

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations on your engagement! This is such an incredibly exciting time in your life. As you embark on the adventure of marriage, we welcome this opportunity to share in your joy. Please know that our heart's desire is to help prepare you for a marriage that not only survives but thrives.

We look forward to connecting with you and doing all we can to enrich your relationship as a couple and with God. The following information has been assembled to help you take your next steps of preparing for your wedding and your life together. A major part of the process is your involvement in a premarital counseling program. It is designed to help you grow in ways that will help you experience a successful and happy marriage.

Please read the following information carefully. If after reading this material you would like South Park Church to be a part of your wedding, please contact the church office at 847-825-5507. We can place a tentative date on our calendar when you call so that it is reserved for you. That date is finalized after completing the steps described below (see page 5).

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Wedding Requirements

When we help you prepare for marriage, we have much more than your wedding day in mind. We are committed to helping couples build a strong foundation for a lifetime together. That is why the following requirements are so important:

1. Generally, one of the individuals or a parent must be a regular attendee of South Park Church. We also welcome couples who are searching for a church to call “home” as they prepare for marriage. The facilities are not available for use by non-attenders due to the heavy use by our own congregation.
2. Both the bride and groom have begun a relationship with Jesus Christ and are open to biblical principles for guiding their marriage. One’s relationship with Jesus is the centerpiece of the counseling process and of a growing marriage. (See below for further explanation.)
3. Between five to six pre-marital counseling sessions must be attended with the officiating pastor or a marriage mentor. Topics covered include God’s plan for marriage, communication, finances, the sexual relationship, and other practical matters. We take time to explore how your family of origin, personality, and expectations affect your marriage. This happens through discussion, information inventories, and outside reading.

These requirements have been established by the elders and pastors at South Park Church. They reflect clear biblical teaching. By following them, you are inviting God’s blessing on your life and on your future marriage.

<p><i>Why is it important that both of us have a relationship with Jesus Christ?</i></p>

South Park Church will not marry unbelievers, or join an unbeliever to a believer in marriage (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). The Bible is clear about spiritual compatibility between marriage partners when it says, “Don’t team up with those who are unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14).

To “team up” is an agricultural illustration. In Bible times, animals were teamed up or yoked together to pull plows and wagons. A good team would pull together in the same direction as one unit.

In the same way, a husband and wife become a team in marriage. They need to pull together in the same direction. This is true in all dimensions of life, especially in one’s personal commitment to Jesus Christ. If either the husband or wife does not have a personal relationship with Jesus, conflict will be inevitable. But a powerful partnership is formed when couples share a commitment to Jesus.

The Premarital Counseling Process

You can contact the church office to consider dates after reading this material. The next step is completing the **Wedding Information Form**, the **Bride-to-be Questionnaire** and the **Groom-to-be Questionnaire**. Once these have been submitted, please contact the church office to schedule a premarital interview with one of our pastors. This should be scheduled at least six months prior to your wedding date.

At your first appointment, you will get acquainted with a member of our pastoral staff. There will be an opportunity to clarify the expectations listed above. And we will discuss the **Purity Covenant** which states: bride-to-be and groom-to-be are abstaining from physical intimacy and are not living together.

Following the interview, the couple may be asked to complete an Inventory and Personality Test. These tools help alert the premarital counselors to strength areas and growth areas in your relationship. This allows us to design the premarital counseling experience to meet the needs of each couple. The couple will also receive information about materials such as books and videos to be used during the counseling process.

Why is it important for a bride and groom to abstain from physical intimacy and living together?

Sex is a gift from God. He is the one who created it! Therefore, we are wise to follow God's directions regarding our sexuality. The Bible's consistent teaching is that sex is to be enjoyed within the boundaries of marriage.

Genesis 2:24-25

²⁴ This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. ²⁵ Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

The idea that "the two are united into one" refers to sex as the culmination of a shared and committed life. There is no shame associated with this intimate connection between a husband and wife. In order to protect the sanctity of this relationship, the Bible gives clear warnings about sex pursued outside of marriage.

Hebrews 13:4

Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.

Many who are planning to be married at South Park Church are honoring God by abstaining from sexual intimacy. For others, this would be a new commitment. We ask couples who are physically intimate or living together to move apart and abstain from their sexual relationship until their wedding day. We encourage you to make this commitment, trusting that God's ways are designed for our good.

By waiting:

- We please God.
- We build trust, and trust is necessary for intimacy.
- We develop the godly qualities of patience and self-control.
- We affirm that we care more for the other person than for ourselves.
- We protect ourselves from feelings of guilt and shame.
- We provide ourselves with an example to give our children.
- We are protected from emotional, mental and physical trauma should we break off our relationship.
- We develop healthy communication habits and skills.
- We avoid the possibility of an unexpected pregnancy.
- We maintain a clear conscience before God and man.
- We increase the anticipation and enjoyment of our wedding night.
- We experience the blessing of obedience.
- We discover more about each other than just the physical.
- We maintain a witness to a lost world.
- We keep from bringing reproach on the name of Christ.*

Further Resources

Suggested Reading

Preparing for Marriage by David Boehi, Brent Nelson, Jeff Schulte, and Lloyd Shadrach

The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman

Boundaries: When to Say Yes, When to Say No, To Take Control of Your Life by Henry Cloud and John Townsend

His Needs, Her Needs by Willard F. Harley

Sex God: Exploring the Endless Connections between Sexuality and Spirituality by Rob Bell

DVD Teaching Available in the Church Office

Married Life: Finishing Together

Married Life: Because Great Marriages Don't Just Happen

Married Life: Celebrate Differences

A Biblical View on Divorce and Remarriage

<http://www.southparkchurch.org/positionpapers.html>

* This list was adapted from *Preparing for Marriage*, edited by Dennis Rainey, page 235.

Ceremony Guidelines

A wedding date on the church calendar is tentative until the following items are finalized:

1. Completion of the following forms: The Wedding Information Form, Bride Questionnaire, Groom Questionnaire, Purity Covenant (These forms can be found at the end of this document.)
2. A pastor from South Park Church has committed to doing the wedding or an officiating pastor from outside South Park Church has been approved.
3. The deposit is paid.

A South Park Church wedding coordinator must be used at all weddings. This person will be of great assistance in the entire process of planning and overseeing the details of the ceremony. The couple will be contacted by the coordinator after the wedding date is finalized on the church calendar.

The Wedding Coordinator will be available at your rehearsal and wedding ceremony to oversee a variety of details. She will ensure that you have the needed equipment (candelabras, kneeling bench, etc.). Although she is not a wedding planner, she will meet with you in advance to answer questions and help you work through the logistics of the ceremony. The Wedding Coordinator will inform you of when the Wedding Coordinator Information List must be completed.

Miscellaneous Guidelines:

- If an officiating pastor from outside South Park Church conducts the ceremony, that pastor must be present at the rehearsal.
- Music used in the wedding ceremony must be approved by the officiating pastor.
- No rice, birdseed, or confetti may be thrown. Rose petals or bubbles may be used.

Facility Guidelines

1. No smoking or serving of alcoholic beverages will be permitted in the church.
2. No decorations may be taped to furniture or walls.
3. Masking tape may be used to tape items to windows and cabinets. (no scotch tape)
4. No tables, cabinets, etc. are to be placed in front of exits.
5. Lighted candles are not permitted, (except in the altar area or in hurricanes or votive candles) as per city fire code.
6. Room capacity must be adhered to.
7. Use of Kitchen facilities: Arrangements for access to the building will be made through the office. Each group using the kitchen is responsible for leaving the kitchen in a clean, orderly fashion. The Golden Rule would apply here.
8. Only the kitchen and kitchenette are wired for coffee pots or any other electrical appliances. Please do not plug appliances into any other outlets than those wired for this use.
9. The building closes at 11 p.m. on weekdays and 10 p.m. on Sundays.
10. Groups of up to 125 people should use Fellowship Hall. Groups over this number must use the Multi-Purpose Room. When the Multi-Purpose Room is used you are responsible for moving and returning tables to the proper place.
11. Arrangements for getting into the building or kitchen must be made in advance through the office during regular office hours. The building is locked after 5 p.m. on weekdays and after 3 p.m. on Saturday.

Fees & Services

Package #1: Wedding Only

Sanctuary/Dressing Room	no charge	
Sound system	\$30	
Custodian	\$45	
<u>Wedding Coordinator</u>	<u>\$100</u>	
	\$175	
Projection (Computer & DVD/VHS player)	\$20	(Optional)
<u>Candelabras & Candles</u>	<u>\$35</u>	(Optional)
	\$230	

Package #2: Wedding and Reception or Rehearsal Dinner in Fellowship Hall with use of Kitchenette

Building usage	\$75	
Sound system (ceremony/reception)	\$50	
Custodian (ceremony/reception)	\$95	
<u>Wedding Coordinator</u>	<u>\$175</u>	
	\$395	
Projection (Computer & DVD/VHS player)	\$30	(Optional)
<u>Candelabras & Candles</u>	<u>\$35</u>	(Optional)
	\$460	

Package #3: Wedding and Reception or rehearsal dinner in Multi-Purpose Room and use of Kitchen

Building usage	\$100	
Sound system (ceremony/reception)	\$50	
Custodian (ceremony/reception)	\$125	
<u>Wedding Coordinator</u>	<u>\$200</u>	
	\$475	
Projection (Computer & DVD/VHS player)	\$30	(Optional)
<u>Candelabras & Candles</u>	<u>\$35</u>	(Optional)
	\$540	

Special Notes

- If you choose to use the candelabras, you must use the candles supplied by the church. They are a special no-drip candle.
- The fees listed above do not include any honorarium for musicians or the pastor. These are to be handled separately at your discretion.

Wedding Information Form

Bride's Information:

First Name _____

Last Name _____

Email address _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home phone _____ Work phone _____

Groom's Information:

First Name _____

Last Name _____

Email address _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home phone _____ Work phone _____

Bride's Parents' names _____

Bride's Parents' address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work phone _____

Groom's Parents' names _____

Groom's Parents' address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work phone _____

Wedding Information:

Location of wedding (room) _____

Wedding date _____ Time _____

Rehearsal date _____ Time _____

Reception Information:

Reception date _____ Time _____

Room needed _____ Kitchen needed? Yes / No

Rehearsal dinner (if applicable)

Room needed _____ Kitchen needed? Yes / No

Officiating Pastor _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Work phone _____

Bride and Groom's new address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Bride Questionnaire

To help us get to know you, there are some things we would like to ask:

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Email _____ Age: _____

Describe your relationship with God:

Are you a member of South Park Church? Yes / No

How long have you been attending South Park Church? _____

Are you willing to study God's design for marriage and meet with a pastor or mentor for premarital counseling? Yes / No

How long have you know your fiancé? _____

How long has the engagement period been? _____

Have you been married before? Yes / No

Date of divorce _____ or Date of death _____

If previously married, please give details:

Are children involved? Yes / No How many _____ Ages _____
With whom do they live?

Groom Questionnaire

To help us get to know you, there are some things we would like to ask:

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Email _____ Age: _____

Describe your relationship with God:

Are you a member of South Park Church? Yes / No

How long have you been attending South Park Church? _____

Are you willing to study God's design for marriage and meet with a pastor or mentor for premarital counseling? Yes / No

How long have you know your fiancé? _____

How long has the engagement period been? _____

Have you been married before? Yes / No

Date of divorce _____ or Date of death _____

If previously married, please give details:

Are children involved? Yes / No How many _____ Ages _____
With whom do they live?

The Purity Covenant

We are committed to God's ways in preparing for our marriage. We agree to abstain from sexual intimacy until we share our marriage vows together. We believe it is God's will for our life and marriage to be dedicated to pure and holy living.

I Thessalonians 4:3-8

"It is God's will that you be sanctified; that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable...For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you His Holy Spirit."

We also understand that God forgives and redeems our past. He looks at us as broken people whom He can make new. Because of His grace, we can start over again. As we ask God to forgive us through Jesus, He will see us as a completely new couple.

I John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

We will trust God and honor Him by upholding His guidelines for sexuality. We will reserve sexual intimacy for our future marriage. We believe that with God's power, we will be able to keep this covenant and be greatly blessed by our obedience to Him.

Signatures:

Groom Date

Bride Date

Counselor Date

WEDDING COORDINATOR INFORMATION LIST

Bride _____ Phone _____

Groom _____ Phone _____

Pastor _____ Phone _____

Wedding Date: _____ Time _____

Rehearsal Date: _____ Time _____

Number of Guests: _____

Musicians _____ Phone _____

Organist _____ Phone _____

Pianist _____ Phone _____

Vocalists _____ Phone _____

_____ Phone _____

_____ Phone _____

Songs: _____

Sound System _____ Phone _____

Photographer _____ Phone _____

Pictures When? _____

Video Operator _____ Phone _____

Florist _____ Phone _____

Equipment Needed: _____

Babysitter _____ Phone _____

Church Items Needed:

_____ Candelabras (church must supply candles)

_____ Candles for candelabras(\$35 fee)

_____ Unity Candle Holder (Bride/Groom provide Unity Candle and Tapers)

_____ Podium

_____ Gift Table

_____ Kneeling Bench

Guest Book Attendant _____

Gift Table Attendant _____

Gifts to Car _____

Clean Up _____

WEDDING PARTY

Bride _____

Officiating Pastor: _____

Groom _____

Maid/Matron of Honor: _____

Best Man: _____

Bridesmaids: _____

Groomsmen: _____

Ushers: _____

Flower Girl: _____

Ring Bearer: _____

Scripture Reader: _____

Parents of Bride: _____

Parents of Groom: _____

Grandparents of Bride: _____

Grandparents of Groom: _____

Candlelighters: _____

Family or Special Seating:

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT IF YOU ARE PLANNING YOUR WEDDING AT A HOLIDAY TIME SUCH AS CHRISTMAS OR EASTER, THE SANCTUARY MAY BE DECORATED WITH HOLIDAY-APPROPRIATE DECORATIONS THAT ARE NOT REMOVABLE. PLEASE CHECK WITH THE WEDDING COORDINATOR.

