



Introduction...



As a church family, we are very happy for you as you take this important step in beginning your new life as a couple. We want you to have the best marriage possible. To that end we have identified a set of principles and protocols that we believe will launch your life together on a trajectory toward success and satisfaction. These principles and protocols are built on our understanding of the Bible concerning God's design for marriages.

This handbook is offered to assist you in preparing for your wedding and nurturing your marriage; because after every wedding comes a marriage.

*“Unless the LORD builds the house,
its builders labor in vain.”*

Psalm 127:1

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Heritage Community Church Marriage Principles...



Heritage Community Church is a community of Christians devoted to nurturing love for Jehovah God, love for others and love for self. One way of accomplishing this is by providing couples with an opportunity to deepen their experience of God through their wedding and the ensuing marriage relationship. Since this “deepening” of your relationship with God through the sacrament of marriage is best accomplished in the context of a Christian Church family, only members of HCC are available to have their wedding at HCC. This insures that the couple will benefit from the influence of the church family.

It is our desire to follow biblical Christian doctrine in every aspect of our lives. Therefore, following principles are built on our understanding of the Bible regarding God’s design for marriage. We contend that following these principles will establish a strong foundation for your marriage.

- 1) We believe that the institution of marriage began with Jehovah God (Genesis 2) and is a covenant between a Christian Man, a Christian woman, and God. Therefore a non-negotiable prerequisite for an HCC wedding is that both bride and groom have a personal and growing relationship with Christ; evidenced by a conversion testimony, commitment to spiritual disciplines, and church membership at HCC.
- 2) It is our desire to help you make your marriage the very best human relationship of your life. We require and provide a mentoring program for all couples and provide pre-marital and post-marital counseling as needed. This usually necessitates a 9-12 month engagement. Please see the section under Marriage Ministry Procedures on page 8, item 3 to initiate the marriage mentoring program.
- 3) Furthermore, we believe that healing from one marital relationship is necessary before beginning another marital relationship. Therefore, HCC requires persons not to be remarried for at least one year from the finalization of their divorce or annulment. This provides for required attendance of Divorce Care, marriage mentoring, and optional classes related to healthy relationship principles.
- 4) God's design for marriage includes sexual intimacy within the marital relationship. We believe couples should remain celibate, hence HCC requires that they live at different addresses prior to the ceremony. Exceptional circumstances and weddings involving premarital pregnancy or military deployment will be considered individually by the Lead Pastor.
- 5) Marriages will not be performed if the bride or groom is under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the rehearsal or ceremony. Wedding party members will be asked not to participate if they are believed to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- 6) Based on the understanding of these principles, the pastoral staff reserves the right to decline performing a wedding. If one minister of the staff has declined to marry a couple for spiritual or ethical reasons, no other minister on the staff will perform the ceremony.

What the Bible Says About Marriage...



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

Purpose of Marriage and Fundamental Truths

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

- 1) *Fruitfulness/Procreation* – God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Genesis 1:28
- 2) *Companionship/Sharing Life* – The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed the place up with flesh. The Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” Genesis 2:18-23
- 3) *Intimacy/Sexual Union* – For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Genesis 2:24-25

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

The things that are part of the marriage process are:

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

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

Leaving and Cleaving

Leaving parents is one of God's first requirements for marriage – Genesis 2:21-25 and Psalm 45:10-12. Of course, this doesn't mean you will abandon your parents or no longer communicate with them. Exodus 20:12 reminds us: "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."

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

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

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

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

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

Blessing and Covenant

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

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

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

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

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

Let’s compare the difference between covenant marriage and a contract.

Covenants and Contracts*

A covenant is initiated for the benefit of the other person	A contract is motivated by the desire to get something you want
In covenants, people make promises which are unconditional	Contracts most often deal with specific action
Covenant relationships are based on steadfast love	Contracts are based on an “If, then mentality”
Covenant relationships view commitments as permanent	Contracts are most often made for a limited period of time
Covenant relationships make provisions for each other’s weaknesses and failures	Contracts normally do not make these provisions

*Based on Covenant Marriage, “Communication & Intimacy,” by Dr. Gary Chapman.

God has much to say about marriage. Consider some of these additional passages in the Bible.

Genesis 2:18-25	Marriage is God's idea.
Genesis 24:58-60	Commitment is essential to a successful marriage.
Jeremiah 33:10-11	Marriage holds times of great joy.
Malachi 2:14-15	Marriage creates the best environment for raising children.
Matthew 5:32	Unfaithfulness breaks the bond of trust, the foundation of all relationships.
Matthew 19:6	Marriage is permanent.
Romans 7:2-3	Ideally, only death should dissolve marriage.
Ephesians 5:21-33	Marriage is based on the practice of love, not feelings.
Ephesians 5:23, 32	Marriage is a living symbol of Christ and the church.
Hebrews 13:4	Marriage is good and honorable.

Essential Resources:

1. Listen to Pastor Steve's message on the biblical link between the Gospel and marriage at: <http://www.heritage-cc.org/media/podcasts/biblical-headship>
2. Download and read the article "Biblical Headship" at: <http://www.heritage-cc.org/ministries/paths-religious-services/weddings>

Your mentors will query you regarding these resources.

Marriage Ministry Protocols...



We request the following protocols be followed by all couples to be married at Heritage Community Church.

- 1) At least one (1) year prior to your planned wedding date, call the Facility Coordinator at 410-551-8500 X249, check any dates of interest, and procure a Marriage Handbook Packet.
- 2) Peruse the Marriage Handbook Packet. The packet will contain the following:
 - A Marriage Handbook that outlines the principles and protocols concerning weddings/receptions at Heritage Community Church.
Please review it carefully.
 - Two Questionnaires - - one for the bride; one for the groom.
 - A Wedding Contract.
 - A Mentoring Consent Form.
 - A Confidential Envelope for returning all information to the church.
- 3) Complete the questionnaires and the mentoring consent form then return them to the church office to the attention of the Facility Coordinator.
- 4) Once these forms are returned you will receive date confirmation from the Facility Coordinator and be contacted by the Wedding and Mentor Coordinators.

Please keep in mind; we cannot perform two weddings at HCC on the same day. Therefore, if a wedding is already scheduled for your first choice date, an alternative date will need to be selected.

- 5) After your date has been finalized, sign the Wedding Contract, insert your deposit and return them to the Wedding Coordinator.

General Information...



Wedding Guidelines for Members of Heritage Community Church

- 1) All weddings and/or receptions are to be scheduled through the church office. Refer to the “Marriage Ministry Procedures” on page XXX for more specific information concerning the policies.
 - The Main Sanctuary seats approximately 800 people.
 - The Grand Hall in the Harold & Betty Bowman Ministry Center can accommodate 500 people.

2) No smoking or use of alcohol is permitted on church property.

3) The throwing of birdseed must be kept outside the church building.

4) The following fee of \$630 for weddings (not receptions) includes:

\$250.00	A non-refundable deposit is required to reserve a date for your wedding.
\$100.00	Sound Board Engineer (2 hours)
\$150.00	Wedding Coordinator
\$130.00	Mentoring cost payable online to Marriage 101.

- Pictures that need to be taken after the wedding ceremony **MUST** be taken directly following the service. Any delay will constitute an additional charge be taken from the deposit.

(NOTE: Please notify photographers that our technicians will be available one to one-half hour(s) before the pre-wedding music begins. They do not, however, come in two to three hours prior to the wedding to turn on stage lights, etc.)

- Any CD music should be on one CD. It's difficult to make smooth transitions between songs when technicians have to switch CDs. For example, the couple must provide either a prelude CD and ceremony CD (to include recessional) or one CD with everything in order.

(NOTE: HCC cannot burn these CDs for the couple.)

- Soloists/duets may use tapes; however, a CD is preferred.

(NOTE: IF there is a solo(s) during the prelude, this needs to be in place on the prelude CD.

- Instrumentalists (most often a guitar) need to bring their own cables, direct boxes, etc. if they wish to connect through HCC's sound system. HCC will not provide equipment for instrumentalists.

(IMPORTANT: All singers, instrumentalists, etc. participating in the wedding, need to be at the rehearsal.)

- Rehearsal time is to be limited to one hour.
- Because your wedding is a sacred occasion, the marriage ceremony should be one of reverence and honor. Your wedding should include prayer, Scripture reading and reference to God's plan for marriage. In addition, all music should be appropriate for the Christian lifestyle. Please have your officiating minister approve any music that is not typically used in Christian worship.

- 5) In the event your wedding party elects to use the Grand Hall in the Harold & Betty Bowman Ministry Center for a wedding reception, the following fees are required in addition to those fees stated above for the use of the Main Sanctuary.

\$200.00	Rental Fee per Section (4 hours)
\$150.00	Custodial Fee

- 6) All items must be removed from the Sanctuary/dressing rooms after the ceremony and before going on to your reception. HCC is not responsible for anything you leave behind that is lost or stolen.



This information will be shared with your pastor and mentoring couple.
Heritage Community Church
To: Wedding Coordinator

Date: _____

Wedding of _____ and _____

Contact Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Wedding Date _____

Time _____

Rehearsal Date _____

Time _____

Will you be using a decorator/florist for your decorations? YES___ NO___

When will the church be decorated: Friday (during business hours – 8 am – 12 pm) or the day of your wedding? Date _____ Time _____

Minister _____ Phone _____

From what church? _____

Will you be using one of our Musicians for your wedding music YES___ NO___

If no, please indicate who or what you will be using for your selected music:

Tape: _____ CD: _____ Own Musicians _____

Will you be using our Grand Hall for your rehearsal dinner/reception? YES___ NO___

Main Sanctuary Deposit (\$150.00) Received Date: _____

Balance _____ Due Date _____

Signature of Bride: _____

Signature of Groom: _____

Approved by: _____ Date: _____



Heritage Community Church
Mentoring Consent Form
To: Mentoring Coordinator

We understand that the mentoring process consists of guidance pertaining to ideals, beliefs, and Scripture by the Mentor Couple.

We acknowledge and understand that we are not receiving psychiatric or psychological counseling. We understand and recognize that the Mentors are not licensed mental health providers.

We acknowledge that any advice shared by the Mentor Couple regarding issues is not given in a professional capacity but is offered solely in their recognized capacity as caring, Biblically-based facilitators.

We acknowledge and take full responsibility for the decisions made by us regarding our relationship and do not hold the Mentor Couple liable in any way for those decisions.

We understand that the role of the Mentor Couple as facilitators and that we have to make our own decisions as individuals and as a couple.

We understand that the information discussed during the mentoring sessions and the results of the inventory are confidential. We agree that when deemed necessary the Mentors can share pertinent information with the clergy listed below.

Therefore, we consent to the terms as outlined.

His Signature _____ Date _____

Her Signature _____ Date _____

Clergy _____

(3 copies: The mentored couple. The Mentor Couple, the clergy)



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Confidential Premarital Information Sheet – Bride*

To: Mentoring Coordinator

Please follow these steps once you receive this form:

1. *Fill out this form completely.*
2. *Return completed form, along with the grooms form, to Heritage Community Church in the confidential envelope provided.*
3. *The date for your wedding cannot be finalized until these completed forms are returned to the church office and the date is approved on the church calendar.*

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Age _____

Are you a member of Heritage Community Church? YES ___ NO ___ If not, what is your church affiliation? _____

Previously married? YES ___ NO ___ If the marriage(s) ended in divorce, please answer the following:

Given reason for divorce(s) _____

What reconciliation efforts were made? _____

What is the date the divorce was finalized? _____

Any Children? YES ___ NO ___ If yes, list ages: _____

How long have you dated? _____

How long have you been engaged? _____

Are you pregnant? YES ___ NO ___

Do you believe you are saved? YES ___ NO ___ Describe your salvation experience: _____

Do you believe you will go to heaven when you die? YES ___ NO ___ What is the reason you believe this way? _____

Describe your relationship with Christ at this point in your life: _____

Desired Wedding Dates and Times (1st Choice) _____

(2nd Choice) _____

Desired Rehearsal Dates and Times (1st Choice) _____

(2nd Choice) _____

Requested Minister for Wedding (1st Choice) _____

(2nd Choice) _____

Facilities Needed: Main Sanctuary _____ Grand Hall Section(s) _____

Reception Location: _____



*Copyright 2002, Marriage Savers, Inc.

Confidential Premarital Information Sheet – Groom*

To: Mentoring Coordinator

Please follow these steps once you receive this form:

1. *Fill out this form completely.*
2. *Return completed form, along with the grooms form, to Heritage Community Church in the confidential envelope provided.*
3. *The date for your wedding cannot be finalized until these completed forms are returned to the church office and the date is approved on the church calendar.*

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Age _____

Are you a member of Heritage Community Church? YES ___ NO ___ If not, what is your church affiliation? _____

Previously married? YES ___ NO ___ If the marriage(s) ended in divorce, please answer the following:

Given reason for divorce(s) _____

What reconciliation efforts were made? _____

What is the date the divorce was finalized? _____

Any Children? YES ___ NO ___ If yes, list ages: _____

How long have you dated? _____

How long have you been engaged? _____

Are you pregnant? YES ___ NO ___

Do you believe you are saved? YES ___ NO ___ Describe your salvation experience: _____

Do you believe you will go to heaven when you die? YES ___ NO ___ What is the reason you believe this way? _____

Describe your relationship with Christ at this point in your life: _____

Desired Wedding Dates and Times (1st Choice) _____
(2nd Choice) _____

Desired Rehearsal Dates and Times (1st Choice) _____
(2nd Choice) _____

Requested Minister for Wedding (1st Choice) _____
(2nd Choice) _____

Facilities Needed: Main Sanctuary _____ Grand Hall Section(s) _____

Reception Location: _____

CHECK LIST:

- ___ Call the Church Office and tentatively book a date.
- ___ Obtain a Marriage Handbook Packet
- ___ Review all information.
- ___ Submit completed wedding contract and mentor forms.
- ___ Begin any programs such as Divorce Care if applicable.
- ___ Register for Marriage Mentoring Class through the Mentoring Coordinator.