

Crestwood Baptist Church *Marriage Principles . . .*



Crestwood Baptist Church exists to produce more Christians and build stronger Christians. One of the ways we do that is through providing couples with an opportunity to experience God through their marriage relationship. It is our desire to follow the teaching of the Bible in every aspect of our lives. The following principles are built on our understanding of Scripture regarding God's design for marriage. We contend that following these principles will be foundational to your marriage. We would be happy to discuss these with you during your initial visit with a pastor.

- 1) Realizing that marriage began with God and is a covenant between a man and a woman, and God, we share with everyone the magnitude of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and being committed to establishing a home centered on Christ. We encourage you to worship together here if you are not currently attending another church.
- 2) It is our desire to help you make your marriage the very best human relationship of your life. We require and provide pre-marital and post-marital counseling as well as a mentoring program for all couples married in our church. This usually necessitates a six-month engagement.
- 3) We believe that healing from one marital relationship is necessary before beginning another marital relationship and encourage persons not to be remarried for at least one year from the finalization of their divorce or annulment.
- 4) God's design for marriage includes sexual intimacy within the marital relationship. We believe couples should remain celibate and live at different addresses prior to the ceremony. Weddings involving premarital pregnancy will be considered individually by the pastoral staff.
- 5) Marriages will not be performed if the bride or groom is under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the rehearsal or ceremony. Wedding party members will be asked not to participate if they are believed to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- 6) Christian ministers from outside our church may be used to perform your ceremony with prior approval of our ministerial staff.
- 7) Based on the understanding of these principles and after meeting with the perspective couple, the pastoral staff reserves the right to decline performing a wedding. If one minister of the staff has declined to marry a couple for spiritual reasons, no other minister on the staff will perform the ceremony.

What the Bible Says About Marriage . . .



A wedding is a joyous celebration of love. It is the holy mystery of two becoming one flesh, of beginning life together and of commitment. God is the designer of marriage and it illustrates His relationship with His people. In Christian marriage, your vows become a solemn covenant between you and God.

Purpose of Marriage and Fundamental Truths

The three basic reasons we marry are found in God's original purpose for marriage.

1) *Fruitfulness/Procreation* – God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Genesis 1:28

2) *Companionship/Sharing Life* – The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. The Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.”

Genesis 2:18-23

3) *Intimacy/Sexual Union* – For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Genesis 2:24-25

Marriage is a journey, not an event and scripture provides wisdom for marriage.

The things that are part of the marriage process are:

- 1) Leaving & Cleaving
- 2) Blessing/Understanding Covenant

Let's look at these a little more in-depth.

Leaving and Cleaving

Leaving parents is one of God's first requirements for marriage - Genesis 2:21-25. Of course, this doesn't mean you will abandon your parents or no longer communicate with them. Exodus 20:12 reminds us: “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.”

The phrase means you will launch out on your own assuming responsibility for your lives, your marriage, and your home. We are to form a new home and new family unit.

It means shifting from I to We. Your mate should have first place, after God.

Leaving is a family process. It changes every family member's role as the family loses part of one member and adds another member.

You're apt to communicate and resolve conflict like your parents. This may be healthy or unhealthy depending on your family background. Your Mentoring Couple will help you explore these issues and help you with your communication and conflict resolution skills.

Leaving and Cleaving - Think about how this reordering of your relationship may be acted out in your wedding ceremony through the Entrance, Affirmation of Support to and from your families, the Scripture and Sermon, and the Music.

Blessing/Covenant

When you marry you are making a covenant with your spouse-to-be and God. You are making the relationship primary, permanent and public.

What is a covenant and to what are you committing? How is a covenant different from what the world may view as a marriage?

Covenant isn't a word we use often. It's a biblical term and God is a covenant-making God. Some may think of covenant strictly as a contract, an agreement or promise of some kind that is based solely on rights and responsibilities. In our culture, marriage is a legal contract that requires a legal license to begin and a legal process to end. The biblical concept of covenant, however, is quite different.

A marriage covenant involves a pledge to seek a limitless, uncompromising love for each other. This kind of promise pledges forgiveness before the fact, pledges faithfulness in the face of difficulties and growth, and commits individuals to choose the partner over and over again, starting each new phase of life with renewed zest and commitment.

A covenant does not mean acceptance of destructive behavior or simply enduring "down times," but involves a willingness to struggle and grow within the marriage.

Let's compare the differences between a covenant marriage and a contract.

Covenants versus Contracts*

A covenant is initiated for the benefit of the other person

A contract is motivated by the desire to get something you want

In covenants, people make promises, which are unconditional

Contracts most often deal with specific action

Covenant relationships are based on steadfast love

Contracts are based on an "If, then mentality"

Covenant relationships view commitments as permanent

Contracts are most often made for a limited time period

Covenant relationships make provisions for each other's weaknesses and failures

Contracts normally do not make these provisions

*Based on Covenant Marriage, "Communication & Intimacy," by Dr. Gary Chapman. God has much to say about marriage. Consider some of these additional passages in the Bible:

Genesis 2:18-25

Marriage is God's idea

Genesis 24: 58-60

Commitment is essential to a successful marriage

Jeremiah 33:10-11

Marriage holds times of great joy.

Malachi 2:14-15

Marriage creates the best environment for raising children

Matthew 5:32

Unfaithfulness breaks the bond of trust, the foundation of all relationships.

Matthew 19:6

Marriage is permanent.

Romans 7:2-3

Ideally, only death should dissolve marriage

Ephesians 5:21-33

Marriage is based on the practice of love, not feelings

Ephesians 5:23,32

Marriage is a living symbol of Christ and the church

Hebrews 13:4

Marriage is good and honorable

Symbolism in Marriage . . .



Questions/Answers on Traditional Marriage symbols

Your wedding is very important to God and His church because of its Biblical foundation.

- What is the significance of a white aisle runner?
It is a symbol of walking on holy ground. A covenant is not made merely between two people and their witnesses. It is made in the presence of God. He is actively involved in the agreement because it is God that joins you together.

- Why are the parents of the couple given special seating?
The parents of the bride and groom are part of the marriage covenant. The commitments they make during the ceremony are just as binding as the vows of the couple.

- Why does the groom enter the auditorium first?
By entering the auditorium first, the groom signifies that he is the covenant initiator. This is important because whoever initiates the covenant assumes greater responsibility for seeing it fulfilled. God initiated the covenant of salvation with us. God is still at work to fulfill His covenant, and Christ will soon appear with the sound of trumpets to consummate the wedding with His bride, the church.

- Why does the father walk the bride down the aisle?
This symbolizes the father's agreement with the bride's choice of a husband. "I am endorsing this man as God's best choice for you, and I am now bringing you to him." At the same time, the father states that he is presenting the groom his daughter who he has earnestly endeavored to train up as a pure bride.

- Why do the bride and groom take each other's right hand during the wedding vows?
The open right hand offered by each party symbolizes their strength, resources and purpose. By clasping each other's right hand, they are pledging these to each other. Just as we depend on the "saving strength of God's right hand," so each partner can depend upon all the resources that the other brings into the covenant relationship.

- Why does the groom make the vows first?
He must be the leader and assume the greater responsibility to fulfill the marriage covenant. As covenant initiator, he must commit himself to the purpose of marriage, which God established in the beginning.
- What is the significance of the wedding ring?
It symbolizes transfer of authority, strength and protection. In scripture, the ring is a symbol of authority along with the resources that accompany it. In a covenant relationship, the ring symbolized identification.
- Why is the couple pronounced husband and wife?
The pronouncement of husband and wife establishes a definite time for the beginning of the marriage. These words are to remove any future doubts in the minds of the couple or the witnesses about the validity of the marriage.
- What is the purpose of introducing the new couple?
The introduction of the new couple establishes their change of names. In the marriage when the wife takes on the name of the husband, the man becomes known as the husband of the wife. When God made the covenant with Abram, he changed his name to Abraham.
- Why do you serve food at a reception?
Food is part of the covenant celebration. One of the root meanings of the word covenant is "to Feed." Following the marriage, a feast was customary to further symbolize the unity of the couple. Entering into a meal is itself a form of covenant. It's significant that the first event of Christ's ministry was to attend a wedding feast and His first miracle took place during that occasion.
- Why does the couple feed cake to each other?
This act symbolizes their becoming one flesh. By feeding cake to each other, they are saying, "This represents my body. As you eat it, I am becoming a part of you, and as I eat the cake that you give to me, you become a part of me."