

Statement on Wedding Officiation at First Evangelical Free Church

At First Evangelical Free Church, we are honored to celebrate and solemnize the covenant of marriage for our members and regular attendees who desire to enter into this sacred union in accordance with God's design as revealed in Scripture. Our pastors are deeply committed to supporting couples in establishing marriages that glorify God, reflect His love, and are built on the firm foundation of His Word.

This commitment includes ensuring that the marriages we officiate align with the biblical principles for marriage, as understood within the evangelical tradition and affirmed by the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA). It is our sincere desire to help couples honor the Lord in their union and to shepherd them with love, grace, and truth as they prepare for their life together.

Biblical Principles for Marriage

1. Marriage is a Covenant Between One Man and One Woman

Marriage is established by God as a covenant relationship between one biological man and biological woman, reflecting the relationship between Christ and His Church (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; Ephesians 5:31-32). This covenantal bond is designed to be lifelong, exclusive, and reflective of God's faithful love.

2. Marriage is Rooted in God's Glory and Purposes

Marriage is not merely a personal arrangement but a divine institution created for God's glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). It serves to display His love, provide companionship, promote holiness (Hebrews 13:4), and, if He wills, bless the couple with the gift of children (Genesis 1:28; Psalm 127:3-5). As part of God's good creation before the fall, marriage is a blessing intended for all people, reflecting His common grace to humanity.

3. Marriage Involves Purity and Commitment Before God

We believe that God calls couples to pursue purity and honor Him in their relationship before marriage. Scripture consistently teaches that

sexual intimacy is a gift to be enjoyed within the covenant of marriage (Hebrews 13:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5). For this reason, we encourage couples to abstain from cohabitation and sexual intimacy before marriage, as these practices do not align with God's design for holy living. Our ministers ask couples to take this commitment seriously as they prepare for a God-honoring union.

4. Marriage Requires Spiritual Unity

Scripture teaches that Christian marriage requires spiritual unity, as believers are to marry "only in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:39) and are warned against being "unequally yoked" with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14). Accordingly, our ministers will not—and indeed are not permitted to—knowingly officiate the marriage of a believer and a non-believer, as such a union would contradict the biblical design for Christian marriage.

5. Remarriage After Divorce

We recognize that divorce and remarriage can be sensitive and complex issues. According to Scripture, remarriage is permissible in certain circumstances, such as in cases of marital unfaithfulness (Matthew 19:9) or when an unbelieving spouse abandons the marriage (1 Corinthians 7:15). However, remarriage is not permissible when the divorce was contrary to biblical teaching or when unresolved issues remain from a previous marriage. We encourage anyone considering remarriage after divorce to engage in open and honest discussions with the presiding minister, who will provide guidance and discernment in light of God's Word and the specific circumstances. Our goal is to walk with you graciously and lovingly as you seek God's will for your life.

6. Provision for Non-Christian Marriages

Recognizing that marriage is part of God's good creation and a blessing for all people, our ministers may officiate the marriage of two non-Christians off-site if the service can be conducted in a way consistent with the minister's Christian convictions. However, our ministers will not officiate weddings that treat their role as perfunctory, solely ceremonial, or in a manner contrary to their faith and conscience.

7. Marriage Must Honor Pastoral Conscience and Church Beliefs

Our pastors take seriously their calling to uphold their consciences before the Lord (Acts 24:16) and to shepherd the flock according to the teaching of Scripture and the policies of our church and denomination. As part of their pastoral responsibility, they officiate weddings in accordance with these biblical principles and our church's doctrinal convictions.

Questions for Reflection

To help you prayerfully discern your readiness for marriage and alignment with these principles, we encourage you to reflect on the following questions:

1. Have I committed to pursuing God's design for marriage as a covenant relationship that reflects His love and faithfulness?
2. Am I prepared to enter marriage with the understanding that it is a lifelong commitment rooted in God's purposes?
3. Am I honoring God in my current relationship by pursuing purity and abstaining from cohabitation or sexual intimacy before marriage?
4. Is my relationship grounded in spiritual unity? Are we both committed believers in Jesus Christ, seeking to honor Him in our union?
5. If I have been divorced, have I sought biblical counsel to understand the circumstances of my divorce and any implications for remarriage?
6. Am I willing to engage in premarital counseling and seek pastoral guidance to strengthen our relationship and prepare for marriage?

Next Steps

At First Evangelical Free Church, only our ministers may perform wedding ceremonies on church property. Exceptions may be approved for other clergy at the sole discretion of the Board of Elders.

Additionally, we require couples to complete premarital counseling with the presiding minister to ensure a strong, God-honoring foundation for their marriage.

If you are a member or regular attendee of First Evangelical Free Church and believe that you are committed to these principles for marriage, we invite you to complete our Wedding Interest Form. This form provides an opportunity for you to share more about your relationship and your desire to be married. Once submitted, a pastor will review your responses and arrange a meeting to discuss your plans and how the church can support you during this joyful season.

We kindly ask that couples refrain from making firm ceremony plans before meeting with the pastor. This ensures that important details can be confirmed, necessary staff and facilities are available, and your wedding can be conducted in a way that aligns with the church's mission and values.

Please know that our desire is to see you flourish as a couple—spiritually, emotionally, and relationally. Our pastors are eager to walk alongside you, providing guidance, encouragement, and prayer as you prepare for marriage. We are here to serve you, not as judges, but as shepherds who care deeply about your good and God's glory.

A Final Word

We understand that conversations about marriage can bring a variety of emotions and questions. As you consider taking this important step, please know that we are committed to helping you discern God's will for your relationship in a spirit of love and partnership.

May the Lord bless you as you seek His guidance, and may your desire to honor Him be the foundation of all you do.