

Wedding Policy



Introduction and General Information

Greetings Future Married Couple!

Congratulations on your engagement! We are honored that you have considered us as a place to confirm your commitment before God to love, cherish and honor one another “until death do you part”!

At Spring Lake Church (SLC), we believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and is without error. We also believe that it is the final authority for all Christian faith and life (*Psalms 19:7-14; Matthew 5:18; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 3:16-17*) and within its pages we find all we need for life and godliness (*2 Peter 1:3*). We also find God’s standards and view of marriage.

Thus, we believe that it is our responsibility before God to help people form solid biblical marriages, not just to perform Christian weddings. It is that understanding and the application of biblical principles that shapes our wedding policy.

Before we go further in the process of planning your wedding, we believe that it would be beneficial for you and your future spouse to know where we, as a church, stand on several important issues. There are several basic elements that greatly strengthen the foundations of any marriage relationship. As you read through these, prayerfully consider where you and your future spouse stand in regards to them. Please understand that while we are open to discussing these with you, based on our desire to live by God’s standards and to help you begin your married life on solid biblical foundation, if any of these elements are missing from your life & relationship with one another, our Pastoral staff will likely excuse themselves from officiating your wedding ceremony. If you have attended our required Before Forever Class, much of these next few paragraphs will be review for you.

We Believe in Spiritual Unity

Marriage was designed by God and is defined in the Bible as a life-long commitment between a man and a woman (*Genesis 2:18-25*). Despite changes in cultural perspectives, we do not have the freedom to redefine marriage. God, in His Word, is clear that when two people enter into a covenant, like marriage, they should share the same spiritual convictions (*2 Corinthians 6:14-18*). Thus, if one of you is a follower of Christ and is striving for Christ-likeness in their lives and the other is not, we believe it is vital that you pause and work through this with one of our pastors or biblical counselors.

We Believe in Moral Purity

God's Word is unashamedly clear on matters of purity (*Acts 15:29; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Hebrews 13:4*). It is vital that a Christian couple keep themselves sexually pure; this gives you a firm foundation for a lasting marriage relationship. Thus, ongoing cohabitation or sexual involvement before marriage constitutes a violation of God's standards of moral purity. It would be hypocritical for us, and dishonoring to God, to ask God in the wedding ceremony to bless your marriage if you are violating His clearly revealed will in this area. It would also be detrimental to the long-term spiritual health of your marriage to go into it, living in disobedience to God. In light of this, we will request that you to make a commitment to abstain from sex and live apart until after marriage, if you want to pursue having your wedding at SLC.

If you find yourselves in either situation and would like to work through this with one of our pastors or biblical counselors, please contact us.

We Believe in the Permanence of Marriage

Scripture is very clear about God's plan for the permanence of marriage (*Matthew 19; Mark 10*) and His heart breaks when divorce occurs. God hates divorce for what it does to people and for what it does to the glory of His own covenant with the church. Nevertheless, we are painfully aware that divorce can and does occur in the lives of some believers under various circumstances. The topic of divorce and remarriage has been a personal, difficult, and a much-debated issue throughout the history of the church, but we believe that we are all called to live according to our understanding of the will of God as expressed in Scripture. The church, as a spiritual family with commitment to honoring Christ and showing earnest love for each other, should be ready to minister forgiveness, healing, reproof, correction, and restoration whenever appropriate. These commitments are the basis for our guidelines, which are given to reflect our understanding regarding questions of divorce and remarriage. Please go to the end of this document to read these guidelines.

Please Note *If you have been divorced, you will be asked on the Pre-Marital/Wedding Application, to tell us **in detail** the circumstances that lead to the divorce and the effort that you extended to save your marriage. We will be looking to see if you made every effort possible on your part to be reconciled to your former spouse before we would agree to be involved in your wedding.*

We Believe in the Fellowship of the Saints

The local church is one of the means God uses to grow us to maturity in Christ (*Colossians 1:28; 2 Peter 2:4-6; Hebrews 10:23-25*). Our desire is to disciple and mentor those who genuinely want to develop a Christ-centered marriage. We believe God has ordained that the church play an active role in this process. Therefore, the pastoral staff of SLC will only officiate at the weddings of those people who are members or regular attenders of the church and striving to be Christ followers. **We define those who are regular attenders as people who we have a record of attending at least two times per month for at least six months.** Until there is that evidence of regular participation in the life of the church, the pastoral staff will not commit to be involved in a wedding. In addition, our facility will **not** be available for weddings of people who would use

the church merely for their personal convenience but are not actively involved in SLC or who do not intend to make this their church home.

Each of our “**We Believe...**” statements are based on our desire to live by God’s standards and to help you begin your married life on solid biblical foundation. If any of these elements are missing from your life and relationship with one another, but you are willing to discuss them and see what God has to say about each one, one of our pastors would be delighted to meet with you.

In order to pursue pre-marital counseling and a wedding at SLC, please complete the **Pre-Marital/Wedding Application**. This application provides the information needed to begin. Please allow six months prior to the wedding date, to meet with your premarital counseling couple, as a time to strengthen the foundation of your relationship.

We congratulate you upon the significant step you are about to take in marriage. Thank you for your prayerful consideration of the above points. Please remember that these reflect our views based on the Word of God. We do not intend to be critical of relationships; our desire is to honor God by being obedient to His commands. Based on this, please know that we will decline to perform wedding ceremonies that do not exhibit this same kind of commitment to God and His Word. Each of us, will one day, stand accountable to God for how we lived (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 3:19).

Premarital Preparation

If one of our pastors is performing your wedding, we require you to be involved in premarital counseling with one of our Premarital Counseling Couples or a pastor. Research has shown that premarital preparation has been very effective in helping couples establish a solid foundation for their marriage. This is our goal in choosing to be involved in your wedding; to help you build a Christ-centered, gospel driven marriage that will last.

Guidelines on Divorce, Reconciliation, and Re-marriage

Divorce

Divorce is always the last option for believers. Because God hates divorce and can do miracles when people persevere, we should encourage believers to persevere in the resolution of marital difficulties and strife regardless of the cause or issues. No one should initiate a divorce unless their partner is guilty of repeatedly breaking the marriage covenant and is unrepentant and unwilling to submit to local church authority. Nonetheless, there are certain circumstances under which Scripture outlines permissible grounds for divorce as noted below:

1. When a spouse is involved in ongoing, unrepentant marital unfaithfulness. (*Matthew 19:9*)
2. When a spouse deserts or divorces their partner thus evidencing a disregard for God's desire for permanency in marriage and will not be reconciled. (*Genesis 2:23-24, I Corinthians 7:15*)
3. When a spouse is unwilling to fulfill essential marriage covenant commitments such as food, clothing, and/or conjugal love, which we understand to include the endangerment of the spouse or children. (*Exodus 21:7-11*) While not explicitly stated, we believe that abusive situations are covered by the Scripture cited, because physical and emotional abuses are extreme forms of neglecting material support and physical affection. Again, one time or even repeated offenses should not be considered grounds for divorce unless the offending party is unrepentant and unwilling to submit to church authority. If the offending party is repentant and willing to truly submit to the direction of the Elders, a course of reconciliation and restoration should be pursued.

While divorce may be *permitted* in the circumstances noted above, Scripture does not *command* divorce for believers.

Reconciliation

The process of reconciliation includes genuine repentance and forgiveness. Reconciliation is the highest practical witness of divine grace and forgiveness. No sin or offense should be considered unforgivable and irreconcilable. Couples should be encouraged and in most cases required to seek reconciliation through repentance and forgiveness before entertaining the thoughts of divorce. Genuine Repentance would be characterized by:

1. A willingness to submit to authority outside of oneself to receive direction and necessary steps toward real change.
2. A true godly sorrow over sins committed and a desire to turn away from those sins. (*2 Corinthians 7:11*)

3. A yielding to God and His Word regarding the recognition, assessment, and confession of any sins committed
4. A desire to be reconciled with the person against whom the sins were committed and those who may have been affected (children in most cases).

It is important to note that often the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Repentance is often the result of a process of moving toward God and His Word. Assessing whether a person is moving toward true Godly repentance or is simply dealing with worldly sorrow requires discernment and much prayer. A complete cessation of a particular sin or the lack thereof, while the goal, cannot be the benchmark of true repentance. As Jesus indicated, a brother may sin against a brother seven times in the same day and truly repent. The repeated repentance may be an indicator that no change has truly occurred, but it can also mean that a true battle over the flesh is in place. While forgiveness may be granted once, the move toward reconciliation is a process that may take time as healing takes place and trust is rebuilt. To aid in the process of reconciling and healing, the couple will be encouraged to seek counseling from our Biblical Counseling Ministry.

Remarriage

While remarriage should never be entered into lightly. We feel that Scripture outlines certain grounds for remarriage as set forth below:

1. Death breaks the marriage bond so remarriage is permissible without question for a believing widow or widower. (*Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39*)
2. If the previous marriage and divorce occurred prior to a saving belief in Christ. (*2 Corinthians 5:17*)
 - If the previous marriage ended in divorce due to the reasons noted in the **Divorce** section above.
 - The marriage of the spouse who initiated the divorce may be viewed as severing the former marriage, so that the unmarried spouse whose behavior did not biblically justify being divorced, may be free to remarry a believer. (*Matthew 19:9*)

Before any remarriage occurs, the following steps should be taken:

1. Serious efforts should be made at reconciliation, including the involvement of the church, if necessary. Both parties must be encouraged to be reconciled to God and to their spouses (*1 Corinthians 7:11*).
2. An assessment should be made as to whether sufficient steps have been taken to ensure there has been healing from any destructive behaviors or attitudes and confession and repentance from any wrongs that may have contributed to the divorce.