

Counsel for Engaged Couples

Congratulations, your engaged! There are likely a thousand details that you are thinking through at this time. We want to come alongside you and serve your joy by providing you some counsel as you prepare for the day when you will covenant with each other before the Lord.

I. Simplicity

A recent survey has studied 16,000 wedding ceremonies and reported that Americans spend an average of \$31,213 on weddings, not including the honeymoon¹. While this may not be the amount of your festivities, we would encourage you towards simplicity as much as it is possible.

2 Corinthians 1.12 says “For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with *simplicity* and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God.”

Simplicity allows you the opportunity to enjoy the festivities and to reflect on what is most important to you while simultaneously mitigating a high volume of stress that often comes with weddings & receptions that are more costly and involved. Also, if you are carrying debt into the marriage it would be advisable to spend less money on the ceremony so that you can set yourself up for a healthy marriage.

II. Clarity in the Ceremony

A wedding ceremony quite literally is a presentation of the Gospel – from the white dress of the bride to the exchanging of vows even down to the simple act of the prospective husband walking up the aisle to take his prospective wife and bringing her to the altar. All of it is a unique opportunity to make clear what you believe about the Gospel. Consequently, make sure to organize the ceremony in a way that exalts Christ and doesn't exalt you above Him.

Not only can you make clear what you believe about the Gospel in the ceremony, you can also make clear what you believe about the role of the church. One small way you can do this is by refraining from the practice of receiving the Lord's Supper.

Paul makes clear his preference as to when the Lord's Supper should be taken when he says “...when you come together as a church” (1 Cor. 11.18). As you read on in this passage Paul seems to indicate that the taking of the Lord's Supper is an opportunity to reflect the unity of the church as a whole, not individuals separated from the church. Certainly it wouldn't be sinful to do this practice; however, it would serve the witnesses of your wedding to teach them that the role of the Lord's Supper is for the church gathered, not the church scattered.

III. Pastors Ability to Officiate

While it should always be the will of pastors to officiate their members' weddings, it is not always advisable or possible for them to do so. Therefore, please be advised that due to either personal circumstances, distance, or other reasons yet to be named, the pastor may not be able to officiate your wedding. This should in no way be a reflection upon our pastor's love and support for you.

IV. Communication with the Officiant

For those weddings that are officiated by the pastor, please make sure to communicate with the pastor about the time and location of the wedding. Also, make clear to them any special instructions that you would have for their involvement.

¹ <https://www.theknot.com/content/average-wedding-cost>

Typically, our pastors will be licensed in the DMV area and will be prepared to pray, give a charge, preach a short Gospel sermonette, and administer the exchanging of the vows. They are not typically advised to co-ordinate the wedding rehearsal, however if you have needs there please make that known to the pastor as soon as possible.

V. Parents

It is not uncommon for parents to have opinions about the wedding, especially if they are paying for some portion of it. As a result there can sometimes be points of stress due to disagreements in the family about the ceremony. This situation is made more difficult because the two of you have not yet made a new family. Therein, the command to “honor your Father and mother” stands (Exodus 20.12; Ephesians 6:4).

Since the family has not yet been formed and you have yet to “leave and cleave” (Gen. 2.24) to one another, you both should understand this is a time you can strive to honor the will of your parents insofar as it pleases the Lord and it is not grossly disagreeable to each of you. Pray together, discuss the situation with each other, listen to the will of your parents, and humbly attempt to obey their wishes if those wishes do not distract from your convictions and the clarity of the Gospel.

It would be advisable for the man to begin to manifest his role as a leader by humbly speaking into the situation and prayerfully considering how to communicate your will to the parents. This conversation may look differently depending on which set of parents is being addressed. The depth of the man’s relationship with the bride’s parents will play into how directly he can speak to them and how much the bride should speak to her own parents (with or without her future husband present). Again, prayerful discernment and wise counsel from others will serve you well here.

VI. Purity

One of the numerous reasons you are getting married to one another is because you are attracted to one another. Therefore, it will be even more difficult than it has been to remain pure in relation to sexual intimacy. It is not uncommon for Christians to reason that since you both are going to get married it wouldn’t be so bad if you slipped up and did something before your wedding day.

For the joy of your soul, the good of your marriage, and the glory of Christ reject all situations and lines of thinking that will dissuade you from protecting your purity in the days leading up to the wedding.

Sexual intimacy is one of the many wonderful benefits of the marital covenant. Breaking that purity by committing sexual immorality before the ceremony is nothing but short-term pleasure traded for long term pain and difficulty. Not to mention, it is sin against God.

Consequently, guard against this temptation by inviting others to hold you accountable, by praying, and by making and abiding by mutual agreements that will keep you from situations that would make it easy for you to fall into sexual sin (e.g. commit to not spending the night together).

Proverbs 6.27 says in the context of sexual sin “Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?” In other words, don’t play with fire...it will only hurt.

Don’t forget this prohibition is for your joy! God has what is best for you in view. You show that you believe that by promoting your sexual purity.

VII. Pre-marital Counseling

Restoration Church offers a four-session marital counseling ministry that includes both in person meetings and homework. Typically this will be done with a pastor (or mature member) and his wife in their home.

Due to the excitement of the impending wedding as well as what can be familiar content in the pre-marital material, there can sometimes be a “check the box” mentality to these sessions.

We would encourage you to try to engage with these sessions and prayerfully consider all that they are trying to impress upon you since they are done in order to try to set you up for a healthy marriage. You can do this by giving sufficient time to doing the homework and reading, talking with each other before every session and engaging in conversation with the couple leading the session. Also, consider having follow up conversations with each other. The more you do this, the more you will be prepared for your life together.

This is important because it has been seen in the life of Restoration Church that newlyweds often find more difficulty than they had expected in the day to day of their marriage. They have realized that the pre-marital material was more important than they thought it would be. In fact, the pre-marital counseling may reveal that it may not be wise to continue in the engagement, or at least to postpone it due to the revelation of significant problems. Whatever the case may be, setting dedicated time aside to think about various aspects of marriage will only serve to strengthen your marital bond.

We offer pre-marital counseling not because we feel as though we have to, but because we want to serve your joy as a couple put together by the Lord.

You can find the material at www.restorationchurchdc.com/premarital. Make sure and contact the people that you want to facilitate your pre-marital counseling as soon as possible. If you're not sure about the specifics, simply contact one of the pastors and they will be happy to serve you.

VIII. Pursuit of One Another

This should be the easiest thing to do, but it is also the easiest thing to neglect. Amidst wedding planning, work, and life in general there will be a great deal of things that will vie for your time away from the important task of pursuing one another in love and holiness.

Make sure to spend time together in prayer as well as taking walks or going on dates where you do not spend time talking about the wedding. You are preparing for a lifetime together and it's critical that you think and work towards the kinds of things that will benefit you well beyond your wedding day.

VIII. Conclusion

It is the hope of all of us at Restoration Church that you would enjoy this wonderful time leading up to the moment when you will make your marital covenant. Please let us know how else we can serve your joy in this special time as you prepare not only for a ceremony, but for your life together.