

# Pre-Marital Preparation & Wedding Guidelines



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## MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROCESS

**Marriage preparation is required** for all couples married by pastors at CCCC. The book "Preparing for Marriage" by David Boehi, Brent Nelson, Jeff Schulte and Lloyd Shadrach is the key resource for this process. Couples also complete an online study called FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study). Couples meet weekly for approximately six weeks with assigned mentors to review and discuss materials. A \$35.00 couple fee covers the costs of all materials.

### **Below are steps for completing CCCC's Marriage Preparation Process:**

1. Review policy, complete/return Wedding Information Form with \$35.00 check payable to CCCC to CCCC, Pam Durand, 999 Egret Bay Blvd N., League City, TX 77573.
2. Pam will contact you to schedule your first meeting with the pastor and provide instructions for completing the online FOCCUS session.
3. Notify Pam ([pdurand@clearcreek.org](mailto:pdurand@clearcreek.org)) after completing FOCCUS. Pam will assign mentors and they will contact you to schedule your first session.
4. Notify Pam after last mentor session. Pam will schedule a second meeting with officiating pastor. At this meeting you will discuss your ceremony details. This meeting completes the marriage preparation process.

It is our hope that as you work through the materials and meet with your mentors you will develop a friendship and a resource to begin your marriage relationship as well prepared as you can be.

### **Please NOTE the following before submitting request:**

1. CCCC pastors will not agree to perform a ceremony before receiving and reviewing the Wedding Information Form and meeting with couple.
2. CCCC pastors will not officiate weddings for couples who are living together. (See Appendix A)
3. Request for remarriage of a divorced person require a presentation of the specific circumstances of the divorce. The request will be considered by at least two elders and the pastor requested to perform the ceremony before a decision is made.



## **WEDDING POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

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### **Agreements**

**The following agreements are required for couples married by pastors at CCCC:**

1. Complete FOCCUS.
2. Complete CCCC's marriage preparation process prior to wedding.
3. Live apart until marriage.
4. Plan and prepare a wedding ceremony that honors God.

### **Officiating Fee and Payment Information**

A suggested honorarium is a minimum of \$200. Please make check payable to officiating pastor and mail to Pam Durand prior to wedding.

### **Pastor's Services**

The pastor's services include two meetings with pastor, participation at rehearsal and officiating the ceremony.

### **Ceremony**

The wedding ceremony is a worship service that recognizes God's leadership in the marriage of the couple. Everything included in the ceremony should befit a worship service.

### **Vows**

Officiating pastor will review wedding vows and ceremony. Any special ceremony requests should be submitted in writing to officiating pastor before second meeting.

### **Music**

Music in wedding ceremony should befit worship service. Numerous music selections, appropriate for weddings, are available through local Christian books and music stores.

### **Photography**

Photos and videos should be done with the least amount of distractions possible.

### **Location**

Our pastors officiate wedding ceremonies for members of the church. The location of the wedding is the responsibility of the couple. Viable options are churches, hotels, gardens, wedding chapels, and homes. Officiating pastors reserve the right to deem a location inappropriate.

### **Arrival of Pastor**

The officiating pastor will arrive 20 to 30 minutes prior to the wedding.



## WEDDING POLICIES & PROCEDURES

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### Marriage License

A marriage license is required and can be attained at the county courthouse. Give marriage license to officiating pastor just before wedding ceremony. The State of Texas requires pastor to have license at ceremony.

#### ***\$60.00 Discount on Marriage License***

Texas offers free marriage education classes around the state and in turn gives couples who complete classes a \$60.00 savings on marriage license and waves 72 hour wait period. CCCC's Premarital Prep Program is state approved; therefore, couples who complete CCCC's Premarital Prep Program qualify for this savings and waiver of 72 hour wait. A certificate will be provided to you at the completion of your mentor sessions.

# WEDDING INFORMATION FORM



**Note:** This form will be submitted to officiating pastor and marriage mentors. Return form and \$35.00 check (payable to CCCC) to CCCC, Pam Durand, 999 Egret Bay Blvd. N., League City, TX 77573.

<b>REHEARSAL</b>	<b>WEDDING</b>
Date _____ Time _____ Location _____ _____	Date _____ Time _____ Location _____ _____
<b>GROOM'S INFORMATION</b> Name _____ D.O.B. _____ Age _____ Address _____ _____	<b>BRIDE'S INFORMATION</b> Name _____ D.O.B. _____ Age _____ Address _____ _____
Email _____ Occupation _____ Phone (h) _____ (w) _____ (c) _____ Children? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Age(s) _____ Parent(s) _____ Name(s) _____ Church Membership? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Previously Married? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> How Many? ____ Years Married How did Marriage(s) End? 1 - _____ 2 - _____ 3 - _____ If divorced, explain reason for divorce. 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____	Email _____ Occupation _____ Phone (h) _____ (w) _____ (c) _____ Children? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Age(s) _____ Parent(s) _____ Name(s) _____ Church Membership? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Previously Married? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> How Many? ____ Years Married How did Marriage(s) End? 1 - _____ 2 - _____ 3 - _____ If divorced, explain reason for divorce. 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> We agree to complete CCCC's Marriage Preparation Process prior to our wedding. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> We agree to live apart until marriage. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> We agree to plan and prepare a wedding ceremony that honors God.	



## WEDDING INFORMATION FORM

### RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

Please describe your religious background and your relationship to Jesus Christ.  
(You may also use the back side of this form.)

#### Groom's Religious Background

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#### Bride's Religious Background

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## **APPENDIX A – LIVING TOGETHER**

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### **Recent Statistics on Cohabitation in the United States**

- Over half of all first marriages are now preceded by living together, compared to virtually none 50 years ago. (Bumpass and Lu, 2000)
- The number of unmarried couples living together increased 72% between 1990 and 2000. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)
- Half of cohabiting relationships end within one year due to the couple either becoming married or separating (Seltzer 2000).
- Within five years from the beginning of a cohabitation relationship more than half of these relationships will end even if the couple had married during that time (Seltzer 2000).
- 57% of cohabiting couples dissolve within ten years when compared with 30% of all first marriages (VanGoethem 2005).
- Cohabiting couples have a rate of separation that is five times that of married couples (Binstock 2003).
- The U.S. Justice Department found that women are 62 times more likely to be assaulted by a live-in boyfriend than by a husband (Colson 1995).
- Cohabiting women have rates of depression 3 times higher than married women (National Institute for Mental Health).

### **The Culture Versus The Bible**

The reality is that most marriages in the United States begin today with couples living together first. More and more people in our culture have come to view sexuality as a personal lifestyle-choice, and the marriage relationship is increasingly viewed as unnecessary or optional. Often, the decision to live together with someone in a sexual relationship is determined by convenience and economics.

In fact, the number one reason given for cohabitation before marriage is economics. Almost without exception, people explain their reasons for cohabitation as financial. It is true that one mortgage is less expensive than two mortgages, but couples who settle for this advantage are placing a higher value on finances than on their relationship with God and with each other. The costs far outweigh the benefits.

Many couples begin preparing for their wedding ignorant of the bible's teaching about marriage and sex, and therefore surprised or offended by Clear Creek Community Church's (CCCC) refusal to perform weddings for couples who are living together. But the culture's view of sex and marriage is very different from the marriage covenant God established and communicates to us in the bible.

The elders of CCCC are committed to bringing glory to God by submitting to his Word, the bible, in all areas of life including marriage. We also believe strongly that a marriage relationship established under and submitted to God's design will be lasting, joyous, intimate, and secure far beyond any substitute arrangement our culture offers.





## APPENDIX A – LIVING TOGETHER

The elders of CCCC want to offer our help and guidance in preparing you for a God glorifying, life giving, and lifelong marriage. The reasons for our refusal to perform wedding ceremonies for people who are “living together” are as follows:

1. A wedding ceremony is a worship service that recognizes God’s presence and calls for the blessing of God on the marriage of the couple. A ceremony would be hypocritical for two people who are ignorant of, or who have willfully refused to obey God’s direction before the ceremony.
2. Strong marriages are built on a foundation of faith in, and submission to, God. A rejection of God’s design for the marriage relationship is a precursor to many relational consequences that ripple through families, children, and the church.
3. Our deepest hope and desire is for couples to live in God honoring, joy filled, intimate relationships where they are continually growing in intimacy with each other and with God. We want to do everything we can to make that possible.
4. As pastors and shepherds over people God has entrusted to us, we are accountable to God for how we lead. We insist on having a clear conscience before the Lord when it comes to marriages we participate in.
5. The bible teaches very clearly that living together is wrong, it is a sin.  
Living together before marriage:
  - Ignores God’s will
  - Compromises one’s character
  - Damages the relationship
  - Hurts the children involved
  - Makes a mockery of the wedding ceremony

We want to lead people away from a relationship that bears these consequences and into a kind of relationship that is God glorifying, healthy, and lifelong.

### A Biblical Perspective on Marriage

The Bible teaches that marriage is a sacred covenant between two people to which God is witness, and that the covenant is for a lifetime.

*Genesis 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

Marriage is an institution whose terms are given to us by God and rooted in God’s creation order and authority. The boundaries God established in the marriage covenant provide a husband and wife with structure and security. Couples who set aside God’s boundaries for marriage must then create the terms and qualities of their particular relationship, and those terms are by nature self centered and transient (as attested to in the statistics referred to above). When people reject God’s design for marriage and arrange their relationship on their personal terms it is always susceptible to redefinition, reconstruction, and termination.

To live together seeking to share the benefits and responsibilities of the marriage covenant before you commit to God and to one another is to set aside God’s design for marriage and replace it with your individual design. The elders of CCCC insist that you do not set aside God’s authority over the marriage relationship, but choose to build a marriage God’s way.



## APPENDIX A – LIVING TOGETHER

### We understand this to mean:

1. **As Children of God** - The bible describes (in Ephesians 5 and elsewhere) marriage as a reflection of Christ's relationship to his church – Christ being the bridegroom coming for his pure bride the church. Ephesians describes a husband's responsibility to his wife as a reflection of Christ's wholly devoted sacrifice for his church and a wife's submitted response to her devoted husband as a reflection of the church's faith in and dependence on Christ.
2. **Following God's Leadership** - The bible describes the marriage relationship as a "chord of *three* strands." It is God, husband, and wife. Marriage is dependent on God's authority and presence. The character qualities the bible describes as being produced by genuine faith in God are the qualities that are to shape the relationship of husband and wife.
3. **Coming From Two Different Places** - Following God's leadership begins before we come to the wedding ceremony. It means that the couple maintains sexual purity before they marry. It means that they don't make economics a higher priority than the God glorifying, long-term health of their relationship.

### Consequences of "Living Together" Before Marriage

*Galatians 6:7-8 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.*

If you ignore God's intentions for the marriage relationship here are some of the mines you will find exploding in your life. These are the consequences of living together as though you are married before you are actually married.

### Emotional Consequences

Sex is not just physical or anatomical; there is more to it. Jesus' words show that sex is more than body parts.

*Matthew 19:6 So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."*

When people come together sexually, they become bonded in a mystical way, you can't just separate like it never happened. It's like two tributaries coming together to make a river and then someone attempting to remove all of the water that was in one tributary from the water that came from the other tributary.

Sexual activity outside of marriage leaves emotional holes in people who may have thought sex was just about body parts. Sexuality separated from emotional vulnerability is an old lie.

*1 Corinthians 6:13-17 "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"-- but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.*



## APPENDIX A – LIVING TOGETHER

The ancient Corinthians argued for freedom to engage in sexual relationships outside the covenant of marriage. We hear the same kind of reasoning today: it says, "We have desires. God gave us the desire for sex just like he gave us the desire for food that sustains us, so it must be OK." But sex is not like food. The Apostle Paul argued in the bible that when one joins himself or herself to someone sexually, they are "glued."

Sex is glue and God intended sex to be like glue. Two people become one sexually and it ties their lives together emotionally. That is one of the reasons sex is not intended for people outside of marriage; because when you glue together and then separate the emotional and relational consequences are very great. So the bible teaches those who belong to Jesus Christ – for your benefit and well-being - that you are not to become one, to become "glued," to any other person except the one you marry.

God wants to spare you the damage. He wants you to be scar free. He wants you to have healthy self-esteem. He wants you to be emotionally whole so that when the right person comes along, you have a wholeness that you can give to him or her in marriage.

### Spiritual Consequences

Sexual sin breaks your fellowship with God! The Bible could not be clearer.

*1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 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.*

God wants you to be *holy*, that means God wants you to put him first, to have a close relationship with you. Sex outside the context of marriage is sinful and so it alienates you from God. Sin separates us from a relationship to God. That is the nature of sin. Sin separates us from God and separates us from one another. That is why premarital sex alienates instead of endears. The difference is that in marriage sex endears, but outside of marriage it alienates.

When we sin, we put into motion a natural progression of rebellion. When we live in a pattern of sin we first experience guilt, when we tire of the guilt we justify our actions and harden our heart against God, eventually we reject God completely.

*Hebrews 13:4 Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.*

It's not just married people who keep the marriage bed pure. You decide to keep the marriage bed pure when you are single. On the wedding night, a couple will take all of their partners to bed with them. When God gives you a husband or wife to love for a lifetime you don't want to hurt them or diminish your love life by taking others from your past into your marriage bed.

People probably do not get involved sexually thinking about being disconnected in their fellowship with God and running the risk of desertion. But God has spoken clearly on this matter. If one's fellowship with God matters, he or she should know that sex outside of marriage alienates one from God. God emphatically warns - don't go there. Wait until marriage.



## APPENDIX A – LIVING TOGETHER

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### Relational Consequences

Sex before marriage clouds your judgment. People involved sexually outside of marriage struggle with the question, “Is this person really in love with me, or is he or she in love with having sex with me?”

Sex before marriage stunts the growth of the relationship. Sex refocuses the relationship on the wrong thing. We do not date to mate, but we date to find a mate. Courtship is intended to develop communication patterns, learn to resolve conflicts and share dreams. Sexual activity derails the development of these critical components of your relationship.

Sex before marriage breeds mistrust. Trust is the only thing you have to build a relationship on. Without trust, relationships die for lack of soil in which to grow. Consider the question objectively: If he or she is unwilling to fully commit to a lifelong marriage relationship before insisting on a sexual relationship, whose interest do they have at heart? If, in their eyes, your relationship is contingent on sex first, what is going to happen when they get bored or decide you aren’t “the right one” anymore?

Consider what the bible says in *Genesis 2: 24-25 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.*

The passage shows that intimacy was created for exclusive (leave) and permanent (united) relationships only. In the context of exclusiveness and permanency there is intimacy and sexual fulfillment that doesn’t lead to guilt and shame. It is in the context of commitment that married people are meant to experience this powerful oneness of sexual intimacy and living together.

### Our Commitment

The elders of Clear Creek Community Church are committed to helping you prepare for a marriage that will glorify God and bring you a lifetime of joy and security. We want to walk with you through whatever process is necessary to help you separate and begin to build your marriage on a biblical foundation. We look forward to the opportunity to serve you in this season.



## APPENDIX A – LIVING TOGETHER

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### The Voice of Experience - Stories of Real Life

- "I met a man who became my best friend and a real support system. We dated for a few months and developed a strong love for each other. We talked of marriage and spent every possible moment together. I felt this must be "God's reward." But the learning about each other became clouded when we allowed our passions to lead to sex. I had an empty hole inside of me that I was trying to fill and this relationship seemed to be the answer. Although we had known each other for months, we had replaced learning about one another with passion. And the passion did not satisfy. It craved for more, it became obsessive, taking over the relationship, crowding out conversation, communication and other activities. Then one day, it all went away."
- It's a lot different being married than living together. And I am glad that the distinction has been so clear cut for me. When we lived together, we were committed as long as we were in love, but now we are in love because we are committed. This is a real difference. Our lives are not perfect, many of our marital problems are a clear result, it seems to me, of our past lives together. I wish we had never lived together. In our case we would have had greater respect for ourselves. We would have learned to resolve disagreements and negotiate rather than the style we learned of secretly evaluating each problem by asking the question, "Is this worth breaking up over," thereby teaching us to deal with problems with bitter acquiescence or with stiff-necked inflexibility, depending on our secret answer to the question. This ruins true trust and intimacy and encouraged fantasies about living alone. Now we face problems and we know that the old ways are inappropriate. We no longer have any substitutes and we no longer have the old "breaking up" option as the escape route.
- Not too long after coming out of an abusive marriage, I met an individual who became the "love of my life"; "my all in all." We shared our dreams, our hopes, and our aspirations. Everything was perfect. But after several months, we allowed our affections to slip into sin. That's when the relationship stopped growing, when confused feelings and doubts set in. We stepped out of the "safe zone" when we stepped into sex without the commitment of a marriage. I lost my sense of peace and realized that in my rebellious state, God was very far away and I was all alone. Instead of developing abiding love, I spent two years in an anguished roller coaster affair of alternating closeness and distance but never in commitment. My choice to participate in sex outside of marriage meant excruciating pain and heartache. Without commitment, I was vulnerable and insecure and lost the confidence to be myself. The relationship died when we realized we had a bag of emotions and passions, but nothing to build a permanent relationship on.

Our breakup was the most painful experience of my life. All that I had hoped and dreamed for, the very reason for clinging so long to this relationship was shattered and my heart with it - blown away like the wind. All that time, all that energy for nothing.



## APPENDIX A – LIVING TOGETHER

### Living Together – Q & A

**Question: If we are already living together won't getting married fix the problem?**

No, not necessarily. If your relationship was established and has been experienced outside of God's Plan for marriage - having a wedding ceremony won't change that. If you truly want to repent and begin to follow God's design for marriage there are healthy pre-marital processes you should go through before you wed. In the mean time you should obey God and separate while you prepare for marriage.

**Question: Is it OK if we live together but commit not to have sex? Can we sleep in separate rooms?**

No. It is a question of accountability. Even though you may be honoring your commitment to not Have sex there is no way for the people who are spiritually responsible for you to know whether you are or not. A second important consideration is found in *Ephesians 5:3*, "*But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.*" (NIV) Your life and lifestyle influences other people. As followers of Jesus we should avoid situations that communicate to a sinful world that a sinful lifestyle is acceptable among those who follow Christ.

**Question: Even though we haven't had a wedding, can't we be married in our own hearts and minds?**

Marriage is a God ordained institution that is public by nature. The commitment we make to our spouse in marriage is a public commitment. The public nature of the commitment allows the church to help sustain, encourage, correct and protect you. If you simply declare yourselves to me "married" privately, outside of God's design and outside the church, you isolate your relationship from the possibility of encouragement, correction, and protection.

**Question: What do we do if we really can't afford to live in two separate places?**

There are many possibilities for separating. Friends, family, and your small group are all possible sources for creating a sustainable situation for separating as you go through a healthy pre-marriage process. CCCC will do everything we can do to help you find a solution. If there are circumstances that make separation genuinely impractical, such as children in the home, please discuss the situation with a CCCC elder. We will do everything we can to help find a solution.

**Question: How long do we have to live apart before you will perform our wedding?**

There are many variables that impact timing, such as the length of time necessary to demonstrate true repentance and a desire to obey God's will for your marriage, the time required to complete a healthy pre-marriage process, etc. This is a discussion you will need to have with a CCCC elder.



## **APPENDIX B – DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE**

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### **What the elders believe about marriage.**

1. Marriage is a reflection of Jesus' relationship to the church
2. Marriage is to be a lifetime commitment
3. Marriage is to be with another follower of Jesus
4. Marriage is to be with someone from the opposite sex

### **What the elders believe about divorce.**

Divorce is never a part of God's original plan for marriage. Thus, repentance from sinful behaviors and reconciliation is the most God-glorifying path for those facing the possibility of divorce. Reconciliation highlights the gospel truth God has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, thus we are to be reconciled to one another – especially those joined together in the covenant of marriage.

### **What the elders believe about remarriage after divorce.**

The Bible describes some specific situations where remarriage is permissible, (through remarriage is not required and may not be the best alternative.) The Bible teaches remarriage is permissible:

1. Where a spouse has died.
2. Where divorce has taken place due to adultery and the offended spouse's heart is hardened to the point where they refuse to seek reconciliation.
3. Where divorce has taken place because an unbelieving spouse deserts the believing spouse.

Christ-loving, Bible-honoring, Gospel-centered leaders hold differing views on Jesus' teaching about divorce and on remarriage for situations that are not specifically described in the biblical texts that discuss divorce.

### **Request for Remarriage**

Request for remarriage of a divorced person require a presentation of the specific circumstances of the divorce. The request will be considered by at least two elders and the pastor requested to perform the ceremony before a decision is made.

### **What if an individual realized he/she was divorced on unbiblical grounds but now has remarried?**

The elders would counsel the individual to recognize God's Word concerning marriage and divorce, repent of any sin (e.g., seek to repair relationships hurt by your divorce, confess your sin to your ex-spouse, etc.) and honor God in their current marriage, trusting God's gracious work of forgiveness in the gospel.