



FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH MARRIAGE POLICY

We are so excited for you as you pursue the covenant of marriage here at Fellowship Bible Church. In an effort to help you take the next steps in marriage, this document will serve as your guide, providing you with the necessary information to make your wedding and marriage a success. Please take time to read through this document and fill out the Marriage Form before the initial contact with a pastor. We want to do everything we can to make this a great and memorable experience for you.

What is Marriage?

From creation, God wonderfully made human beings to be biologically and sexually distinct as male and female. These two complementary genders share equal dignity as they together reflect the image and nature of God. Scripture instructs the sexual behavior of all men and women by granting them either sexual celibacy or monogamous marriage. Any other sexual behavior is sinful and an offense to God. Marriage is a covenant bond ordained by God and intended as a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman. (Gen 1:27-28, 2:18, 21-24; Matt 19:4-6; Mark 10:5-8; Hebrews 13:4, 1 Cor 6:9-20, 7:7, Matt 19:12)

What Marriage Means at Fellowship:

The mission of our church is to *grow compelling relationships with God and others that have an irresistible influence in the world*. At Fellowship, marriage is a means by which we display this ideal to our community and to the world. The covenant of marriage is designed by God to model Christ's relationship to his people, and so happiness in marriage can only happen when Christ is at its center. That's why we take marriage and its preparation so seriously here at Fellowship. We genuinely want you to experience the profound joy that comes from a Christ-centered marriage.

Since Fellowship considers marriage a sacred covenant, it only facilitates weddings (rehearsal, ceremony and reception) for those with established relationships with the church. The bride, the groom, or an immediate family member must be a member of the church.

Fellowship only participates in weddings where Jesus is honored as Lord and Savior, and the Scriptures are revered as the authoritative blueprint for marriage.

If you are not at this point, we'd love to do whatever we can, with God's power, to help you get there!

Wedding Contact:

Every couple wishing to include Fellowship in their wedding must first complete and email this signed Policy and the Marriage Form to Cynthia Santana at csantana@fellowshipjackson.com.

Fellowship's involvement would include:

- hosting their wedding ceremony at a Fellowship facility.
- having a Fellowship pastor officiate their wedding ceremony.
- receiving pre-marital counseling from a Fellowship pastor.

If you are seeking to use Fellowship's facilities for your wedding or any related event, you must also complete the Facilities Use Agreement Package and return that to Jennifer Maddox at finance@fellowshipjackson.com. She will guide you through the initial steps of applying for use of the facilities.

Pre-marital Counseling:

All couples that are being married by a Fellowship pastor are required to attend 5 sessions of pre-marital counseling. Please fill out the Marriage Form before counseling begins.

Couples are free to pursue counseling from outside of the Fellowship staff as long as the sponsoring pastor has approved it.

Pastors Performing Ceremony

Fellowship Pastors

Most couples choose to have a Fellowship pastor do their pre-marital counseling and perform the wedding. Please indicate on your Marriage Form which pastor you would like to perform your wedding.

Non-Fellowship Pastors

Under approved circumstances we do allow non-Fellowship pastors to officiate the ceremony and/or counseling. In the event that a Fellowship pastor is not performing the ceremony or participating in it, a Fellowship pastor will be appointed as a sponsor to oversee the process and approve the non-Fellowship pastor's participation. Any non-Fellowship pastor or officiant must affirm, in writing, Fellowship's Belief Statement and Statement on Marriage.

Fellowship-Sponsored Pastor

Your Fellowship sponsoring pastor will be able to help guide you through the details and discuss your pre-marital counseling. It is necessary for you to set up an appointment for a preliminary meeting with the sponsoring pastor so that he can meet with you as a couple at least once, and assist with details of which an outside pastor might not be aware (i.e. how to make sure he can legally perform a ceremony if he is licensed in another state).

Honorarium

Our pastors are not compensated by the church to officiate weddings. Their involvement in this special event in your life (attendance at rehearsal and wedding, sermon preparation, consulting with bride and groom and other key participants) requires that they forego other obligations, commitments, and family time. We suggest a \$200.00 honorarium for the officiating pastor.

Pastoral Discretion

Your Fellowship pastor shall have sole discretion in determining whether or not to perform or permit your wedding ceremony, conduct your pre-marital counseling, or act in the role of sponsored pastor. At Fellowship, our written Statement of Beliefs is not the totality of our convictions regarding truth, morality, or right conduct. The Bible, as the inspired and infallible Word of God, is the absolute and final source of all we believe. The board of elders serves Fellowship Bible Church as the interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

Wedding Licenses:

You are responsible for processing and completing all requirements and documentation to obtain the necessary license and marriage documents. Neither Fellowship nor its Pastors will be responsible for this process.

Ceremony:

All couples seeking to have their ceremony or any wedding-related event at Fellowship must complete and affirm the Facilities Use Agreement Package. Fellowship does not permit its facilities to be used in any way, by any person or group, which would contradict its teachings on truth and morality.

Divorce/Remarriage:

As noted above, marriage is a covenant bond ordained by God and intended as a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman. Divorce is the dissolution of a marriage. While divorce is always occasioned by sin, it is not always sinful. Divorce is legitimate in response to pervasive sexual misconduct and in cases of abandonment. It is also a reasonable response to abuse. At Fellowship, we do not affirm divorce as an acceptable solution to hardship or unhappiness.

Remarriage after an illegitimate divorce may be permissible if all efforts at reconciliation were exhausted and forgiveness has been sought through repentance. At Fellowship, we do not affirm remarriage as the prerogative of every person, nor do we believe that it be restricted to those who have lost a spouse to death.

If you have experienced a divorce in your past, a Fellowship pastor would like to speak with you in further detail about that marriage. In the Marriage Form, you will also be asked to provide a written explanation of the circumstances that ended your previous marriage.

Co-Habitation/Sexual Purity:

As noted above, Fellowship affirms the Scripture's teaching that any sexual behavior other than sexual celibacy or monogamous marriage between a man and woman is sinful and an offense to God. In the Marriage Form, you will be asked to answer questions about your living situations prior to your marriage and to make a commitment to sexual purity leading up to your marriage. A Fellowship pastor will discuss this further during your meeting.

Mediation/Alternative Dispute Resolution:

At Fellowship, we believe that differences or conflicts should be addressed in a manner consistent with Fellowship's Belief Statement without recourse to the courts. (See Matthew 18:15-20; I Corinthians: 6:1-8). In the highly unlikely event that there is any dispute between the bride and/or groom and Fellowship and/or any staff, pastor, elder or member of Fellowship, the undersigned covenants and willingly consents that any and all claims or disputes shall be settled by biblically-based Christian mediation. Any such mediation will be governed by the *Rules of Christian Conciliation* of the Institute for Christian Conciliation ("ICC"), a division of Peacemaker Ministries (peacemaker.net/icc), unless modified as stipulated by the parties. A mediator, who will be chosen with the assistance of the ICC, will attempt to assist us in reaching a voluntary settlement of any disputes through mediation. The mediation process will remain confidential and no communications will be admissible for any other purpose. Fellowship agrees to pay for the costs charged by the mediator, but all other parties shall bear their own expenses including their own attorney's fees. Any request for mediation must be submitted within thirty (30) days of the arising dispute.

If you have any questions about this policy or Fellowship's beliefs, please meet with one of our pastors before signing this form.

We certify that we have reviewed, understood, and affirm the Fellowship Bible Church Marriage Policy on this the _____ day of _____, 20____.

Bride – Print Name

Groom – Print Name

Bride – Signature

Groom – Signature