



WATERMARK

wedding
GUIDE

WATERMARK WEDDING GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

**LETTER FROM
WATERMARK**

LETTER FROM WATERMARK

WELCOME TO WATERMARK'S WEDDING GUIDE! WE ARE SO GLAD YOU ARE HERE.

Congratulations on the decision you have made to enter into the covenant of marriage! We believe marriage is a gift from the Lord, given to us in order to put His greatness on display for the world (James 1:17; Matthew 5:14-16). Our desire at Watermark Community Church (Watermark) is to help in any way we can to get you ready for your wedding day. More importantly, while we desire couples to have a wonderful wedding day, our greatest passion is for your marriage to bring God the glory He deserves.

Whether we are providing you a location to get married and/or a pastor to officiate your ceremony, as the body of Christ, we are primarily concerned with God being honored in the process. Since marriage is one of the most important decisions you will ever make, we see it as our responsibility to help best prepare you for marriage. To that end, we have put together this wedding policy guide to help assist you in the process. In the following pages you will find all the information you need in order to use our facility, as well as pricing, policies, procedures, requirements/qualifications, and much more.

We hope that our website, as well as this wedding policy guide will be a great help to you. The first step is for you to become familiar with our policies and procedures as related to using our facilities by reading over this policy guide. The second step will be for you to contact our Wedding Assistant at 214-393-3043 or at weddings@watermark.org. She will help you get the process started.

May God bless you as you prepare for both your marriage and wedding day!

In Christ,

Premarital Ministry Team
Watermark Community Church
214.361.2275

SECTION 1

OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW

Please note all necessary documents and fees must be turned in before your event date and venue are finalized. This includes the wedding application, pre-married wedding agreement, event agreement, and said fees.

MEMBERSHIP

Facilities are available for weddings and receptions exclusively to members of Watermark who are actively serving in an area of ministry, children of active members, or to non-members who are actively pursuing membership. All events must be scheduled through the Wedding Assistant.

- To become a member at Watermark, an individual must:
 - Attend Membership Class.
 - Sign the Membership Covenant.
 - Share their testimony with a member of the Believe Team.
 - Become part of a community group.
 - Choose and commit to an area of service.
- Actively pursuing membership is defined as someone who has attended Membership Class and has started to complete the membership requirements stated above.
 - If you have not attended the membership class, you must agree to attend the next class.
 - If you are not a member of a community group, then you must agree to join a married Foundation Group (community group for newly married couples) or a Community Group at the next possible Community Formation.
 - If you have questions about the membership process or your membership status email membership@watermark.org.
- Couples must also complete the premarital process at Watermark.

- Couples must attend the Watermark Premarital Class, called Merge (offered several times throughout the year), as well as go through 2-on-2 premarital mentoring with a married Watermark mentor couple.
 - If you are unable to complete the process, please contact the marriage ministry, at merge@watermark.org.
- Adult children of Watermark members may use the facilities for wedding ceremonies if at least one parent is an active member.
 - If a parent is not a member of Watermark, then the individual desiring to be married must either be a member or actively pursuing membership.
 - In addition, the couple must either go through the Watermark premarital process or will need to discuss their marriage preparation with the marriage ministry at weddings@watermark.org.

SCHEDULING - GENERAL

- Your event date will be confirmed by the Wedding Assistant.
- Weddings may not be scheduled more than 9 months in advance.
- Receptions may not be scheduled more than 9 months in advance and are given a 7-hour time slot.
- All facility rental charges must be paid in full to the Events Coordinator one month prior to the wedding weekend.
- Watermark only performs weddings on Saturdays.
- Wedding dates are unavailable during the following dates/holidays:
 - Easter weekend
 - Memorial Day weekend
 - Independence Day (if it falls on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or Monday)
 - Labor Day weekend
 - Thanksgiving weekend
 - The week of Christmas or New Years
 - Other weekends throughout the year may not be available due to previously scheduled all-church or all-staff events.

SCHEDULING – REHEARSAL

- Rehearsals are scheduled for the Friday before the wedding for one-hour time slots at 4:00 PM, 5:00 PM or 6:00 PM. We are unable to provide AV for the rehearsals.

SCHEDULING – CEREMONY

- There are two available time slots for the ceremony: 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM and 3:00 PM – 9:00 PM. In order to be consistent with all couples that get married in the chapel, we will be unable to accommodate any requests to change the aforementioned time slots, even in the case that there is not a wedding before or after your time slot.
- The earliest a ceremony can begin is 1½ hours after your time slot begins, and the latest a ceremony can begin is 1½ hours before your time slot is over.

AGREEMENT WITH WATERMARK'S ESSENTIAL BELIEFS

The Bible | We believe the Bible to be the verbally inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, as well as, the supreme and final authority in doctrine and practice (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; John 17:17).

The Trinity | We believe there is one God, that the Father and the Son and the Spirit is each God, and that the Father and the Son and the Spirit is each a distinct person (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 2:9; Acts 5:3-4).

Jesus Christ | We believe the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God, fulfill prophecy and redeem sinful man. We believe He accomplished our redemption through His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross, burial and bodily resurrection. We believe our redemption and salvation are guaranteed by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is the only means of salvation (John 1:1, 14, 18; Luke 1:35; Romans 3:24-26, 4:25; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Philippians 2:5-8; 1 Timothy 2:5).

We believe that Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, the creator and sustainer of heaven and earth, and the Head of the church. We believe the Lord Jesus Christ is now in heaven, exalted to the right hand of God where, as High Priest to His people, He serves as our Advocate and intercedes for us (Colossians 1:15-19; Hebrews 1:3, 3:1, 7:23-25; 1 John 2:1-2).

The Holy Spirit | We believe God the Holy Spirit is a person who restrains evil in the world and convicts men of sin, righteousness and judgment. He dwells in all who believe in Jesus. From the moment of belief in the Son, the Spirit baptizes believers into the body, seals them for salvation, regenerates them to new life, bestows spiritual gifts on each one, and is fully present to continually fill (control and guide) His own (John 16:7-11; John 3:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 13; John 14:16-17; Ephesians 4:30, 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

Man | We believe God created all things in heaven and earth and that they exist by His power (Genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:16-17). We believe man was created innocent and in the image and likeness of God but that he sinned, bringing both physical and spiritual death to himself and his posterity. We believe man inherited a sinful nature, is alienated from God, can do nothing to merit God's favor, and is therefore, in need of salvation (Genesis 1:27, 2:17, 3:19; Ephesians 2:1-3).

We believe that God created mankind in His image: male (man) and female (woman), sexually and biologically different, but with equal personal dignity. It is inconsistent with God's design for a follower of Christ to in any way practically live or physically seek to change, alter, or disagree with their obvious biological sex which has been assigned by God (Genesis 1:26-28; Romans 1:26-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

We believe that marriage is a union ordained by God and intended as a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman (Genesis 1:27-28; Genesis 2:18; Matthew 19:4-9; Mark 10:5-9; Ephesians 5:31-33). In keeping with the Bible's clear teaching on marriage as a union between one man and one woman, we will not conduct nor host wedding ceremonies inconsistent with Scripture.

Salvation | We believe salvation is a sovereign gift of God and is received by man through personal faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for sin. We believe man is justified by grace through faith apart from works (Acts 13:38-39; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 1:4-5; 2:8-10). We believe that Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation and that no one is saved apart from a conscious and personal decision to trust in Christ as his or her one and only Savior (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 10:9-10). We believe all true believers elect of God, once saved, are kept secure in Christ forever (Romans 8:1, 29-30, 38-39; John 10:27-30).

The Second Coming | We believe in the future, visible, and bodily return of Jesus Christ to the earth, commonly called the Second Coming, to rule the nations and establish His kingdom on earth (Philippians 3:20; Matthew 24:15-31; Zechariah 14:4-11; Revelation 19:11-21).

COHABITATION STANCE

The Scriptures teach that cohabitating couples fall short of God's standard for premarried couples. Please see the Appendix for the Watermark Statement on Cohabitation (page 53).

Despite growing popularity and practice of cohabitation within the broader culture today and even in some churches, we desire to honor scripture with respect to cohabitation prior to marriage. The findings of secular research notwithstanding, it is Watermark's conviction that cohabitation is a biblically sinful decision for couples. If a couple decides to continue cohabitating, Watermark will decline the use of a staff pastor for the marriage ceremony and will not host a wedding in our facilities.

We also ask couples who are living together but not having sex move into separate homes. Scripture tells us to "flee sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18) and to place yourself in a living situation that you have the best chance for purity and separation from temptation (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; Ephesians 5:3; Hebrews 13:4). It is our observation that couples that honor the Lord in every aspect of their relationship experience greater oneness, peace, and joy in marriage.

If you are currently cohabitating or have questions about cohabitation, we would like to have the opportunity in which to discuss further with you. Please contact us at merge@watermark.org if you have any questions

SECTION 2

FACILITIES

WATERMARK FACILITIES

CEREMONY

Chapel

- Our chapel will seat up to 320 people.
- All seating will be on wooden pews with cushions.
- The center aisle is 6 feet wide.
- The Chapel may be decorated only with flowers and candles after prior approval (see page 24 for flower and candle requirements).
- All candles MUST be dripless and must be in an approved holder.
- The grass fixtures in the chapel cannot be removed.
- It is the responsibility of the wedding party to remove all decorations prior to leaving for the reception.

RECEPTION

Table Set Up: Round tables are 5' (60") and rectangle tables are 6'x2.5'. Please note these are rough numbers and depending upon how the room is set up, they are subject to change.

2nd and 3rd Floor Assembly Rooms

- The 2nd floor assembly room will seat a maximum of 20 round tables.
- The 3rd floor assembly room will seat a maximum of 23 round tables.
- 8 chairs per table is recommended, however up to 10 chairs per table will fit.

2 nd Floor Assembly Seating	3 rd Floor Assembly Seating
8 * 20 = 160	8 * 23 = 184
9 * 20 = 180	9 * 23 = 207
10 * 20 = 200	10 * 23 = 230

3rd Banquet Room

- This room will seat a maximum of 15 round tables.
- 8 chairs per table is recommended, however up to 10 chairs per table will fit.

3 rd Banquet Room Seating
8 * 15 = 120
9 * 15 = 135
10 * 15 = 150

Loft

- If the Loft is available one month prior to the wedding day, the couple that contacted us the earliest is eligible to use the facility.
- The Loft will seat a maximum of 32-34 round tables depending on dance floor and layout.
- 8 chairs per table is recommended, however up to 10 chairs per table will fit.

Loft Seating
8 * 30 = 240
9 * 30 = 270
10 * 30 = 300

CUSTODIAL SERVICES AND CLEAN UP

Custodial services are provided to assure clean, ready-to-use facilities; however, the wedding party is responsible for kitchen clean up done according to cleaning checklist on page 84 and fee schedule on page 31.

SECTION 3

BEFORE THE WEDDING

BEFORE THE WEDDING

MERGE

All couples are required to attend and complete Merge. The eight-week class is offered several times a year and the weekend class is offered throughout the year as well for couples who are unable to attend the eight-week class. You can sign-up or find more information on this class at watermark.org/merge. The cost of the class is \$80/couple for the eight-week class and \$100/couple for the weekend class. *If for some reason you are unable to attend one of the Merge classes, you may take a different class after approval from the Watermark Marriage Ministry team.*

PREMARITAL MENTORING

In addition to completing the eight sessions of Merge, all couples are required to complete premarital mentoring with either the pastor who will officiate the ceremony or a staff-approved mentor couple. Couples are required to take the PREPARE inventory, which provides specific feedback (both strengths and growth areas). Results of the PREPARE inventory will be discussed and reviewed with the mentor couple and/or officiating pastor. The cost of the inventory is \$30/couple. If a mentor couple is meeting with you instead of the officiating pastor, you may be asked to meet with the officiating pastor 1-2 times, in order to discuss your service/ceremony as well as to give the pastor the opportunity to know you as a couple.

THE WEDDING COORDINATOR

A Wedding Coordinator will be assigned to you by the Watermark Wedding Assistant after approval of your wedding date and finalization of reservations. She will meet with you one month prior to your wedding. She will help ensure that you have all areas covered, including: florists, food, decorations, room layout, etc. The Wedding Coordinator is the representative of Watermark, and will be responsible for total adherence to Watermark wedding policies.

In addition, you may use your own outside wedding planner if you already have one; however, that person must meet with the Watermark Wedding Coordinator and inform Watermark of all plans for the wedding. All plans coordinated with the outside wedding planner must be approved by Watermark Wedding Assistant. Also, please note that the Watermark Wedding Coordinator will be responsible for running all wedding-related events on the Watermark campus. Please see our policies section for more information on the Wedding Coordinator.

THE MARRIAGE LICENSE

In order to officiate a ceremonial wedding, a marriage license issued by the State of Texas is required. A wedding will not take place without a valid marriage license.

- More information on obtaining a Texas marriage license can be found at this website: <http://www.dallascounty.org/departments/countyclerk/marriage-license.html>
- Licenses are valid for a period of 30 days from issue date.
- Please discuss with your officiating pastor their process for obtaining and signing the license.

CEREMONY REHEARSAL

Rehearsals are scheduled for the Friday before the wedding for one hour time slots at 4:00 PM, 5:00 PM or 6:00 PM and will be directed by the officiating pastor and the Wedding Coordinator. The rehearsal time slot will be arranged through the Wedding Assistant. The entire wedding party should attend, including, ushers and immediate family members. Rehearsals will begin on time and will last no longer than one hour. Participants should arrive at least 15 minutes ahead of the scheduled start time. Any changes must be approved by the Wedding Coordinator by the end of the rehearsal. There will be no changes on the day of the ceremony.

SECTION 4

THE WEDDING CEREMONY

THE WEDDING CEREMONY

THE OFFICIATING PASTOR

Whenever possible, we encourage you to select a pastor with whom you have a personal relationship. You will have the opportunity on your Wedding Application form to request a specific Watermark pastor to officiate your ceremony. While we will do our best to accommodate your requests, please note that the senior pastor is rarely available to officiate ceremonies. If you do not have a relationship with a pastor or if you do not have a preference of your wedding officiant, we will assign one of our pastors to officiate the ceremony. Pastors from outside of Watermark with whom you have a prior relationship are welcome to officiate ceremonies at Watermark; however, you must fill out an Outside Officiant Form (page 93), and he must be approved by the Watermark Premarital Director. Please discuss this option with the Watermark Wedding Assistant as soon as possible so we may begin the approval process. Kindly note that Watermark adheres to 1 Timothy 2:12 regarding the use of female officiants.

Watermark maintains the right to back out of a ceremony at any time in the process if we do not believe the couple should be married. While we do not desire to see this ever happen, if a couple has not conducted themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel or if there are concerns about the potential health of the marriage, difficult conversations will be had with the couple.

OFFICIATING PASTOR'S FEE

Watermark does not have a set fee for the officiating pastor, and there is no fee allocated in the cost of the facility for the pastor. You may consult the officiating pastor to see if he has a set fee, but our suggested honorarium for the pastor is \$300.

THE SERVICE

For a document outlining Order of Ceremony, see page 36 in the Appendix for couples to review together. The Wedding Coordinator and the officiating pastor will be able to help you establish your ceremony's order and answer any questions you might have. Please select music that is in good taste and appropriate for a Christian wedding service. All music selections will be reviewed and approved by the Watermark Wedding Assistant (see sample music for us on page 40).

VOWS

The wedding vows provide the opportunity for the two of you in the ceremony to express your lifelong commitment to one another. Please choose your words carefully and consider the weight of the commitment you are making. For instance, if you say that you are committing to stay married 'in sickness and in health, for better for worse, for richer for poorer', before you agree to get married, you must be willing to speak these words and live them out with integrity.

There are two primary choices you will need to make with your vows: you can either use standard vows (several different options for you in the Appendix on page 36), or you may choose to write your own vows. If you choose to write your own vows, you will be asked to submit them to your officiating pastor one week prior to your wedding date so that he may review them before they are read publicly. We would suggest that you read your written vows (the pastor will hold your copy) and not try to memorize them. Please let your officiating pastor know which option you choose.

WEDDING SCRIPTURES FOR READING

You are encouraged to choose your own readings for your wedding. A suggested Scripture reading list is located in the Appendix on page 41. The Officiating Pastor and/or Wedding Coordinator will assist you in placing your reading(s) at the proper place(s) in the ceremony.

SECTION 5

GENERAL POLICIES

GENERAL POLICIES

SECURITY

Please ensure the Wedding Assistant knows the names and expected times of arrival of all wedding vendors that will need access to the building ahead of the wedding ceremony. An extra security officer is required for all weddings; this is included in the price of the wedding.

AUDIO/VISUAL (A/V) AND MUSIC

See page 80 for guidelines and agreement and page 40 for sample music.

- **A/V Technician:**
 - Due to the complexity of the church's sound equipment, only a trained approved church A/V Technician may operate the system. No exceptions will be made. A/V Tech will not be required to perform sound checks more than 2 hours prior to event start time.
- **Vocalists, Pianists and Musicians:**
 - These services may be requested through the Wedding Assistant. Vocalists' and musicians' fees may vary based on time requirements and music selections. It is your responsibility to see to it that payment arrangements are made for the musicians.
 - Please keep all music tasteful and appropriate for a Christian church event. All music will be approved by the Wedding Assistant: see page 91 for the music approval form.

FLORAL AND DÉCOR

See page 82 for guidelines and agreement.

- The Chapel may be decorated with flowers or preapproved candles ONLY.
- The grass fixtures in the chapel cannot be removed.

- Confetti, rice, birdseed, and like materials may NOT be thrown inside or outside the building,
- Rose petals, sparklers, and bubbles are permitted for send-off outside the building only,
- Watermark staff will NOT be responsible for helping decorate, deliver or move rented equipment and/or set-up for any other ancillary function related to your event.

CANDLES

- All candles must be **smokeless, dripless**, in an **approved glass container** in which the candle is fully covered,
- No open flames, no space heaters, no candles without approved glass holders. Use of candles requires approval in advance,
- Absolutely no candles along the aisle, stairways, exits or in front of fire extinguishers.

CATERING

See page 85 for guidelines and agreement.

- All Caterers must be approved by Wedding Assistant at least one month prior to the event.
- All Caterers must submit proof of insurance with signed agreement.
- We do not have a kitchen that can be used for the reception in the Loft. Our only kitchen is located on the 3rd floor of the West Tower. If no other event is taking place, this kitchen may only be used for keeping and storing food. Cooking is not permitted.
- The kitchen must be cleaned according to the cleaning checklist (see page 84).

LIABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

- Absolutely no alcoholic beverages are allowed on Watermark premises. Drunkenness will not be tolerated and is cause for the event to be cancelled.
- Wine is permitted if the couple chooses to include communion in their ceremony. We do not provide any of the elements for communion – i.e. bread, grape juice, a plate, napkin, etc.
- Smoking is not permitted in the building.

- Neither coordinators nor Watermark are responsible for any lost or stolen items.
- Watermark will not be liable for injuries to those attending your event.

MISCELLANEOUS AND PROPERTY

- Rehearsal dinners may not be held at Watermark.
- Set up and breakdown of **tables and chairs only** is provided by Watermark (unless notified to the contrary). Set-up requirements must be specified with the specified Wedding Assistant and diagramed on appropriate floor plan, two weeks prior to the event.
- All Watermark items will be cleared from the floor (with the exception of some areas of the Loft) and tables and chairs will be set up for the event. After the event, items will be reset on floor and church owned items returned to storage.
- Items included in your rental of the facility include banquet round and rectangular tables and the coordinating chairs. You are responsible for renting and returning all other items such as linens and dance floors. White round and rectangular linens may be rented from Watermark for \$6.50 per linen.
- There will be no moving of permanent Watermark furniture such as sofas, lounge chairs and decorative tables. Only the event furniture (banquet rounds, rectangle tables and coordinating chairs) is available for use. The 2nd and 3rd floor assembly room stages cannot / will not be moved for any reason.
- The proper use of equipment is required at all times. Any breakage or damage to church equipment must be reimbursed at replacement cost.
- No childcare or nursery facilities will be available.
- Reservations may be cancelled; however the original \$500 deposit becomes non-refundable 90 days out from the wedding date.
- Decorations cannot be hung from light/conduits, sprinkler pipe or sprinkler heads.
- The grass fixtures in the chapel cannot be removed.
- The following are mandatory services when getting married at Watermark: wedding coordinator, utilities, security guard, set-up, cleaning and A/V staff.

Custodial services are provided to assure clean, ready-to-use facilities. However, the Wedding Party is responsible for kitchen clean up done according to cleaning checklist.

SECTION 6

SERVICES

SERVICES

SERVICES OF THE WATERMARK WEDDING COORDINATOR

The services of the Watermark Wedding Coordinator are **required for all weddings**.

Serving as your Watermark liaison for your event, the Wedding Coordinator will be the main contact for any questions and assistance pertaining to your event. The coordinator's responsibilities include one pre-event planning meeting, the event timeframe and the post event clean-up timeframe.

Please note that if you plan on having an outside Wedding Planner, the Watermark Wedding Coordinator will be responsible for running all wedding related events on Watermark campus.

Specific services provided to you by the church Wedding Coordinator:

- Meet to discuss the process and review all details and plans for the event.
- Assure that all policies are understood and followed.
- Assist with approving type of event, florists, caterers and entertainment.
- Direct vendors and help with time management of the celebration.

SERVICES OF A/V TECHNICIANS

The services of the A/V technicians are required for all weddings.

Services are available as follows:

- Resources available include – video projection, CD players, PowerPoint, DVD players, live band support (per prior arrangements with the Technical Resources Coordinator).
- No A/V will be used at the rehearsal.
- We cannot accommodate lowering the stage from the 2nd and 3rd Floor assembly rooms to function as a dance floor. Dance floors must be rented from and assembled by an outside vendor. Arrangements for delivery and set-up of the dance floor are the responsibility of the user, in coordination with the Wedding Assistant or representative.
- Due to the nature of the audio system installation in the 3rd floor banquet room, we cannot relocate any staging into the room.
- Outside groups are required to supply their own musical instruments; we will supply only appropriate microphones and input points.
- Outside parties are responsible for bringing their own source media (i.e. videos, music compilations)
- Media to be used by outside parties must be in the following formats only:
 - Audio – Finalized/Closed CD, mp3 Player
 - Video – MPEG file, AVI file, Finalized/Closed DVD, Microsoft PowerPoint (.ppt)
- Outside groups are solely responsible for any pre- or post-production of media (i.e. source material, video or audio editing, etc.).
- The rates for A/V team will be compiled based upon the needs by the Technical Director and Technical Resources Coordinator (i.e. set-up, rehearsals, event, and tear-down) – please see fee schedule.
- Live music may incur an additional fee depending on the needs of the band. This will be decided prior to the wedding ceremony, and you will be informed of any price change.
- Any changes made within two weeks from the wedding date will not be guaranteed to be accommodated.

Please note that outside groups are required to use in-house A/V team unless an outside operator has been previously approved by the Technical Director or Technical Resources Coordinator.

SECTION 7

FEE SCHEDULE

FEE SCHEDULE

Use of facilities enlists standard contract hourly expectations. Rehearsal dinners may not be held at Watermark.

STANDARD CONTRACT HOURLY EXPECTATIONS

Everything must be cleaned up by 11 PM.

STANDARD CONTRACT HOURLY EXPECTATIONS	Rehearsal	Ceremony	Reception
Events Hours Allowed Under Contract	1	1	4
Facility Use Hours Allowed Under Contract	2	6	7

COSTS

Chapel - Ceremony Only (320 people)	\$1300
Reception - Tower/Building	\$600
Audio/Visual is included for the following: Ceremony: 2 Hour Reception: 1 Hour	-
Coffee Service - Reception	\$12.50 per 25 people + \$65 charge for brewer
Tablecloths - Reception	\$6.50 per linen

SERVICES INCLUDED WITH FEES

- Watermark Wedding Coordinator
- Utilities
- Security guard
- Set-up
- Cleaning
- A/V staff

A \$500 deposit will be collected no later than 2 weeks after the Wedding Policy Meeting deposit will be collected no later than 2 weeks after the Wedding Policy Meeting. This will be deducted from the total rental fee. The deposit is refundable up to 90 days prior to the wedding date at which point it becomes non-refundable.

IMPORTANT DATES

50% of the remaining fee is due two months prior to the wedding.

- The final 50% is due one month prior to the wedding.
- Please make checks payable to: WATERMARK COMMUNITY CHURCH
- Please include "Watermark Weddings" along with your first/last name in the notes section on your check.
- Payments should be sent to:

Watermark Wedding Coordinator
7540 LBJ Freeway
Dallas, TX 75251

SECTION 8

PROCESS CHECKLIST

PROCESS CHECKLIST

- Completed by: _____ Paid Deposit (due within two weeks of the initial meeting)
- Completed by: _____ Complete Merge or recommended retreat
- Completed by: _____ Contact Premarried Assistant for 2on2 Documents
(2 weeks after initial chapel meeting)
- Completed by: _____ Premarital mentoring with mentor couple (4-6 sessions)
- Completed by: _____ 1st meeting with Pastor
- Completed by: _____ 2nd meeting with Pastor
- Completed by: _____ 1st meeting with Wedding Coordinator
- Completed by: _____ Submit Music/AV Form
(due 1 month prior to the ceremony)
- Completed by: _____ Submit Musicians/DJ Form
(due 1 month prior to ceremony)
- Completed by: _____ Submit Floral/Décor Form
(due 1 month prior to ceremony)
- Completed by: _____ Submit Catering/Bakery Form
(due 1 month prior to ceremony)
- Completed by: _____ Submit Photographer/Videographer Form
(due 1 month prior to ceremony)
- Completed by: _____ Submit Watermark Event Agreement
(due 1 month prior to ceremony)
- Completed by: _____ Paid 2nd payment
- Completed by: _____ Paid final payment

SECTION 9

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

SAMPLE ORDER OF SERVICE

1. Seating of Grandparents
2. Seating of Parents
3. Processional
4. Welcome
5. Giving of the Bride
6. Scripture Reading
7. Song
8. Message
9. Exchange of Vows
10. Giving of Rings
11. Lighting of Unity Candle
12. Communion
13. Prayer
14. Pronouncement of marriage

NOTE: if officiating pastor is not from Watermark, please note on your ceremony program what church or organization he is representing.

SAMPLE VOWS

Option #1

Do you, [groom], take [bride], to be your wife, according to God's holy decree; do you promise to be to her a loving and loyal husband, to cherish and keep her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, to be faithful only to her as long as you both shall live? [I do.]

Do you, [bride], take [groom], to be your husband, according to God's holy decree; do you promise to be to him a loving and loyal wife, to cherish and keep him in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, to be faithful only to him as long as you both shall live? [I do.]

Option #2

[Bride], will you have this man to be your husband; to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live? [I will.]

[Groom], will you have this woman to be your wife; to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as you both shall live? [I will.]

Option #3

[Groom], the command of God to husbands is, "Husbands, love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave His own life for it." Loving as Christ is the key to the enjoyment of all that God has designed marriage to be. Therefore, do you willingly express your desire and intent to fulfill God's command to husbands and do you now commit to 'Wife' to be her husband? [I do.]

[Bride], the Scriptures teach that wives are to honor and respect their husbands, just as the church honors and respects Christ. To the wives God says, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church." 'Wife', this command of God is His word designed to make your marriage relationship a thing of beauty and joy. So in acceptance of this principle of God's word, do you now commit yourself to 'Husband' to be his wife, to join your lives together in living, permanent union as Christ to His church? [I do.]

Option #4

I, [groom], take you [bride], to be my wedded wife. To have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness or in health, to love and to cherish 'till death do us part. (or as long as we both shall live) And hereto I pledge you my faithfulness.

I, [bride], take you [groom], 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 do us part. (or as long as we both shall live) And hereto I pledge you my faithfulness.

Option #5

I, [groom], take you [bride], to be my wedded wife, and I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses, to be thy loving and faithful husband; in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live.

I, [bride], take you [groom], to be my wedded husband, and I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses, to be thy loving and faithful wife; in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live.

Option #6

I do commit myself to you, [bride], before God, to be your faithful and loving husband for all the years of our earthly life, to seek to love you even as Christ loves the Church, which is His bride.

I do commit myself to you, [groom], before God to be your faithful and loving wife for all the years of our earthly life to cherish our relationship in Christ and God's order for the family.

Option #7

I, [groom], created in God's image solely for His glory, saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, promise to love you, [bride], not only with words, but with actions and truth so that God's love is brought to full expression through us. I promise to be considerate and treat you with respect, to feed, care for, and manage our family well. Not to be harsh, quick-tempered, or overbearing. I will keep myself only unto you. I will put God first and you second, striving to love you better each day as your husband and your best friend. As Christ taught us to love by laying down His life I too will gladly lay down my life to protect you. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates us.

I, [bride], created in God's image solely for His glory, saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, promise to love you, [groom], not only with words, but with actions and trust so that God's love is brought to full expression through us. I promise to submit to you as you submit to Christ, to bring you good, not harm, to honor you with the dignity and reverence of my life keeping myself only unto you. I will put God first and you second, serving alongside you as your helper. I will strive to love you better each day as your wife and your best friend. Where you go, I will go and your God will be my God. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates us.

Option #8

I [groom] / [bride] take you [bride] / [groom] as my wedding wife / husband to have to and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness or in health, to love and to cherish, 'til death do us part, for as long as we both shall live.

SAMPLE MUSIC FOR THE CEREMONY

Pre-Ceremony Worship or Communion / Prayer Songs

Made to Worship
Mighty to Save
Here is Our King
Oh Praise Him
Unfailing Love
How Great is Our God
Cannons
Blessed Be Your Name
Here I am to Worship
Everything Glorious
Kindness
Glory to God Forever

Processional or Recessional Songs

Cannon in D
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring
Ode to Joy
Great is Thy Faithfulness
Be Thou My Vision
Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee
Trumpet Voluntary
Bridal Chorus

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE READINGS

All listed in English Standard Version.

Old Testament

Genesis 2:18-24 | Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him. Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature that was its name. The man gave names to all the livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Ruth 1:16-17 | But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you."

Isaiah 55:12-13 | For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Isaiah 63:7 | I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

Psalm 33 | Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright. Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings! Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts. For the word of the LORD is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD. By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage! The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man; from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds. The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue. Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you.

Psalm 34:1-3 | I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!

Psalm 67 | May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!

Psalm 100 | Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are His; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 150 | Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness! Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!

Proverbs 18:22 | He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.

Song of Solomon 2:10-13 | My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree ripens its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 | Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

New Testament

Matthew 5:13-16 | You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 7:24-27 | Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

Matthew 19:4-6 | He answered, "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."

Mark 10:6-9 | But from the beginning of creation, "God made them male and female. Therefore a man shall leave his father and 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.

John 15:9-15 | As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends. 14You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

Romans 12:9-18 | Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

1 Corinthians 13:1-8 | If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

Galatians 5:22-23 | But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Galatians 6:2 | Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Ephesians 3:17b-20 | ...that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us...

Ephesians 4:1-6, 20-32 | I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

But that is not the way you learned Christ! — assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Ephesians 5:21-33 | ...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Philippians 2:1-4 | So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Colossians 3:12-17 | Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on) love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

1 Peter 4:8 | Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

1 John 3:18 | Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

1 John 4:7-12 | Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

PREMARITAL PURITY PLEDGE

We believe that sex is a gift from God to be enjoyed in the context of marriage and that He had our best in mind when He gave us strong directives about sexual purity before marriage. There are many benefits to staying sexually pure before marriage. By waiting until marriage¹:

- You please God and experience the blessing of obedience.
- You build trust, which is necessary for intimacy.
- You develop the godly qualities of patience and self-control.
- You affirm that you care more for the other person than yourself.
- You protect yourself from feelings of guilt and shame.
- You provide yourself with an example to give your (future) children and others.
- You are protected from emotional, mental and physical trauma should you break off your relationship.
- You develop healthy communication habits and skills.
- You avoid the possibility of an unplanned pregnancy.
- You avoid the possibility of contracting a sexually transmitted disease.
- You increase the anticipation and enjoyment of your wedding night.
- You discover more about each other than just the physical.
- If you are a Christian, you maintain a witness to the world.
- If you are a Christian, you keep from bringing reproach on the name of Christ.

Although many couples believe engaging in sex prior to marriage will strengthen their relationship, we believe the opposite is true. We believe sex outside of marriage can slow down the growth of a couple's relationship by causing emotional confusion and distracting couples from pursuing activities that would be more meaningful and beneficial during the dating/engagement stage of a relationship. We believe it is worth noting that research² indicates a positive relationship between couples who live by biblical standards³ regarding purity and marriage longevity.

While physical intimacy is of huge importance in a healthy marriage, we do not believe it is the *foundation* upon which to build a great marriage. Therefore, the aim of this pledge is to help each couple focus on the essential building blocks of establishing a healthy marriage.

What is outlined below is a voluntary pledge, taken by a seriously dating or engaged couple, to sexual purity. This pledge is optional, but strongly encouraged. Therefore, we ask you to consider agreeing to limit your physical involvement, as indicated below, and to be held accountable by your mentor couple.

Sexual purity means much more than not having sexual intercourse before marriage. Many couples avoid intercourse but are still sexually intimate. Scripture defines sexual purity as being morally excellent. And moral excellence means being holy. It means avoiding the appearance of evil. It means purity of thought as well as purity of deed. It means protecting one another's innocence from being stained by impure actions.

Those considering or preparing for marriage are asked by their mentors to talk about the pledge privately and to pray about it before deciding whether to take this step. Regardless of what the decision is, the matter will remain a private one between Merge leadership and you. Ultimately, however, it is a spiritual matter between you and God.

Be honest about the physical part of your relationship. We know the Bible does not specifically address 'how far a couple can go before marriage,' however, it is clear that we are to flee from sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18).

If you are a follower of Jesus, then you want to live in a way that is radically different than culture. We are not to be conformed by the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12:1-2).

Consider making a commitment to keeping your physical activities between #1 – #3.

1. Holding hands
2. Hugging
3. Light kissing
4. French kissing
5. Kissing on the neck, ears or other parts of the body
6. Indirect stimulation of the breasts/genitals (e.g. "grinding")
7. Manual stimulation of the breasts/genitals

- 8. Oral stimulation of the breasts/genitals
- 9. Intercourse

If your physical activities exceed #3, we suggest the following steps:

- Confess to the Lord, and repent of your actions (Psalm 51:3-4).
- Confess and seek forgiveness from your partner.
- Inform your mentor couple. We recommend the male contact the male leader within 24 hours after exceeding the physical limit. If the man does not do so, the woman should call the female mentor.
- Calling your mentor does not circumvent the need to confess your actions to God; however, letting your mentor know keeps you accountable, so your focus can be on the spiritual, character-building issues that are important in forging a lifelong committed marriage.

Please note our expectation is that individuals who are members or leaders at Watermark Community Church will sign this pledge. If you chose not to, please initiate a conversation with Merge leadership and your community group so we can better understand your decision.

We pledge to hold our relationship to a Biblical standard, so the Lord might bless this relationship now, and in the many years ahead. Therefore, we agree to call our mentors if the physical involvement goes beyond level #3.

PREMARITAL COUPLE

MENTOR COUPLE

¹ Obtained from "Preparing for Marriage: Discover God's Plan for a Lifetime of Love" by David Boehi, et al

² See Kahn and London, "Premarital Sex and the Risk of Divorce" in Journal of Marriage and Family (1991) 53:845-855.

³ Selected scripture related to sexual purity:

- 1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

- Ephesians 5:3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.
- Hebrews 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.
- Proverbs 6:27-28 Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk with hot coals and his feet not be scorched?

STATEMENT ON COHABITATION

Exploring Cohabitation

In today's culture, cohabitation – living together before marriage – has become increasingly common, even among people of faith. Couples often find themselves asking the question, “Is this a wise next step for our relationship?” Frequently couples take this step out of a desire to test their relational compatibility without considering the implications it might have on their long-term commitment to one another or what God would have them choose to do.

As followers of Jesus, this decision isn't just about convenience, it's about honoring the Lord and his design for marriage. No matter where you are at spiritually: fully-devoted, newly exploring the faith, or disinterested in spiritual things, it is wise to consider what is best long term, not just in the moment. This guide is designed to give you a biblical perspective on cohabitation, while also helping you better understand the challenges and confusion that cohabitation could create

Impact On Future Marriage

Whether you're a follower of Jesus or not, the impact cohabitation can have on your future marriage should be a concern to all of us. Studies often land all over the map when it comes to cohabitation, but here are a few things that could potentially impact your marriage down the road.

Commitment ambiguity: Scott Stanley, a leading relationship researcher and psychologist, developed the concept of sliding vs. deciding. He says couples often slide into the decision to move in together out of convenience and gradual escalation of the relationship, instead of a thoughtful decision that they made together. These types of decisions bring confusion rather than clarity.

Sliding into these types of decisions can lead to couples choosing to stay together out of constraint (social, financial, practical) rather than dedication. This can lead couples to move forward in marriage, even when they both know they shouldn't, lowering relational satisfaction and stability, which could increase the risk of divorce.

Consumer mentality: A consumer mindset focuses on short term satisfaction, which undermines long-term commitment. Someone with a consumer mindset may be more likely to leave because of disillusionment, rather than work through the difficulties together. Lasting marriages are built on self-sacrifice and mutual commitment, not self-fulfillment and conditional agreements.

Contradicting biblical convictions: Knowingly ignoring biblical convictions can gradually dull our spiritual sensitivity over time, leading us to compromise in other areas of our relationship, either now or in the future. If you are willing to live outside of God’s design prior to marriage, you will more than likely be willing to step outside of God’s design within marriage. Healthy marriages require daily obedience to God’s word – which includes promoting peace, forgiveness, and purity.

Biblical Considerations

While scripture doesn’t contain a verse that directly says, “Thou shalt not live together before marriage,” it does consistently uphold a biblical sexual ethic that implies cohabitation outside of marriage contradicts God’s design. Here are a few verses to consider:

God’s Design for Marriage (Genesis 2:24)

“Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

This verse establishes a biblical order for marriage: leave, unite in marriage, then become one flesh. Sexual and emotional union happens within the context of the marriage covenant, not prior to.

Jesus’ Exchange with a Cohabiting Woman (John 4:16-18)

“...Jesus said to her, ‘Go, call your husband, and come here.’ The woman answered him, ‘I have no husband.’ Jesus said to her, ‘You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband...”

In this exchange Jesus doesn't excuse or ignore the woman's current situation, but he doesn't humiliate her either. Jesus brings up her relational history to reveal her deeper need. He neither affirms cohabitation nor reveals that our relational mistakes are a barrier to God's grace.

Honor the Marriage Bed (Hebrews 13:4)

“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and the adulterous.”

The Bible places a high value on sexual purity. Living together before marriage often involves shared intimacy, and even when it doesn't, it can lead to temptation, causing us to cross boundaries physically, sending a confusing message to others.

God's Desire for Sexual Purity (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.”

God sees the avoidance of sexual activity outside of marriage as an opportunity to be set apart, learning how to live self-controlled lives when it comes to temptations.

Flee Sexual Immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)

“Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

Rather than seeing how close we can get to the line, scripture calls us to flee sexual sin. Living together places couples in situations that make it difficult to honor this call.

Avoid Even a Hint (Ephesians 5:3)

“But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.”

Even the appearance of sexual immorality can harm your witness and confuse others' understanding of Christian values, leading them into possible temptation and/or sin.

Don't Be a Stumbling Block (Romans 14:13)

“Therefore, let us not pass judgement on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.”

Even if you believe your cohabitation is non-sexual or protected by physical boundaries, it may lead to confusion, temptation, or compromise for others. Relationship decisions are never purely private, and we should be aware of the impact our decisions have on those around us and choose to live above reproach (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

Opportunity To Trust

When it comes to cohabitation, it is easy to lean on our own understanding about what we believe is best for our relationship. God is inviting us to trust him. (Proverbs 3:5-6) It is possible to deepen your relationship and nurture closeness without compromising boundaries or ignoring your convictions. If finances are a concern, trust God to provide through the generous hospitality of his people. If compatibility is making you uneasy, take the time to discuss expectations, share beliefs and values, and support one another through self-sacrifice, which will lead to deeper commitment.

Questions To Consider

If you're considering living together before marriage or if you've already made that decision, pause and reflect on the following questions. Ask the Lord to direct your steps.

- Why are we considering living together?
- Are we both equally committed to a future together?

- Do we have a shared understanding of where our relationship is headed?
- Are we valuing convenience or commitment more in our relationship?
- What future impact might this decision have on our relationship?
- Are we honoring God with the choices we are making in our relationship?
- How might this decision impact our walk with God or our spiritual witness to others?
- If we decide to live together prior to marriage, how will we resist temptation?
- Are our friends, family, and community aware that we are processing this decision? How do they feel about it?
- What other options do we have to live separately during this season?
- Are we willing to invite mentors or a pastor into this conversation? Why or why not?

FAQ

Is it sinful to live together prior to marriage? Living together often implies a level of physical and emotional intimacy reserved only for marriage. (Hebrews 13:4) Living together creates an environment for temptation where sin is always near.

Can we live together if we are not having sex? Even if a couple intends to remain sexually pure, cohabitation blurs boundaries and doesn't reflect God's design for marriage. While it may be possible to live together and not be sexually active, realistically you're choosing to put yourself in consistently compromising situations that may be extremely difficult to emerge from sin-free.

How might cohabitation impact our witness to others? Scripture urges believers to avoid even the appearance of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:22) In 1 Corinthians 10:24, Paul instructs us not to seek our own good, but instead to look out for the good of others. It is wise to consider how your decision to live together prior to marriage will not just impact you, but also those around you.

Will living together prior to marriage hurt our future marriage? Historically, research has shown that cohabitation before marriage is associated with a significantly higher divorce rate. (Institute for Family Studies) Couples who move in together for practical reasons (money, convenience, etc.) often have worse outcomes (negative communication patterns, lower relational satisfaction, etc.) than couples who make a purposeful, intentional decision together. Living together creates

shared obligations, which increase constraints, making it tougher to end a relationship that isn't healthy or strong enough to progress toward marriage.

Is it ok to spend the night or travel together? We believe you can best honor God and one another, while dating, by not spending the night together or traveling alone together for the reasons listed below.

Spending the night and traveling together:

- Does not protect your heart. (Song of Solomon 3:5, Proverbs 4:23)
- Is not fleeing from temptation or immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18, 10:12-13, Ephesians 5:3)
- Is not a good witness to others. (Romans 12:2, Colossians 4:5)
- Is not the way to “test drive” the relationship (Proverbs 16:25)

SETTING BOUNDARIES

A Pathway to Deeper Connection

For many couples the idea of setting physical boundaries in your relationship feels like a step backward. But what if it was, instead, a step forward? As you participate in merge, we want to invite you into an opportunity to grow your relationship by setting boundaries that most of you know you need but may be afraid to set yourselves.

This class, and the invitation to set healthy boundaries, is rooted in a Biblical worldview. We believe God exists, he is good, and his design for sex within marriage leads to flourishing. We understand that you may not share these beliefs, but we think this exercise will introduce you to some principles that will lead to a deeper connection with God and each other.

We also believe this commitment will lead to deeper marital satisfaction, first and foremost by honoring the Lord in how we steward our relationships, and second, by creating a pathway to deeper connection through trust, mutual respect, and self-control.

Building Boundaries Together

It's helpful to be proactive, by establishing boundaries together before temptation is heightened. Healthy boundaries invite clarity, allowing you to avoid compromise when it comes to your personal convictions. As you have this conversation together, here are a few guidelines for building boundaries that honor the Lord and one another.

Clarify your convictions | When it comes to setting boundaries, where do you turn for direction and guidance? We believe the Bible lays the groundwork for healthy boundaries. Take some time to read through the passages below. What keywords or phrases stand out to you when it comes to God's desire for us? Write them out on the lines below the verses.

On sexual immorality:

- Colossians 3:5 - "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

- Hebrews 13:4 - "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and the adulterous."
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 - "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God."
- 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 - "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."
- Romans 13:14 - "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires."
- Romans 12:1-2 - "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

On temptation:

- James 1:14 - "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."
- 1 Corinthians 10:13 - "No temptation has overtaken that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."
- Galatians 5:16 - "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."
- Psalm 101:3 - "I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me."

Be honest and specific about your boundaries | When it comes to setting boundaries, you may land in a different place than your significant other. It is important to express what will help

these boundaries be effective. Be honest about personal struggles and current temptations, as well as areas where you feel vulnerable. Taking into consideration the verses above, write out some of your convictions when it comes to boundaries. Spend some time in prayer prior to completing this section. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into boundaries that will glorify the Lord.

Here are a few possible examples to consider:

- We will refrain from being alone together in a bedroom with the door closed, to avoid temptation or hinder our witness for Christ.
- We will limit our physical interactions to light kissing; to decrease the likelihood we cross other physical or mental boundaries.
- We will avoid spending the night at one another's place to avoid temptation or confusion.

Put your boundaries in writing | Discuss and write out your boundaries together. This will keep them memorable and visible, while also creating shared ownership. Consider what types of physical connection are healthy for your relationship, leading to deeper connection, rather than regret and shame. Consider what environments may increase temptation, rather than faithfulness. Be specific, as vague boundaries create confusion.

With prayerful consideration, reliance on God's grace, and dependence on his spirit, we commit to honor the physical boundaries we've established together. It is our desire to maintain these boundaries for the glory of God and for our good. We pursue obedience because we are loved by God, not in any attempt to earn God's love.

PREMARITAL COUPLE

MENTOR COUPLE

Invite Accountability & Input | It is tough to discern on our own where we should set our boundaries. We believe it is wise to invite input from trusted mentors, who are mature believers who will offer support, and not shame, who will help you set wise, healthy boundaries. Using the passages below as your guide, make a commitment to humble confession and sincere repentance with accountability, which should include both your community group and your merge leaders.

- 1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- James 5:16 - Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working
- Hebrews 4:15-16 - "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Revisit your boundaries | Setting boundaries is not a one-time event. Over time, you may need to reconsider or adjust them. Revisiting boundaries is a sign of dependence and wisdom, not failure. Our hope is not in performance-driven-effort or behavior modification; rather, it is in the finished work of Christ that makes us pure. (1 Peter 3:18, 2 Corinthians 5:21) When we obey, we give God glory. When we struggle, we humbly run to his grace to receive mercy

FAQ

What if we've already been sexually active together?

It's never too late to set new boundaries. Start with open, honest conversations about your intentions moving forward. It may be helpful to seek support from a trusted mentor or counselor.

What boundaries should we consider?

- Types of physical connection: Holding hands, hugging, light kissing, French kissing, kissing other parts of the body (neck, ears, etc.), indirect stimulation of breasts/genitals, manual stimulation of breasts/genitals, oral stimulation of breasts/genitals, and intercourse.
- Environments to consider: Late night hangouts, time together in a private setting, lounging or snuggling on beds or couches, watching movies or listening to music that stirs up explicit thoughts, trips away together or overnights.

Do boundaries ever change?

It is wise to communicate openly and be willing to hit reset as needed, if the boundaries are not keeping you in a healthy place. Don't get lax as the wedding approaches. Most couples find that boundaries need to tighten as the relationship deepens.

What if we cross a boundary?

Don't panic. Acknowledge the mistake, talk openly about what happened with one another and trusted mentors, then decide together how to reestablish your boundaries. Growth often comes through learning from past mistakes.

How does thought life play into this?

In 2 Corinthians 10:5, Paul encourages us to take every thought captive to obey Christ. Our thought life will have a significant impact on our actions. Jesus went as far as to say that if a man even looks at a woman lustfully, he has committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28) Guard your thought life by meditating on God's word and setting your mind on things above. (Psalm 119:9-11, Philippians 4:8, Colossians 3:1-17).

Do we have to set boundaries to attend Merge?

While it's not a requirement to attend Merge, setting boundaries in your relationship will be beneficial in honoring the Lord and each other's personal convictions. *We expect all Watermark members to complete this exercise and discuss with their merge leaders.*

WATERMARK'S PASTORAL STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

This document can also be read online at watermark.org/mdr or by scanning the QR code below



Introduction

This document addresses the important and sensitive topics of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. It is intended to provide direction rooted in Scripture while encouraging you to process these matters thoughtfully and in community with trusted believers.

We, the elders of Watermark, recognize the challenges of creating a document like this, as words can sometimes be misunderstood or interpreted through the lens of personal desires. While the Holy Spirit provides guidance to every believer, Scripture reminds us of the wisdom found in the counsel of many, especially in the context of a challenging marriage. This document is not a replacement for pastoral care, shepherding, or the input of elders, but a resource to guide you toward God's truth.

Readers approach this topic from different perspectives:

1. Those exploring marriage, divorce, and remarriage for the first time.
Now is the best time to establish convictions based on God's Word before circumstances or emotions take hold.
2. Those actively considering divorce or remarriage.
We encourage you to prayerfully process this document, actively pursue community, and seek help from others.
3. Those who have experienced divorce or remarriage.
Our aim is not to bring shame but to point you toward the hope and grace found in the gospel.

Finally, we ask you to engage with this material prayerfully and involve trusted leaders as you process it. While other interpretations of marriage, divorce, and remarriage exist, this document reflects the elders' understanding of Scripture and the responsibility entrusted to us at Watermark. May it serve as a helpful tool to guide you in truth, wisdom, and grace.

Marriage

The Bible teaches that God created marriage as a sacred and covenantal union between one man and one woman, intended to reflect his image and design and to display Christ's love for his bride—the Church. Marriage is described as a lifelong covenant based on mutual love, respect, and selflessness. It is built on the foundation of two image bearers who possess inherent dignity, worth, and value. The union of marriage is established through a covenant that mirrors the covenantal relationship between God and his people. Passages such as Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 highlight the divine intention for marriage to be a one-flesh union, symbolizing the deep, inseparable bond designed by God.

In the New Testament, Jesus emphasizes the permanence of marriage, teaching that it should never be dissolved casually. He addresses contemporary Jewish debates on divorce, correcting misconceptions and highlighting the importance of marital faithfulness and the sanctity of the marriage covenant. Paul further reinforces the sanctity of marriage by instructing spouses to love and honor one another, to fulfill their marital duties, and to remain committed even in challenging circumstances with the ultimate purpose of reflecting and glorifying Christ (e.g., Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16). Marriage, therefore, is depicted as a divine institution meant to mirror—though imperfectly—God's unwavering commitment to his people, encouraging mutual care, fidelity, and respect.

Summary

The biblical view of marriage is a profound reflection of God's covenantal relationship with humanity. It is a union characterized by commitment, love, and mutual respect, intended to last a lifetime by the grace of God and the empowerment of his Spirit.

Scripture Addresses

Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:24; Malachi 2:16; Matthew 5:31-32; Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16; Ephesians 5:22-33

Divorce

The Bible acknowledges the painful reality of divorce, recognizing it as a result of human sinfulness and hard-heartedness. Divorce is seen as the breaking of a sacred covenant, a tragic disruption of the one-flesh union that God intended to be lifelong. When divorce occurs, it is always the result of sin, but this does not mean divorce is always sinful.

While God's ideal for marriage is permanence, the Bible provides provisions for divorce in certain circumstances to protect the innocent and vulnerable. In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 regulated divorce practices to protect women from being unjustly abandoned and left without means of support. Moses permitted this regulation due to the hardness of people's hearts, ensuring that women received a certificate of divorce. This certificate allowed them to remarry and regain social and economic stability. Such a provision offered significant protection for women in a patriarchal society, preventing them from facing destitution or marginalization.

In the New Testament, Jesus reiterates the sanctity of marriage and condemns the practice of casual or easy divorce, as was common in the interpretations of some Jewish teachers of his time. Jesus emphasizes that divorce should not be sought lightly and underscores that marriage is a divine institution meant to reflect God's unbreakable covenant with his people. However, he acknowledges that due to the hardness of human hearts, divorce is permitted in specific, severe circumstances. Paul's teachings in 1 Corinthians 7 also emphasize that believers should strive to remain married and work toward reconciliation whenever possible, highlighting the importance of maintaining the marital bond.

As we look at Scripture, we strive to interpret it in biblical and God-honoring ways. We never want to permit something that God forbids, nor do we want to forbid something that God permits. And while it's true we understand Scripture to permit divorce in rare and severe circumstances, it's our experience that the vast majority of difficult marriages do not meet these biblical criteria. Rather, we see reconciliation as the faithful and primary path for most couples, which glorifies God and reflects his covenant love and redemptive grace.

With that in mind, this document will explore two categories where Scripture explicitly permits divorce—sexual immorality and abandonment by an unbelieving spouse—as well as how abuse may, in certain cases, functionally amount to abandonment. Each is addressed in the sections that follow.

Sexual Immorality

The Bible regards sexual immorality (Gk. *porneia*) as a severe breach of the marriage covenant. This term encompasses a range of illicit sexual behaviors, including adultery, prostitution, incest, homosexuality, and bestiality—all of which violate the trust and sanctity inherent in marriage. In Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, Jesus acknowledges the gravity of such actions by making an allowance for divorce in cases when the covenant has been profoundly violated. Sexual immorality is more than just a physical act; it is a profound violation of the spiritual and covenantal relationship within marriage, undermining the bond meant to mirror the faithful and exclusive relationship between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:31-32). Further clarity on the topic of pornography is provided in the FAQ section.

Though divorce may be permitted in certain cases of sexual immorality, it is never mandated. The Bible consistently calls for forgiveness, reconciliation, and the pursuit of restoration whenever possible. Jesus' teaching challenges both the permissive view of the Hillel school (which allowed divorce for nearly any reason) and the strict view of the Shammai school (which often saw divorce as obligatory for sexual sin). Instead, Jesus addressed divorce by pointing back to the Creation account in Genesis, emphasizing God's original design for marriage as a lifelong and unbreakable union. We see Jesus reinforcing the biblical teaching that reconciliation and restoration should always be the primary goal.

We encourage anyone in this situation to prayerfully consider Scripture and to seek biblical guidance from church leaders and trusted believers as they navigate this extremely complex scenario.

Abandonment

As in all circumstances, God's heart—even in cases of abandonment—is reconciliation. In 1 Corinthians 7:15-16, Paul specifically addresses the situation when an unbelieving spouse deserts (abandons) a believing spouse, stating that the believer is “not enslaved” and is free to let the marriage end.

This principle may also apply in cases when a "professing Christian" persists in behavior that flagrantly violates their covenantal responsibilities, such as sustained patterns of unrepentant sin, hardness of heart, or a refusal to pursue reconciliation, effectively abandoning their spouse. In such situations, the church and its leaders may, after careful shepherding and church discipline, recognize the unrepentant spouse as functionally acting as an unbeliever. When this occurs, the abandoned spouse may view 1 Corinthians 7:15-16 as a biblical basis for dissolving the marriage.

However, as we shepherd those navigating difficult marriages, we must also consider Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, where he exhorts believing spouses to remain married and, if separation occurs, to pursue reconciliation rather than immediate divorce. This reminds us that while abandonment may, in certain circumstances, provide grounds for divorce, the goal should always be restoration when possible. A hasty or overly broad application of this principle could lead to situations when a struggling spouse is too quickly labeled as an “unbeliever” to justify ending the marriage. Instead, there should be a careful and prayerful process of discernment, seeking biblical counsel, and exhausting all reasonable efforts for reconciliation before concluding that abandonment has truly occurred in a way that aligns with Scripture.

Abuse

Abuse, encompassing physical, emotional, sexual, and spiritual harm, violates the core commitments of love, honor, and protection that are fundamental to marriage. While the Bible does not explicitly list “abuse” as a stated ground for divorce, it consistently upholds the dignity and protection of individuals, condemns oppression and violence, and calls husbands and wives to love and care for one another (Ephesians 5:25-29; Colossians 3:19; Malachi 2:16).

While reconciliation is always God's heart, reconciliation does not mean returning to an abusive situation. The safety of the abused spouse is paramount, and immediate separation is often necessary while the church provides care, protection (including the potential involvement of law enforcement), and shepherding.

In 1 Corinthians 7:15, Paul permits divorce if an unbelieving spouse abandons a believing spouse. While this passage does not explicitly address abuse, a persistent and unrepentant pattern of abuse may functionally amount to abandonment when the abuser's actions destroy the marital covenant and forsake their responsibilities. In such cases, the church must carefully assess the situation, ensuring that accountability, biblical discipline, and clear steps toward safety and healing are in place.

Recognizing abuse requires careful discernment, and church leadership has a responsibility to provide a thorough and compassionate process. Repentance in the context of abuse must be more than words; it requires genuine, long-term change, demonstrated through tangible actions, accountability, and the rebuilding of trust. When true repentance is absent, church leaders may conclude that the abuser is acting as an unbeliever (Matthew 18:17). In such cases, church leaders may reach a place where they view the abuse as a form of abandonment, which could constitute biblical grounds for divorce.

Our commitment as the church is to protect the vulnerable, provide biblical guidance, and ensure that no one is pressured to remain in an unsafe situation under the guise of reconciliation.

Summary

The Bible acknowledges divorce as a painful reality resulting from human sinfulness and hard-heartedness. While always a consequence of sin, divorce is not always sinful. Though God's ideal is lifelong marriage, Scripture permits divorce in certain cases of sexual immorality and abandonment by an unbelieving spouse. In some cases, abuse may be understood as a form of abandonment or neglect that rises to the level of covenant-breaking. Even then, reconciliation should always be the first pursuit, reflecting God's grace. Before considering divorce, every effort

should be made to seek repentance and healing with church support. Upholding the sanctity of marriage and striving for reconciliation honors God's original design for a lifelong covenant.

Scripture Addresses

Genesis 2:24; Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Malachi 2:16; Matthew 5:31-32; Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16; Ephesians 5:25-29, 31-32; Exodus 21:10-11

Remarriage

When divorce is not justified according to biblical teachings, entering into a new marriage (with someone other than the original spouse) is considered an act of infidelity according to Scripture (Matthew 5:32, 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18). 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 exhorts believers to remain in their marriage or, if divorced, to remain unmarried or be reconciled. This principle underscores that divorce does not automatically grant freedom to remarry—rather, every situation must be carefully evaluated through the lens of Scripture and godly counsel.

When reconciliation is truly not possible, we believe that remarriage is a permissible option.

Determining when reconciliation is no longer possible is a weighty matter. Historically, two clear biblical markers indicate the end of reconciliation:

- 1) The death of a former spouse (1 Corinthians 7:39; Romans 7:2-3)
- 2) The remarriage of a former spouse, which permanently severs the possibility of reconciliation (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)

Beyond these, if a divorce occurred on biblically justified grounds—such as unrepentant sexual immorality, abandonment, or abuse that destroyed the marriage covenant—remarriage may be permissible. However, it should be pursued with wisdom, patience, and the guidance of biblical community. Reconciliation should always be earnestly pursued before moving toward remarriage.

To ensure clarity, we have provided further guidance on remarriage in the FAQ section.

Scripture Addresses

Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16; 1 Corinthians 7:39; Romans 7:2-3; Deuteronomy 24:1-4

Overall Summary

Our view on marriage, divorce, and remarriage is grounded in the biblical ideal of lifelong, monogamous marriage between one man and one woman as a sacred covenant reflecting Christ's love for the Church. While divorce is permissible in certain cases of sexual immorality, abandonment, and abuse, it is far from mandated, and reconciliation should always be the first pursuit, both before and after divorce, when possible. The Bible calls us to forgive and seek restoration, recognizing that marriage is meant to reflect God's enduring love and commitment. The overarching principle is to uphold the sanctity of marriage while providing compassion and justice in circumstances when the covenant has been gravely violated.

FAQ

Is marriage God's plan for everyone?

Absolutely not. If you are single, take heart in knowing that singleness and marriage are both reliable paths to an abundant life.

While marriage is a divine institution that reflects God's unwavering commitment to his people, it is not ultimate, nor is it required for everyone. Jesus makes this clear in Matthew 19:10-12, and Paul affirms it in 1 Corinthians 7, teaching that singleness can be a gift that allows for undistracted devotion to the Lord.

Marriage is a shadow of God's love for his bride, the Church, not a perfect reflection of it. It is a good and God-ordained covenant, but it is not the answer to our deepest needs. Marriage, or even remarriage, cannot fix what is broken in our hearts—that restoration comes only through Christ.

Whether single or married, every believer is called to pursue faithfulness, holiness, and contentment in Christ, knowing that our ultimate fulfillment is found in him, not in any human relationship.

How should we view separation?

Keeping in mind the Lord's desire for couples to remain married (Matthew 19:6), we acknowledge that in some cases, separation may be necessary for the safety and well-being of one or both spouses. However, separation should not be viewed as a step toward divorce but rather as a season for healing, reflection, and possible restoration.

Reconciliation should remain the goal as both the husband and wife seek the Lord's will, receive the counsel of mature believers, and address personal issues that contributed to their separation. To ensure separation is intentional and purposeful, we encourage couples to follow the 4 Ps of Separation:

1. Plan: Establish clear goals for the separation.
2. Purpose: Define the reason for the separation and what it hopes to accomplish.
3. People: Involve trusted community, care teams, and counselors for support and accountability.
4. Period: Set a specific timeframe to reassess progress and next steps.

When done wisely and with godly counsel, separation can serve as a tool for restoration rather than dissolution, providing space for healing, trust-building, and biblical reconciliation.

Briefly explain the audience when Jesus was asked about divorce by the Pharisees.

When the Pharisees attempted to trap Jesus with a question about divorce, he confronted their distorted view by pointing back to God's original design in Genesis 1:27 and 2:24—that marriage is a lifelong, unbreakable covenant. At the time, Jewish thought was heavily influenced by the Hillel and Shammai schools. The Hillel school interpreted "some indecency" in Deuteronomy 24:1 broadly, allowing a man to divorce his wife for almost any reason—even something as trivial as burning his dinner—while the Shammai school permitted divorce only in cases of sexual immorality.

Jesus did not align himself with either school. Instead, he transcended their debate by pointing back to God's original design for marriage as a permanent, covenantal union. While Jesus acknowledged sexual immorality (Matthew 19:3-9) as grounds for divorce, he did not require divorce in such cases, emphasizing reconciliation and restoration whenever possible. His strict

stance on the permanence of marriage surprised even his disciples, who responded, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry” (Matthew 19:10).

Later, Paul builds on Jesus’ teaching in 1 Corinthians 7, maintaining the high view of marriage while also addressing situations such as abandonment by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15).

How should I interpret the phrase “God hates divorce”?

The phrase "God hates divorce" comes from Malachi 2:16 and is often cited to underscore the seriousness of divorce. However, recent scholarship and (some solid) translations (including the ESV) suggest a more nuanced understanding. Some interpretations argue that the verse actually refers to a man who hates and divorces his wife, emphasizing the treachery and injustice involved. This perspective aligns with the broader biblical context, which acknowledges the deep pain and societal disruption caused by divorce. Rather than indicating that all divorces are morally wrong, it highlights God's grief over the harmful consequences of divorce. This understanding encourages believers to approach marriage with a deep commitment to reconciliation and restoration, recognizing the profound impact of divorce while also making compassionate allowances for situations involving severe breaches of the marriage covenant.

Should we really consider the Matthew 19 “exception clause” when we don’t find it in Luke or Mark?

The “exception clause” refers to Jesus’ statement in Matthew 19:9 (and also Matthew 5:32), where he allows for divorce in certain cases of sexual immorality. The absence of the exception clause in Mark and Luke does not negate its validity, as each Gospel was written with different audiences and emphases in mind. Matthew's inclusion of the exception clause addresses a specific debate among Jewish teachers of the time regarding grounds for divorce. The absence of the clause in Mark and Luke likely reflects the assumption that their audiences were already aware of such exceptions, highlighting the need to interpret Scripture holistically rather than in isolation.

Does my spouse’s viewing of pornography constitute biblical grounds for divorce?

Pornography is a sin that is deeply harmful to the individual and the marriage. It undermines trust, intimacy, and the integrity of the marital relationship. Therefore, pornography addiction or use should be addressed with urgency, repentance, and accountability. It is a serious issue that requires intentional steps toward healing, including biblical counseling and community support. However, we don't believe it automatically should be considered biblical grounds for divorce.

That said, prolonged, unrepentant engagement in pornography, especially if it leads to a refusal to pursue reconciliation or restoration, could signal a deeper rejection of the marriage covenant. This is why it's essential to seek pastoral guidance, involve community, and approach the situation prayerfully. The focus should always be on pursuing healing, accountability, and restoration wherever possible, reflecting God's redemptive heart.

Does porneia refer exclusively to premarital sex during the betrothal period (engagement)?

Very unlikely. While some interpretations suggest that porneia in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 could refer specifically to sexual immorality during the betrothal period, the broader scholarly consensus is that porneia encompasses a wide range of sexual sins. This includes adultery, fornication, homosexuality, and other forms of illicit sexual behavior. Importantly, in Matthew 19:3-9, Jesus is addressing a question about divorce, which implies he is speaking within the context of marriage, not engagement.

If people get divorced, are they still married in God's eyes?

According to Scripture, divorce does legally and relationally end a marriage, but it does not mean that remarriage is automatically permitted. Jesus emphasizes the seriousness of divorce in Matthew 19:6 ("What God has joined together, let no one separate"), yet he and Paul also acknowledge legitimate grounds for divorce (see Divorce section). 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 provides further clarity, stating that if a woman separates from her husband, she should "remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband." Paul uses the Greek word *agamos* (meaning "unmarried") to describe her status, indicating that divorce does, in some sense, end the marriage covenant. However, the priority remains reconciliation where possible rather than assuming freedom to remarry.

If someone has gotten a divorce for illegitimate reasons, can he/she still get remarried biblically? Jesus teaches that remarriage after an illegitimate divorce constitutes adultery (Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12). This implies that the original marriage covenant is still recognized by God. However, once remarriage has occurred, breaking up the new marriage would not be advisable, as it would constitute further sin by destroying another marriage (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). Repentance and seeking forgiveness for the illegitimate divorce are crucial, and moving forward, the individual should adhere to biblical principles regarding marriage and divorce. The overarching principle is to honor the sanctity of marriage and strive for reconciliation whenever possible.

Does Romans 7:2-3 imply that remarriage is only allowed after a spouse's death?

Romans 7:2-3 emphasizes the lifelong commitment of marriage by using the example of a woman being bound to her husband until his death. This passage primarily serves as an analogy to illustrate believers' release from the Law through Christ. While it underscores the permanence of marriage, it does not address specific exceptions for divorce and remarriage found elsewhere in Scripture. Therefore, while Romans 7:2-3 highlights the ideal of lifelong marriage, it does not negate the biblical grounds for divorce and remarriage in certain circumstances.

When is reconciliation no longer possible, and when is remarriage biblically permitted?

Reconciliation should always be the first goal in any situation involving divorce. Remarriage should never be pursued lightly. However, the Bible presents clear instances where reconciliation is no longer possible, and remarriage becomes a permissible option:

1. The death of a former spouse (1 Corinthians 7:39; Romans 7:2-3)
2. The remarriage of a former spouse, which permanently severs the possibility of reconciliation (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)
3. Divorce that occurred on clear biblical grounds (e.g., sexual immorality or abandonment), after reconciliation has been prayerfully pursued and efforts toward restoration have been exhausted. In such cases, 1 Corinthians 7:15-16 suggests that the abandoned spouse is "not enslaved". Remarriage in these circumstances is not considered sin and reflects a biblically permitted freedom.

Who determines when reconciliation is no longer possible?

This is a decision that should not be made in isolation. Scripture, godly counsel, and church leadership should all be involved in discerning whether remarriage is biblically appropriate. No one should presume that remarriage is automatically the next step after divorce. Patience, prayer, and wise counsel are critical in processing such a significant decision.

When abuse has occurred in a marriage, how does the abuser’s repentance factor into determining whether a divorce is permitted?

1 Corinthians 7:15 applies when an unbelieving spouse abandons—or, by implication, abuses—a believing spouse. In such cases, for the believing spouse to be considered “free,” the church must determine that the offending spouse is acting as an unbeliever, meaning they persist in unrepentant sin, refuse correction, and reject biblical accountability.

Repentance is not just a one-time confession but an ongoing turning away from sin, demonstrated by consistent actions over time. True repentance includes acknowledgment of wrongdoing, willingness to submit to spiritual authority, and clear, measurable change. Where repentance is absent, church discipline (Matthew 18:17) should take place, and if the offender remains unrepentant, they should be treated as a non-believer, at which point divorce may be biblically permissible.

This process takes time, and the safety of the victim must be prioritized while the abuser is called to repentance. While the church supports the victim in healing, care must also be taken to shepherd them toward biblical faithfulness in their own actions without excusing sin or fostering bitterness. The goal in all cases is to uphold both protection and biblical integrity, ensuring that decisions about divorce are made with wisdom, accountability, and a heart aligned with God’s design for marriage and justice.

What does the Bible say about gender?

We believe God created mankind in his image, forming each person in the womb from conception (Psalm 139:13-16; Isaiah 44:2; 49:5; Jeremiah 1:4-5) until the point of death when they breathe their last (Genesis 25:8; Luke 23:46); and assigning gender to his people, male (man) and female (woman), as he created them sexually and biologically different, but with equal personal dignity and value (Genesis 1:26-28).

Practical Steps For Those Facing Challenges In Their Marriage

If you are struggling in your marriage, we encourage you to take the following steps as you seek God's wisdom and guidance:

1. Trust God to help you do what feels impossible.

God empowers us through the Holy Spirit to follow his Word, even in difficult circumstances. Seek him in prayer and rely on his strength rather than your own.

Key Scripture: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

2. Invite others whom you trust to offer godly counsel and support.

Do not walk through this alone. God provides the body of Christ—friends, mentors, community, and church leaders—to help guide and support you. Fear, shame, or self-reliance can delay the help you need most. Be aware that in challenging circumstances, our tendency will be to want friends to tell us what we want to hear instead of the biblical truth we need to hear.

Key Scripture: "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety." (Proverbs 11:14)

3. Seek wisdom from Scripture and prayerfully apply it.

God's Word provides clear direction for how to love, forgive, and navigate challenges in marriage. Spend time in prayer and Scripture, asking God to soften your heart and shape your actions.

Key Scripture: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105)

4. Pursue reconciliation whenever possible.

Marriage is designed to reflect God's commitment to his people. If reconciliation is possible, take intentional steps toward healing with the help of trusted community and church leadership.

Key Scripture: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."
(Romans 12:18)

5. If separation or divorce is being considered, seek wise, biblical counsel.

Major decisions should never be made in isolation. Before taking any steps toward separation or divorce, seek guidance from church leaders, biblical counselors, and trusted believers who will walk with you in truth and love.

Key Scripture: "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed." (Proverbs 15:22)

By taking these steps, you are inviting God into your marriage and allowing him to work in ways that may be beyond what you can see or imagine.

Closing Prayer

A prayer from the Watermark elders

"Father, thank you for your gift of marriage. We pray that every current and future marriage at Watermark would truly reflect the love Christ has for his Church. For the marriages that are struggling, we pray for your hope and healing. For the marriages that have ended, we pray for your grace and even your restoration. We pray this document would only help your people glorify you fully in decisions regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage. We ask and pray that you would guard anyone from using this document to justify any action that is not pleasing to you. May your Spirit lead and guide every believer into all truth so that you would be glorified in your people. In the name of Jesus, Amen."

SECTION 10

GUIDELINES AND AGREEMENTS

GUIDELINES AND AGREEMENTS

MUSICIAN(S)/DJ GUIDELINES

Please make sure your Musician(s)/DJ is aware of and has a copy of these guidelines. The Musician/DJ must sign and return the attached agreement at least one month before the event.

- The Musician/DJ must contact the Wedding Assistant at least one month before the event to make arrangements for set-up and location information. The facilities will be made available for set-up two hours before the event start time. If this creates a conflict with another scheduled event, the Coordinator will set another time for set-up. If the room is not occupied for another event earlier access may be available.
- Musicians and DJs are required to supply all their own equipment and will not be allowed to use any Watermark A/V equipment. Watermark does have a full keyboard available for use in the Chapel.
- Any equipment used must not deface the church furniture or building property.
- Musicians and DJs are responsible for removal all equipment immediately following the event.

MUSICIAN(S)/DJ GUIDELINES AND AGREEMENT

Bride / Groom:	Event Date:
Watermark Wedding Assistant:	Phone: (214) 393-3043
Vendor:	Phone:

Thank you for helping to make this a joyous occasion. Watermark Community Church is happy to assist you in creating a worshipful atmosphere for the event. We ask that you read, sign, and return this agreement at least one month prior to the event. If you have questions or need assistance, please call the Wedding Assistant.

The following guidelines are furnished so that we may work together as smoothly as possible:

- Return signed Agreement to Wedding Assistant one month prior to event.
- The Musicians/DJ should contact the Wedding Assistant at least one month before the event to make arrangements for set-up and location information.
- The facilities will be made available according to the agreed upon time slot.
- Musicians and DJ are required to supply all their own equipment and will not be allowed to use any Watermark A/V equipment. Watermark does have a full keyboard available for use in the Chapel.
- Any equipment used must not deface the church furniture or building property.
- **Musicians and DJ are responsible for removal of all their equipment immediately following the event.**

Vendor

Wedding Assistant

Date

Date

Please make a copy for your records and return this signed form at least one month before the event to: Watermark, Attn: Wedding Assistant, 7540 LBJ Freeway, Dallas, TX 75251

FLORAL/DÉCOR GUIDELINES

Please make sure your florist is aware of and has a copy of these guidelines. The decorator/florist must sign and return the attached agreement at least one month before the event.

- The florist must contact the Wedding Assistant at least one month before the event to make arrangements for decorating. The facilities will be made available for decorating according previously agreed upon time slot. Earlier access to decorate is not available.
- Please have the florist provide the final floral order to the Wedding Assistant as soon as it is complete.
- Florists are expected to provide their own plants and decorations for the event.
- Real flower petals **may not** be scattered on the carpet.
- The placing of decorations must not deface the church furniture or building property. This prohibits the use of nails, tacks, screws, staples, pins or most kinds of tape in any part of the building or on any furniture. There can be nothing hanging from the ceiling.
- Smokeless and dripless candles are permitted in approved glass holders only.
- The chapel may only be decorated with flowers.
- Decorators must strike all decorations immediately following the event.
- If church staff is being used for set up and breakdown then room arrangements must be communicated in the event detail page.

FLORAL/DECOR GUIDELINES AND AGREEMENT

Bride / Groom:	Event Date:
Watermark Wedding Assistant:	Phone: (214) 393-3043
Vendor:	Phone:

Thank you for helping to make this a joyous occasion. Watermark Community Church is happy to assist you in creating a worshipful atmosphere for the event. We ask that you read, sign, and return this agreement at least one month prior to the event. If you have questions or need assistance, please call the Wedding Assistant.

The following guidelines are furnished so that we may work together as smoothly as possible:

- Return signed Agreement to Wedding Assistant one month prior to event. Include copy of complete Floral Order with signed Agreement.
- The facilities will be made available according to the agreed upon time slot.
- Florists are expected to provide their own plants and decorations for the event.
- Real flower petals **may not** be scattered on the carpet.
- The placing of decorations must not deface the church furniture or building property.
- Smokeless and dripless candles are permissible only when used in approved glass container.
- **Decorators must strike all decorations immediately following the event.**
- If church staff is being used for set up and breakdown then room arrangements must be discussed with the Wedding Assistant at least one month before the event and must be detailed in this Agreement.

Vendor

Wedding Assistant

Date

Date

Please make a copy for your records and return this signed form at least one month before the event to: Watermark, Attn: Wedding Assistant, 7540 LBJ Freeway, Dallas, TX 75251

CATERER/BAKERY GUIDELINES

Please make sure your caterer and/or bakery is aware of and has a copy of these guidelines. The caterer/bakery must read, sign, and return the attached agreement and guidelines, along with proof of insurance and a copy of the Banquet Event Order (BEO) at least one month before the event.

Caterers/bakeries must adhere to the following guidelines:

- The caterer/bakery must contact the Wedding Assistant at least one month before the event to make arrangements for set-up.
- Bring his / her own equipment and staff for serving and cleaning at the event.
- Follow the below cleaning checklist. The cleaning standards should be posted in the kitchen as well.
- **The kitchen may not be used for food preparation** but simply as a place from which to serve during the event. Food should be prepared off-site and delivered to the Tower or Loft for the reception. A refrigerator and microwave are in the kitchens. Preparation of the meal and cleanup of the kitchen is the responsibility of the event host. They should appoint someone in advance of the event day to assure that cleanup is done and trash is left in appropriate containers.
- The caterer is responsible for any damage to property, equipment, carpets, etc. beyond reasonable wear.

Cleaning Checklist:

- _____ Remove all decorations and personal items.
- _____ Empty refrigerator.
- _____ Bag all trash.
- _____ Empty coffeemaker filter.
- _____ Clean, dry and put away coffee pots.
- _____ Wipe down cutting boards.
- _____ Wash, dry and put away all dishes.
- _____ Put all items in the appropriate labeled areas.

CATERING/BAKERY GUIDELINES AND AGREEMENT

Bride / Groom:	Event Date:
Watermark Wedding Assistant:	Phone: (214) 393-3043
Vendor:	Phone:

Thank you for helping to make this a joyous occasion. Watermark Community Church is happy to assist you in creating a worshipful atmosphere for the event. We ask that you read, sign, and return this agreement at least one month prior to the event. If you have questions or need assistance, please call the Wedding Assistant.

The following guidelines are furnished so that we may work together as smoothly as possible:

- Return signed Agreement to Wedding Assistant one month prior to event. Include copy of Banquet Event Order (BEO) or Event Menu and proof of insurance with signed Agreement.
- The facilities will be made available according to the agreed upon time slot.
- Must provide his / her own equipment and staff for serving and cleaning before, during, and after the event.
- Follow the list of cleaning standards per attached checklist (page 63).
- **The church kitchen may not be used for food preparation** but simply as a place from which to serve during the reception.
- The caterer is responsible for any damage to property, equipment, carpets, etc. beyond reasonable wear.

Vendor

Wedding Assistant

Date

Date

Please make a copy for your records and return this signed form at least one month before the event to: Watermark, Attn: Wedding Assistant, 7540 LBJ Freeway, Dallas, TX 75251

RENTAL COMPANY GUIDELINES

Please make sure your Rental Company is aware of and has a copy of these guidelines. The company must sign and return the attached agreement at least one month before the event.

- The Rental Company must contact the Wedding Assistant at least one month before the event to make arrangements for set-up and location information. The facilities will be made available for set-up two hours before the event start time. If this creates a conflict with another scheduled event, the Coordinator will set another time for set-up. If the room is not occupied for another event earlier access may be available.
- The rented equipment – linens, tables, dance floor, etc. – must be removed immediately after the event. We do not permit overnight storage.
- Any equipment used must not deface the church furniture or building property.

RENTAL COMPANY GUIDELINES AND AGREEMENT

Bride / Groom:	Event Date:
Watermark Wedding Assistant:	Phone: (214) 393-3043
Vendor:	Phone:

Thank you for helping to make this a joyous occasion. Watermark Community Church is happy to assist you in creating a worshipful atmosphere for the event. We ask that you read, sign, and return this agreement at least one month prior to the event. If you have questions or need assistance, please call the Wedding Assistant.

The following guidelines are furnished so that we may work together as smoothly as possible:

- Return signed Agreement to Wedding Assistant one month prior to event.
- The Rental Company should contact the Wedding Assistant at least one month before the event to make arrangements for set-up and location information.
- The facilities will be made available according to the agreed upon time slot.
- Any equipment used must not deface the church furniture or building property.
- **The Rental Company is responsible for removal of all their equipment immediately following the event. There will be no overnight storage.**

Vendor

Wedding Assistant

Date

Date

Please make a copy for your records and return this signed form at least one month before the event to: Watermark, Attn: Wedding Assistant, 7540 LBJ Freeway, Dallas, TX 75251

PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER GUIDELINES

Please make sure your photographer and/or videographer is aware of and has a copy of these guidelines. We believe marriage is a great gift from the Lord, given to us in order to put His greatness on display for the world. The majority of couples want to remember this great day with photos and/or videos. We ask that all Photographers and Videographers respect the guidelines below:

- The photographer may take pictures before or after the ceremony in several areas of the building: The Bride's Room, The Groom's Room, Atrium, The Loft, The Chapel. You can also use outside of the building if desired.
- All pre-wedding photos must be completed 30 minutes prior to the start of the Ceremony.
- Movement allowed near the altar will be communicated by the Watermark Wedding Coordinator.
- If you move furniture, we ask that you please return it to its original position.
- If the photographer is present at rehearsal, we ask that they do not disrupt the flow of the rehearsal because there is a one-hour time limit.
- After ceremony photos must be completed within one hour.
- Lighting will be arranged with the Bride, Groom and A/V individual prior to the wedding.
- Please remember this is a Wedding and we request that you dress appropriately for the occasion. Comfortable business casual would be considered appropriate.
- A video may be set stationary and may not be moving around during the ceremony.
- All photographers/videographers must use their own equipment. No Watermark equipment is available for use.

PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER GUIDELINES AND AGREEMENT

Bride / Groom:	Event Date:
Watermark Wedding Assistant:	Phone: (214) 393-3043
Vendor:	Phone:

Thank you for helping to make this a joyous occasion. Watermark Community Church is happy to assist you in creating a worshipful atmosphere for the event. We ask that you read, sign, and return this agreement at least one month prior to the event. If you have questions or need assistance, please call the Wedding Assistant.

The following guidelines are furnished so that we may work together as smoothly as possible:

- The photographer may take pictures before or after the ceremony in several areas of the building: Bride’s Room, Groom’s Room, Atrium, The Loft, The Chapel. You can also use outside of the building.
- All pre-wedding photos must be completed 30 minutes prior to the start of the Ceremony
- Movement allowed near the altar will be communicated by the Watermark Wedding Coordinator.
- If you move furniture, we ask that you please return it to its original position.
- If the photographer is present at rehearsal, we ask that they do not disrupt the flow of the rehearsal because there is a one-hour time limit.
- After ceremony photo’s must be completed within one hour.
- Lighting will be arranged with the Bride, Groom and A/V individual prior to the wedding.
- Please remember this is a Wedding and we request that you dress appropriately for the occasion. Comfortable business casual would be considered appropriate.
- A video may be set stationery and may not be moving around during the ceremony.
- All photographers/videographers must use their own equipment. No Watermark equipment is available.

Vendor

Wedding Assistant

Date

Date

**Please make a copy for your records and return this signed form at least one month before the event to:
Watermark, Attn: Wedding Assistant, 7540 LBJ Freeway, Dallas, TX 75251**

MUSIC/AUDIO VISUAL FORM

Date of Ceremony: _____

Start Time of Ceremony: _____

Music

Please whether the music will be:

- a.) Tracks (if Tracks, please see the NOTE below)
- b.) Live Accompaniment (if Live Accompaniment, please list all instruments and/or vocals)

- c.) Both

NOTE: Watermark requires all music/media/tracks to be provided and given to the wedding coordinator one week in advance. Approved methods of music/media/tracks include:

- Spotify Playlist (preferred method)
- MP3 Tracks sent to wedding coordinator

Set Up Location

Location of Instrument(s) and/or Singer(s):

- _____ Stage Right (Facing out from the stage, the RIGHT side (Traditionally the **bride's** side)
- _____ Stage Left (Facing out from the stage, the LEFT side (traditionally the **groom's** side)
- _____ Balcony

Officiant/Readers

Please indicate how many people will be speaking during the ceremony:

- _____ Pastor
- _____ Scripture Reader
- _____ Other (please clarify) _____

Video

Please indicate if there are any video requirements during the service – specifically if audio will be requested.

Reception

(If applicable)

_____ Spotify (using WM sound board)

_____ DJ (using DJ's own equipment)

_____ Band (using band's own equipment)

Please list any other reception requests:

Approved By: _____ Date: _____

*Due ONE MONTH prior to the ceremony

OUTSIDE OFFICIANT FORM

Please email this completed form at least one month before the event to: weddings@watermark.org

Please Print

Name: _____

Title: _____

Church or Ministry: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Church or Ministry Web Address: _____

Name of Bride and Groom: _____

In order to help us respond to this request, please answer the following questions Yes or No.

I am currently leading myself well spiritually, free of concealed sin. Yes / No

Comments:

If married, I can say of our marriage, follow us as we follow Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1) Yes / No / NA

Comments:

I affirm Watermark's 7 Essentials listed on the back side of this form. Yes / No

Comments:

During the ceremony, I am committed to giving a clear presentation of the Gospel, consistent with the Salvation section in Watermark's 7 Essentials. Yes / No

Comments:

I am licensed or ordained under the authority of the following church/ministry:

Signature: _____

WATERMARK 7 ESSENTIALS

The Bible | We believe the Bible to be the verbally inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, and the supreme and final authority in doctrine and practice. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; John 17:17)

The Trinity | We believe there is one God, that the Father and the Son and the Spirit are each God, and that the Father and the Son and the Spirit are each a distinct person. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 13:14; see also 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 2:9; Acts 5:3-4)

Jesus Christ | We believe the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man, without ceasing to be God. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God, fulfill prophecy, and redeem sinful man. We believe He accomplished our redemption through His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross, His burial, and His bodily resurrection. We believe our redemption and salvation are guaranteed by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is the only means of salvation. (John 1:1, 14, 18; Luke 1:35; Romans 3:24-26, 4:25; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Philippians 2:5-8; 1 Timothy 2:5)

We believe that Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, the Creator and Sustainer of heaven and earth, and the Head of the church. We believe the Lord Jesus Christ is now in heaven, exalted to the right hand of God where, as High Priest to His people, He serves as our Advocate and intercedes for us. (Colossians 1:15-19; Hebrews 1:3, 3:1, 7:23-25; 1 John 2:1-2)

The Holy Spirit | We believe God the Holy Spirit is a person who restrains evil in the world and convicts men of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He dwells in all who believe in Jesus. From the moment of belief in the Son, the Spirit baptizes believers into the body, seals them for salvation, regenerates them to new life, bestows spiritual gifts on each one, and is fully present to continually fill (control and guide) His own. (John 16:7-11; John 3:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 13; John 14:16-17; Ephesians 4:30, 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19)

Man | We believe man was created innocent and in the image and likeness of God, but that man sinned, bringing both physical and spiritual death to himself and his posterity. (Genesis 1:27, 2:17, 3:19) Man can do nothing to merit God's favor, and as such, is in need of salvation. (Isaiah 59:1-2;

Romans 6:23) We believe that mankind's sinful nature is rebellious toward God and His good design for life and worship. (Romans 1:20-24; Ephesians 2:1-3) Mankind's rebellion causes confusion about good and evil, and harm to people, ultimately ending in judgment, despair and death. (Genesis 1:31; Galatians 5:16-21; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; James 1:13-15)

We believe God created mankind in His image, forming each person in the womb from conception (Psalm 139:13-16; Isaiah 44:2, 49:5; Jeremiah 1:4-5) until the point of death when they breathe their last (Genesis 25:8; Luke 23:46); and assigning gender to His people, male (man) and female (woman), as He created them sexually and biologically different, but with equal personal dignity and value. (Genesis 1:26-28)

We believe that God ordained marriage as a lifelong union between one man and one woman. (Genesis 2:18; Matthew 19:4-9; Ephesians 5:31-33) Those who accept and live within God's design for sex, biological gender, and marriage experience the blessing of His good design (Psalm 1:1-3, 128:1-4), and decisions to change, alter, or modify God's will in marriage, sex, or gender are part of man's brokenness and lead to despair. (Romans 1:21-22; James 1:13-15)

We believe that God loves and pursues mankind despite our rebellion. (Romans 5:8) He offers forgiveness, healing and abundant life to anyone who turns to Him in humility. (John 3:17, 10:10; Titus 3:3-7; 1 Peter 5:6-7)

Salvation | We believe salvation is a sovereign gift of God and is received by man through personal faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for sin. We believe man is justified by grace through faith apart from works. (Acts 13:38-39; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 1:4-5, 2:8-10) We believe that Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation and that no one is saved apart from a conscious and personal decision to trust in Christ as his or her one and only Savior. (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 10:9-10) We believe all true believers elect of God, once saved, are kept secure in Christ forever. (Romans 8:1, 29-30, 38-39; John 10:27-30)

The Second Coming | We believe in the future, visible, and bodily return of Jesus Christ to the earth, commonly called the Second Coming, to rule the nations and establish His kingdom on earth. (Philippians 3:20; Matthew 24:15-31; Zechariah 14:4-11; Revelation 19:11-21)

PREMARITAL PURITY PLEDGE

We believe that sex is a gift from God to be enjoyed in the context of marriage and that He had our best in mind when He gave us strong directives about sexual purity before marriage. There are many benefits to staying sexually pure before marriage. By waiting until marriage¹:

- You please God and experience the blessing of obedience.
- You build trust, which is necessary for intimacy.
- You develop the godly qualities of patience and self-control.
- You affirm that you care more for the other person than yourself.
- You protect yourself from feelings of guilt and shame.
- You provide yourself with an example to give your (future) children and others.
- You are protected from emotional, mental and physical trauma should you break off your relationship.
- You develop healthy communication habits and skills.
- You avoid the possibility of an unplanned pregnancy.
- You avoid the possibility of contracting a sexually transmitted disease.
- You increase the anticipation and enjoyment of your wedding night.
- You discover more about each other than just the physical.
- If you are a Christian, you maintain a witness to the world.
- If you are a Christian, you keep from bringing reproach on the name of Christ.

Although many couples believe engaging in sex prior to marriage will strengthen their relationship, we believe the opposite is true. We believe sex outside of marriage can slow down the growth of a couple's relationship by causing emotional confusion and distracting couples from pursuing activities that would be more meaningful and beneficial during the dating/engagement stage of a relationship. We believe it is worth noting that research² indicates a positive relationship between couples who live by biblical standards³ regarding purity and marriage longevity.

While physical intimacy is of huge importance in a healthy marriage, we do not believe it is the *foundation* upon which to build a great marriage. Therefore, the aim of this pledge is to help each couple focus on the essential building blocks of establishing a healthy marriage.

What is outlined below is a voluntary pledge, taken by a seriously dating or engaged couple, to sexual purity. This pledge is optional, but strongly encouraged. Therefore, we ask you to consider agreeing to limit your physical involvement, as indicated below, and to be held accountable by your mentor couple.

Sexual purity means much more than not having sexual intercourse before marriage. Many couples avoid intercourse but are still sexually intimate. Scripture defines sexual purity as being morally excellent. And moral excellence means being holy. It means avoiding the appearance of evil. It means purity of thought as well as purity of deed. It means protecting one another's innocence from being stained by impure actions.

Those considering or preparing for marriage are asked by their mentors to talk about the pledge privately and to pray about it before deciding whether to take this step. Regardless of what the decision is, the matter will remain a private one between Merge leadership and you. Ultimately, however, it is a spiritual matter between you and God.

Be honest about the physical part of your relationship. We know the Bible does not specifically address "how far a couple can go before marriage," however, it is clear that we are to flee from sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18).

If you are a follower of Jesus, then you want to live in a way that is radically different than culture. We are not to be conformed by the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12:1-2).

Consider making a commitment to keeping your physical activities between #1 – #3.

1. Holding hands
2. Hugging
3. Light kissing
4. French kissing
5. Kissing on the neck, ears or other parts of the body

6. Indirect stimulation of the breasts/genitals (e.g. “grinding”)
7. Manual stimulation of the breasts/genitals
8. Oral stimulation of the breasts/genitals
9. Intercourse

If your physical activities exceed #3, we suggest the following steps:

- Confess to the Lord, and repent of your actions (Psalm 51.3-4).
- Confess and seek forgiveness from your partner.
- Inform your mentor couple. We recommend the male contact the male leader within 24 hours after exceeding the physical limit. If the man does not do so, the woman should call the female mentor.
- Calling your mentor does not circumvent the need to confess your actions to God; however, letting your mentor know keeps you accountable, so your focus can be on the spiritual, character-building issues that are important in forging a lifelong committed marriage.

Please note our expectation is that individuals who are members or leaders at Watermark Community Church will sign this pledge. If you choose not to, please initiate a conversation with Merge leadership and your community group so we can better understand your decision.

We pledge to hold our relationship to a Biblical standard, so the Lord might bless this relationship now, and in the many years ahead. Therefore, we agree to call our mentors if the physical involvement goes beyond level #3.

PREMARITAL COUPLE

MENTOR COUPLE

¹ Obtained from "Preparing for Marriage: Discover God's Plan for a Lifetime of Love" by David Boehi, et al

² See Kahn and London, "Premarital Sex and the Risk of Divorce" in Journal of Marriage and Family (1991) 53:845-855.

³ Selected scripture related to sexual purity:

- 1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.
- Ephesians 5:3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.
- Hebrews 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.
- Proverbs 6:27-28 Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk with hot coals and his feet not be scorched?

WATERMARK PREMARRIED WEDDING AGREEMENT

Congratulations on your decision to get married! Please take some time to read over the following information about the biblical, lifelong marital commitment you are about to make, as well as Watermark's requirements related to preparing for marriage.

Many couples work very hard at putting together a beautiful wedding day, but most couples do not put time into preparing for the realities of marriage and do not consider the implications of entering into a covenant relationship with one another. For this reason, at Watermark, we see premarital preparation as being an integral part of the wedding/marriage process, and for this reason will not allow couples to use our facilities unless they have taken steps to prepare for marriage.

While premarital education and mentoring is not biblically mandated per se, we believe premarital preparation would fall in line with seeking wisdom from the counsel of others (see Proverbs 9:1-12, 11:14, 15:22, 24:6). As a result, we require all couples who desire the use of our facility or a Watermark pastor to officiate a ceremony, to complete the Watermark premarital process. Specifically, we require couples to take and complete the Watermark premarital class (8-week or weekend class), as well as 4-6 sessions premarital mentoring with a staff member, an approved Watermark mentor couple, or your officiating pastor. If, for some reason, you are unable to complete Watermark pre-married class, you may be eligible to take another class (as approved by Watermark marriage ministry).

Qualifications

NOTE: The following qualifications will be assessed throughout the premarital process. The officiating pastor or the pre-married pastor will determine whether or not the qualifications have been met by the individuals and couple. We will seek to determine whether or not the qualifications have been met as soon as possible in the pre-married process. There are occasions where the pre-married couple may not agree with the Watermark pastoral assessment, but Watermark staff will hold the final authority in the decision-making process of whether or not a couple has qualified for facility usage.

Spiritual Qualifications

- Both male and female must be believers in Christ who are able to testify to their faith in the Triune God. At Watermark, we believe salvation is a sovereign gift of God and is received by man through personal faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for sin. We believe man is justified by grace through faith apart from works (Acts 13:38-39; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 1:4-5, 2:8-10). We believe all true believers elect of God, once saved, are kept secure in Christ forever (Romans 8:1, 29-30, 38-39; John 10:27-30).
 - A believer is not permitted to marry a non-believer (2 Corinthians 6:14).
 - You each will be asked to share your testimony throughout the premarital process.
- Both must be free to marry:
 - Never married before,
 - Widowed, or
 - Divorced, but ex-spouse must either be deceased or remarried. Please see page 64 for Watermark Community Church's stance on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage.
- Both must understand and be committed to the Biblical pattern of permanence in the one-flesh union that marriage creates (Matthew 19:6).
- Marriages will be officiated and hosted for only heterosexual couples – marriage is a covenant relationship established by God between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:3-6, Ephesians 5:21-33, among many other passages). This will hold true for Watermark pastoral staff regardless of Texas state law.

Relational Qualifications

- Each individual must be able to understand and accept the responsibility and commitment of marriage (Ephesians 5:21-33; Matthew 19:6)
- Each must have a realistic view of and an appreciation for marriage and the other person (1 Peter 3:7; Philippians 2:1-4)
- Each must agree to pursue biblical community both before and after marriage (Hebrews 10:24-25; Proverbs 11:14, 12:15, 13:10, 15:22, 16:25, 19:20, 20:18)

Requirements

1. You must attend the Watermark premarital class (or an equivalent marriage preparation class approved by the Watermark marriage ministry). If any sessions are missed, you must agree to listen to the audio of the class.
2. You must commit to a minimum of four premarital mentoring sessions with either a staff-approved mentor couple or the officiating pastor.
3. You will be expected to complete all assignments from the class and mentoring, which have been designed to best prepare you for marriage. In addition, you will take the PREPARE inventory to help assist your mentor couple or officiating pastor in helping you best prepare for marriage.

WATERMARK COMMUNITY CHURCH EVENT AGREEMENT

Bride / Groom:	Event Date:
Phone:	Alternate Phone:
Watermark Wedding Assistant:	Phone: (214) 393-3043

Watermark Community Church (Watermark) is happy to assist you in creating a worshipful atmosphere for the Event. This Agreement is entered into by you and Watermark. The policies in this document are furnished so that we may work together as seamlessly as possible: By signing this Agreement, you agree to adhere to all Watermark Event policies as outlined in this document and pay all related Watermark fees. If you have questions or need assistance, please call the Wedding Assistant.

In exchange for Watermark permitting use of its facilities, Host hereby assumes all liability for, and shall indemnify, defend, protect, save and hold harmless, Watermark, its affiliates, officers, agents, subcontractors and employees from and against any and all liabilities, claims, judgments, damages and losses, including all costs, attorneys' fees and expenses incidental thereto, caused by or arising out of the negligence, gross negligence and/or willful misconduct of the Host and Host's respective guests and/or agents. The Host shall give Watermark, prompt written notice of any claim made or suit instituted against the Host arising out of or related to the Event and Watermark shall have the right to control the defense of same with counsel of its choosing.

Watermark disclaims all, responsibility and liability for the damage or loss of any items, effects, merchandise or articles on Watermark's premises prior to, during or following the Event. Watermark reserves the right to inspect and regulate all Events. Host shall pay Watermark for all damages incurred during the Event to the Watermark premises, furniture, fixtures and equipment. Host has been informed of and understands the possibility of other Watermark ministry events occurring on the wedding day. There may be other people or events on campus, but we will do our best to prevent any interference or distraction.

Host/Watermark Member

Wedding Assistant

Date

Date

Please make a copy for your records and return this signed form two weeks after the Wedding Policy Meeting:
 Watermark, Attn: Wedding Assistant 7540 LBJ Freeway, Dallas, TX 75251