between the date a divorce is final and the date of a subsequent wedding.
- In an effort to obtain an objective perspective and understanding of the deterioration of the previous relationship, the pastor may ask permission to talk with a former marriage partner.
- Our modern culture is largely ignoring biblical moral standards and when a couple has not kept the biblical standard of sexual purity, we find that they always benefit from confession, forgiveness, and a decision to live a distinctly Christian lifestyle as they prepare for a Christian wedding. We will proceed with pre-marriage counseling only if a couple is committed to sexual abstinence before marriage. If a couple is living together, we will need to discuss ways to resolve this compromise of a biblical lifestyle before proceeding with premarital counseling.

Recommended reading on the subject of divorce and remarriage:

Divorce, by Charles Swindoll

Saving Your Second Marriage Before It Starts, by Les & Leslie Parrott

Moral Purity, Charles Swindoll

Pre-Marriage Counseling Contract

With _____ and _____

Counseling is the most effective when there is openness, honesty and a commitment to learn and grow. Therefore, in order to make the most of the process, the following expectations are stated as a prerequisite for proceeding with the pre-marriage counseling and also as a basis for the Pastor’s commitment to officiate at the wedding. After reading and signing this contract is to be handed to the marrying pastor prior to the initial premarital counseling session.

1. We accept the responsibility to keep the counseling appointments and to come on time, or to call in advance if an unavoidable conflict arises. We also accept the responsibility to take the initiative to reschedule any missed sessions.
2. We agree to complete homework assignments, to bring our materials with us, and to come ready to discuss what we are learning from the content.
3. We agree to be honest in this process and to be open to learn from how we are perceived by each other and by our counselor.
4. We agree to refrain from sexual relations until our wedding night.
5. We agree to regularly attend Sunday worship during our pre-marriage process.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Prospective Groom	Date	Prospective Bride	Date

Pastor/Counselor’s Agreement: I agree to respect the confidentiality of these Pre-Marriage Counseling sessions both during and after the series, and I agree to officiate at the wedding on _____ of the two above named persons, pending their keeping of this contract.

_____	_____
Signed	Date

Frequently Asked Questions

What happens at the premarital interview?

The bride and groom will meet with a member of the ministerial staff to discuss wedding plans and details. Premarital couples also receive information on the requisite premarital counseling at the time of the premarital interview. Specific requirements to be married at Calvary Baptist Church or by a CBC pastor are also discussed. (See question #2)

Following the interview, the couple will be asked to complete the premarital assessment and four (4) sessions with a premarital facilitator. This inventory helps to alert the premarital facilitator and marrying pastor to areas that need specific attention. They also help to identify areas of strength in the relationship. The premarital counseling experience is uniquely designed to meet the needs of each couple.

What are the specific requirements to be married at Calvary Baptist Church or by a CBC pastor?

All premarital couples must complete our six-session counseling program. In addition, the pastors of Calvary Baptist Church have determined the following qualifications, based on Biblical truths:

1) Bride and groom must individually confess a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Calvary Baptist Church will not marry unbelievers, or join an unbeliever to a believer in marriage (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). God's Word is clear about spiritual compatibility between marriage partners.

2) Bride and groom must abstain from physical intimacy or living together. We must follow God's directions alone regarding our sexuality. The Bible gives us clear instructions for sex within the parameters of the marriage relationship (1 Thessalonians 4:3-6) God's Word also gives us clear warnings and consequences when sex is used outside of the marriage. The couple must be committed to the biblical standard of sexual purity, agreeing that it is God's plan to reserve the sexual relationship exclusively for marriage. If a couple has been sexually active, they will be expected to adapt a biblical lifestyle of sexual abstinence until marriage. If a couple is living together, we will need to discuss ways to resolve the appearance of a compromise from biblical lifestyle before proceeding further with pre-marriage conferences. For further explanation, recommended reading is: Moral Purity by Charles Swindoll. What is the cost of the Calvary Baptist Church premarital counseling program? The cost for members of Calvary Baptist Church is \$100. The cost to non-participants is \$100. This cost covers counseling materials.

What do we talk about at the counseling sessions? You will discuss many subjects throughout your time together. These subjects include marital roles and responsibilities; skills for communicating and resolving conflicts; realistic management of finances; your sexual relationship; your family of origin; and much more! Your relationship strengths will be discussed, as well as areas that need growth.

Although the program is designed to cover certain topics, your counselors will design your time together to fit your individual needs. Details of the six sessions are discussed during your premarital interview. Homework assignments are given prior to each session to enhance your understanding (and promote discussion) of the material.

You may call the Calvary Baptist Church office for information on the following:

- Financial counseling
- Blended family support
- Divorce recovery

What should I expect from the premarital counseling experience? You should expect to be challenged, strengthened, educated, and better prepared for your upcoming marriage. You will probably experience some laughs, some tears, and some pleasant surprises!

You should leave your premarital counseling with some problem areas identified, some new marital skills learned, and most importantly - a more realistic expectation of what marriage will be like!

May God richly bless you individually, and as a couple, as you embark on this exciting journey together!

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man separate." Mark 10:7-9 (NIV)

Perspective Wedding Date: _____

Groom Contact Information:

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Bride Contact Information:

Phone: _____ Email: _____