

Preparing for Marriage at Maywood Evangelical Free Church

Congratulations! We rejoice with you about your future marriage. It is our desire to help you start your marriage well and flourish for a lifetime. We take marriage relationships seriously. At the same time we know how much fun this is: growing together, experiencing new things, and loving another person enough to make public vows of commitment and a spiritual covenant before God.

Please read through this entire document. It contains:

Biblical Guidelines for Marriage
Experiential Guidelines
Steps in the Marriage Process at Maywood Free Church
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Remember Paul's admonition to the Corinthians:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13: 4-8a)

Please commit to apply this passage and express love to each other and the people involved in helping you. We want the best for you both.

Biblical Guidelines for Marriage

We believe the Bible provides clear guidelines that protect and enrich marriage for a lifetime. These guidelines define our process:

1. Can an unbeliever and a believer marry?

We believe the future bride and groom must be spiritually and emotionally compatible. We will not schedule a wedding unless a couple is spiritually and emotionally compatible.

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14)

2. What if one of us is divorced?

Our God values the permanence of marriage. To honor marriage and the covenant made we will not marry divorced persons except where Scripture allows. Maywood Free Church believes that there are only two situations where the Bible allows for remarriage after a divorce.

A. If adultery (sexual sin) has occurred within a relationship by the other party.

"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce. But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery. (Matthew 5:31-32)

B. If a non-Christian abandons a Christian.

But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. (1 Corinthians 7:15)

Beyond these two circumstances, Maywood Free Church will not participate in remarriage weddings after a divorce due to the sanctity of the marriage covenant.

3. What if we are sexually active?

God speaks clearly through His Word: there are benefits and blessings of self-control and obedience. We require both of you to remain sexually pure until your wedding day.

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. (Hebrews 13:4)

4. What if we are living together?

We believe couples should not cohabit prior to marriage and will not schedule a wedding for couples who are living together. We believe engagement is a time to work on the non-physical aspects of the relationship: emotional, spiritual and intellectual closeness. Couples who are cohabitating have a higher divorce rate after marriage. God wants marriage to be a true commitment, not a trial run.

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. (1 Cor. 6:18)

Experiential Guidelines

Because of our experience working with couples and successfully preparing for marriage, we have developed the following guidelines:

1. Overview of Requirements

- Meet with Maywood pastor, complete a Wedding Application, and premarital counsel.

- Upon meeting with Maywood pastor and the signing of the Wedding Application/Covenant a date will be placed on the church calendar for the wedding ceremony.

- Attending all premarital counseling classes prior to wedding is required.

- Taking an online premarital assessment during premarital counseling (paid for by couple \$30.00).

Required Book Reading for *Preparing for Marriage* Course

Love and Respect by Emerson & Sara Eggerich
His Needs Her Needs by Willard F. Harley, Jr.

Other Recommended Reading

Preparing for Marriage by Dennis Rainey
Complete Financial Guide for Young Couples by Larry Burkett
Saving Your Marriage Before it Starts by Drs. Les & Leslie Parrott
The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman
Intended for Pleasure by Ed Wheat M.D. & Gaye Wheat

2. If divorced, how long should we wait before remarrying?

We believe that a new relationship should not be pursued until the potential of a healthy reconciliation has been exhausted and time for personal recovery has passed. We encourage at least two years to have elapsed from the time the divorce was made legally final. We encourage a divorced person to participate in counseling sessions that address recovery from a divorce, as well as to explore the possibility and/or wisdom of reconciliation, remarriage, and singleness. When children are involved we move carefully forward.

3. How long do we have to be a couple before we consider marriage?

We recommend at least six months of dating and six months of engagement. We call this the "Test of Time." Marriage is one of the most

important lifetime decisions and commitments a couple will ever make. Take time to truly know each other, make the proper preparations and undertake the relational work that needs to be completed prior to saying “I Do.”

4. How long does it take to prepare for a wedding?

At least one year is highly recommended due to the process and the need for advanced booking of outside reception halls.

5. If a couple breaks their vow of purity (covenant) it is the officiating pastor’s discretion to postpone or terminate the wedding plan.

Steps in the Marriage Process at Maywood Free Church

Getting Started

- 1.** Request a "*Preparing for Marriage* at Maywood Evangelical Free Church" information packet from Maywood's church office.
- 2.** Notify the church office that you desire to get married and that you would like to schedule an appointment to talk about your wedding with the pastor in charge. Please read "*Preparing for Marriage* at Maywood Evangelical Free Church" prior to coming to the appointment.

During this appointment the couple will be given a Wedding Application to review and sign. This must be signed and returned at the first counseling session.

- 3.** It will be during the first counsel session that the date would be placed on the church calendar if it is approved by the Maywood pastor. The Wedding Application will be reviewed during this time. It would be necessary to officially approve all wedding dates at the next staff meeting to double check for any conflicts in the church calendar.
- 4.** Pastoral Evaluation - Ongoing evaluation will be made as to the readiness of the couple for marriage.
- 5.** The wedding coordinator at Maywood Free Church coordinates all weddings. The wedding coordinator will work with the couple to make facility reservations, handle fees, and work through the ceremony and rehearsal details.
- 6.** The couple will meet and work through the wedding ceremony with the officiating pastor. All music and videos must be approved (This must be done no later than two weeks prior to the wedding date).

Frequently Asked Questions

When can we start?

Start as early as 18 months if you are a member and 9 months if you are a non-member of Maywood. If you would like help in the decision to be married, feel free to contact the Maywood church office. We would be glad to assist you!

When should we book a reception hall?

Please do not reserve an outside reception hall until your wedding and date have been scheduled and confirmed at the church.

What happens after the wedding has been approved?

An Approval Letter will be sent to the couple verifying that a date has been reserved on the church calendar for the rehearsal and wedding ceremony. Premarital sessions will begin (plan on six to eight sessions) and the wedding coordinator will contact you within two weeks. All weddings and receptions must end no later than 9 p.m. on Saturdays.

What if we want a Pastor that is not on the Maywood Free Church staff to marry us, but we want to be married at Maywood Free Church?

Some couples have a Pastor that they identify with from their hometown before transitioning to the Rockford area and request him to officiate their wedding. We acknowledge the fact that this is important for the couple, and will accommodate this request only if the Pastor is of like faith and belief. A Maywood pastor must be part of the ceremony if the church campus is used. He can be available for the welcome, a reading or prayer and will be present for the entire ceremony. Couples will still be required to attend counseling in order to be married at Maywood Free Church unless other arrangements are granted by the Maywood pastor. Contact will be made with the pastor overseeing the premarital counseling in order to establish agreement in counseling.

Can a Maywood Free Church Pastor marry us off-site?

Yes. All premarital counseling requirements are still in effect. Compensation for travel expenses, gas, food and other expenses need to be addressed and provided for the Pastor and his wife/family. Note: If you are getting married out-of-state make sure the pastor has authorization or a license to officiate a wedding ceremony in that location.

Who will help us in planning for the wedding ceremony?

The officiating Pastor can assist you in planning for your wedding ceremony. The order of worship for the ceremony needs to be discussed and approved by the officiating Pastor no later than two weeks prior to the wedding date. We reserve the right to approve music, reading and other content for all ceremonies. A staff person will contact the wedding coordinator when a

wedding has been approved. The couple is responsible for contacting all musicians, readers and other participants in the wedding.

What does the Wedding Coordinator do?

A couple wishing to use Maywood Free Church for their wedding service must coordinate their wedding plans through our Wedding Coordinator. She will work with you and discuss details specific to your wedding day and rehearsal time. Her objective is to be sure that your wedding service is well orchestrated and memorable. You will find her services and experience to be invaluable during your planning. She will contact you after your wedding has been approved.

Can we have our wedding reception at Maywood Free Church?

There are specific locations in the facility that can accommodate receptions. These spaces can be considered when reserving the wedding date on the church calendar. All receptions must be catered by a licensed, insured caterer and will be under the oversight of the wedding coordinator before, during and after the reception. General clean-up after the wedding is expected to be done by the couple getting married or whomever they designate for that duty. This includes removal of decorations, flowers, trash, etc., and all activities must end no later than 9 p.m. if on Saturday. All receptions held on the church campus should reflect a nature that is consistent with a Christian event and should not bring into question the character of our Christian testimony. There will be no alcoholic beverages served or dancing on the church grounds. The wedding service, rehearsal and reception should honor and bring glory to our Lord. All music that is chosen for either the wedding ceremony or the reception should be of Christian nature. There is no smoking allowed inside the facility on the Maywood Free Church campus. No throwing of rice, confetti, birdseed, or glitter inside the facility.

Does Maywood Free Church offer childcare?

Neither childcare nor our nursery area is available during the wedding rehearsal, the wedding, or the reception. Children must be supervised at all times.

Once we complete the wedding application and receive pastoral approval, can we go ahead and secure a reception off campus?

Yes. Once your wedding is approved and the ceremony/rehearsal has been secured on the church calendar, then you may reserve an outside reception hall. However, during the premarital counsel the pastor reserves the rights to postpone or refrain from marrying the couple should concerns arise that are not resolvable prior to the wedding.

How and when should we secure a marriage license?

A marriage license can be secured in the county in which you reside. Each county has certain requirements; a valid driver's license, birth certificate, and a small fee. In Winnebago County the marriage needs to be solemnized

within 60 days of application with a waiting period 24 hours. Both bride and groom must be present to apply for the license.

My fiancée (or both of us) lives a long distance from Maywood Free Church, how are we to participate in the premarital counsel?

Some couples are faced with this issue. Initially, a conference call could begin the process as we work through the Wedding Application together. We do require that premarital counseling, comparable to that at Maywood Free Church, be completed with a Pastor at another church in your local area prior to the wedding.

Are there any circumstances where Maywood Free Church would refuse to marry us?

There are some cases in which indicators denote areas of concern to proceed with a wedding. The Pastor will review these “major” concerns with the couple during a consultation and request a postponement of marriage while offering an extended preparation plan. If the couple is willing to work on specific areas of their lives and relationship, we are willing to walk with them in their journey to prepare for a lifetime of marriage. We will marry a couple after they successfully work through the extended preparation plan designed for them.

What are the Fees for Weddings?

Required Fees (ceremony only w/o reception)

	WC	Chapel
• Church Members Average Cost	\$600	\$500
• Non-member Average Cost	\$700	\$550

Optional Fees

- Decorating Equipment
- Kitchen
- Sound Equipment
- Support Staff

Average Ceremony & Reception Cost:

	<u>WC/Gymnasium</u>	<u>Chapel/Gymnasium</u>	<u>WC/Chapel</u>
Members	\$1000	\$925	\$1025
Non-members	\$1175	\$1175	\$1225

(Fees are subject to change)

