

PASTOR HALE'S WEDDING POLICY

In Matthew 19:4-6, Jesus said: *Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.*

Article XVIII of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 states: *Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.*

I affirm these truths.

In the realm of human relationships, no decision is more significant or more vital than the decision to marry. Marriage is both a civil ceremony, authorized and recognized by the state, and a spiritual union, approved and established by God. Because of its importance, I take very seriously the responsibility to unite a man and woman together in holy matrimony. When couples ask me to marry them, they have to meet certain criteria and agree to several requirements which I have included below.

If you read them over and find that you meet these criteria and that you agree to my requirements, please call the church and schedule a time to meet with me and talk about your wedding plans and schedule.

Please note that these requirements apply *only* to my participation in the ceremony, not necessarily to the use of the church building. The church has its own policy regarding use of the building.

REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Both the bride and the groom must be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have accepted Him as Savior, submitted to baptism, and joined a local church. Furthermore, they must agree to be members of the same church (preferably Gethsemane Baptist Church) after they are married.
- 2) The couple must have as much as eight hours of premarital counseling. This includes books, audio, and / or video assignments that I may provide, and about two hours meeting with Pastor Hale. The premarital counseling includes frank discussions about finances, family, sexual matters, and personality issues.
- 3) The marriage must be the first marriage for both the bride and the groom, unless you meet one of the following exceptions.
 - a. Your previous spouse passed away.
 - b. You are remarrying the spouse you previously divorced.
 - c. You have unequivocal evidence that your previous divorce meets one of the two biblical criteria allowed in Matthew 5:31-32 or 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 (unrepentant and repeated adultery or abandonment by an unbelieving spouse). In all candor, I very much dislike being the judge of who has a scriptural divorce and who does not, but the only honest way to determine this is to speak to all parties involved, including ex-spouses.
- 4) No alcohol will be served at any wedding function, including the rehearsal dinner and the reception.
- 5) No music will be played in the wedding ceremony that is inconsistent with Christian principles and lifestyle.
- 6) The wife agrees to take her husband's last name.
- 7) Consistent with Ephesians 5:22-33, the wedding message and vows in the ceremony will direct the bride in biblical submission and will direct the husband in leadership by self-sacrifice.
- 8) The couple agrees to never consider divorce as an option once they are married.
- 9) The bride and groom agree to complete celibacy from this point until the wedding. If you are living together, you must confess this sin to the Lord and separate immediately. The Bible commands me not to be a partaker in the sins of others (1 Timothy 5:22), and I cannot in good conscience condone sexual immorality by ignoring it until the wedding day. Sex before marriage is just as wrong as adultery after marriage. This point is non-negotiable. I regret that I have to remind Christian couples that God commands sexual purity, but the commitment that you must make is for celibacy outside of marriage and exclusive monogamy within marriage.