

Wedding Workbook

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Pastor Matthew D. Musteric + pastormusteric@gmail.com

Bethlehem Lutheran Church + 419-287-4182

<http://bethlehempemberville.org> + 220 Cedar Street + PO Box 344 + Pemberville, OH 43450



MASTER CHECKLIST for Pre-Marriage Conversations

Most of these documents can be found on our website (bethlehempemberville.org) under the “wedding” tab.

As soon as you are engaged to 6 months before your wedding date

1. Call the church to see if your desire wedding date is available.
2. Download and read our wedding guidelines and wedding fees.
3. Print and submit a completed wedding application.
4. Once you have completed the application, the pastor will set you up to complete an online pre-marriage inventory (cost to you of \$30-\$35). *The pastor will need your email addresses to set this up.*
5. Print a copy of the wedding service worksheet and complete it. Detailed instructions are in this workbook.

6 months before your wedding date

1. Set up a time to meet with the pastor for your first pre-marriage session.
2. Make arrangements with musicians.
3. Set up a time to meet with the pastor for your second pre-marriage session.

2-3 weeks before your wedding date

1. Submit a draft of the bulletin to the pastor for review before printing. *This applies whether you are printing your own bulletins or having the church print your bulletins.*
2. Submit a list of all music to be used during worship to the pastor.

The day of your wedding rehearsal

1. Give the wedding license to the pastor.
2. Pay musician(s), pastor and all church fees (see “wedding fees” worksheet online).

A Letter to Those Planning to Get Married

Christian marriage is a wonderful and holy gift of God. In marriage we are reminded of, and begin to live out, a beautiful truth of our Christian faith: we are made to live in loving community with God and with each other.

Often couples spend a lot of time planning the details of the wedding service. This is a good thing because it is appropriate we give much time and thought to this service. It is important to remember that a wedding service is first and foremost an act of worship.

During this time of preparation it is also important that you as a couple devote a considerable amount of time for planning your marriage. It is my hope that this workbook will assist you in planning for both your wedding *and* your marriage.

It is my expectation that both of you will read through this entire booklet and complete it *before our second meeting together*. You can begin working on it as soon as you'd like. A helpful checklist is found on the cover of this workbook.

In most cases, we will meet together two times before your wedding date. **Before the first session, you will take a pre-marriage inventory online at a cost of \$35 and complete the wedding service worksheet.**

May God bless you as you prepare for a lifetime of faithfulness together.

+ Pastor Matthew D. Musteric



1. The Goals of Christian Marriage

Read Genesis 2:18-24

In many ways, these verses form the foundation of Christian marriage. We learn right away that we are created for communion with God and with each other. In the New Testament, when pressed on the question of divorce, Jesus directs his hearers back to these verses, to God's original intentions from the start: marriage as a gift of God to be lived out in lifelong faithfulness.

1. Read Genesis 2:18-24. What comforts you? Surprises you? Challenges you?

2. What does it mean to become "one flesh"? Why do you think God designed sexual intimacy to be enjoyed in the context of marriage?

3. This story appears very early in the Bible. What does that say about the importance God places on marriage?

4. The theme of marriage is an important one throughout the Bible. Find three other stories of marriages/weddings in Scripture and record the Bible chapters and verses here.

The Three Goals of Christian Marriage

1. Be Fruitful and Multiply: A Goal of Christian Marriage is Children

One of the goals of marriage is having children and raising them to know and love God.

Discuss: How will you live this out in your marriage?

What are your plans for children? What does it mean to be open to children?

What does it mean to raise children for God's kingdom?

2. Forsaking All Others: A Goal of Christian Marriage is Lifelong Faithfulness

One of the goals of Christian marriage is to be drawn together in a relationship of intimacy and lifelong faithfulness to each other.

How will you practice faithfulness in your marriage?

Discuss what boundaries you will keep to protect your marriage from infidelity.

What are ways to practice what we pray in the Lord's prayer: "Lead us not into temptation"?

3. For God So Loved the World: A Goal of Christian Marriage is Showing God's Love

One of the goals of marriage is that in your life together as husband and wife you will show the world what God's love is like.

What does it mean that your marriage is "public" and not just about you two?

What does it mean to say, "When you marry someone, you marry his/her family?"

How will you cultivate friendships that are supportive of your marriage?

Who do you know that has a *great* marriage? Why?

2. Mutual Submission and Practicing Forgiveness

Read Ephesians 5:20-33

1. Marriage is difficult work. In this Letter to the Ephesians we are invited to consider marriage as servanthood: mutual submission to one another in love. Many people find some of the language on this text offensive. It is important to pay attention to the whole theme as we discover the richness of this invitation.

Read Ephesians 5:20-33. What comforts you? Surprises you? Challenges you?

2. Women: What is your reaction to verses 22-24? How does this verse read differently in light of verse 21?

3. Men: What is your reaction to verses 25-30? How will you sacrificially love your wife?

4. What does it mean to be subject to one another in love? What does this look like in your relationship now? What will it look like in your marriage?

5. Have you discussed the roles you will play in your marriage? What roles did your parents play in their marriage? How would you like your marriage to be the same? Different?

Prayer and Forgiveness

1. *Regular Prayer*

Begin a time of regular prayer together and for one another (ideally: daily). You will need to set aside a regular time for prayer.

What does regular prayer look like for you?

How will you pray together?

2. *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*

Listen to the three sermons on forgiveness that can be purchased from Mars Hill for \$4.50 for the MP3 download: <https://marshill.org/shop/forgiveness/>

What did you learn from the sermon series (MP3 CDs) on forgiveness?

Read chapter 3 in Anderson's *Seven Spiritual Practices of Marriage* book.

What are you doing to "bring honor to conflict" and to truly practice forgiveness and reconciliation in your relationship together?

3. Celebrating Your Marriage

Read John 2:1-11

1. Marriage is God's gifts and is to be celebrated. In John's Gospel, the Wedding at Cana is the first place where Jesus performs a "sign." This wedding banquet gives us a hint of what God's kingdom is like.

Wedding feasts were a big deal in the first century. How will you celebrate your marriage beyond your wedding day?

2. Jesus saves the best wine for last. Discuss what you are looking forward to about growing old together.

3. How will you make room for Jesus in your marriage?
What are your plans for worship weekly?
What are your plans for regular prayer?
What are your plans for regularly reflecting on Scripture?

Building a Marriage: Your First Year

This is not a complete list, but here are some things you may want to consider giving some attention to during your first year of marriage.

1. Honeymoon: How can your celebration of marriage during your honeymoon be an example for a regular (at least monthly) celebration of your marriage and each other?

2. Marriage Mentors: It is important to find a couple (before you are married) to serve as mentors and role models as you begin your married life together. Who do you know that has a faithful marriage? How might they help you as a couple as you grow in your own marriage covenant? Note: *It is best not to choose someone too close in your extended families.*

Our marriage mentors are: _____

Contact information: _____

3. Counseling or Enrichment: You have probably spent hundreds if not thousands of dollars on your wedding. How much money will you spend on your marriage? There are many retreats, resources—even continued counseling—to help you grow in your marriage together (See the last page of this booklet for a list). Make time to make a list of marriage counselors' names and phone numbers handy so that when you hit rocky spots, you have a guide to help you through them.

A good marriage counselor is: _____

Contact information: _____

4. Discuss the Big Four: Sex. Money. Parenting. In-Laws.

These four topics are the largest source of conflict in marriages.

Sex

Did your family talk about it? How?

Is there a family history of abuse?

Are you comfortable asking for what you want in your sexual relationship?

Are there sexual activities that would make you uncomfortable?

Money*

Did your family talk about money?

How was money handled?

What did you learn about money?

Are you a spender or a saver?

**I strongly recommend taking Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University class during your time of courtship. Check online for a class near you: <http://www.daveramsey.com/fpu/home/>*

Parenting

How were children regarded in your family?

What did you parents do well with discipline?

What would you do differently?

In-Laws

How do you get along with each other's families?

Share a positive and negative story from your family of origin (write it down).

5. Planning the Wedding Worship Service

*Below are some of the options for the wedding worship service. Please take time to discuss your answers **before meeting with the pastor the first time**. Feel free to write in this workbook. Also, please bring any questions you have. I have found that this much easier to discuss questions about the service itself well in advance of the wedding. Please copy your answers to the **wedding service worksheet** and give it to the pastor.*

1. Will your wedding include a celebration of Holy Communion? Yes / No

It is very appropriate to celebrate Holy Communion at a wedding. If you choose to celebrate Holy Communion, the pastor will preside, but you as the bride and groom may help to distribute the gifts of bread and wine to all who are gathered.

If Holy Communion is celebrated, all Baptized Christians will be invited to take part. The following instructions (or a similar invitation) will be given to all present, either in the bulletin or verbally by the pastor:

Welcome to the Meal of the Baptized! Lutherans believe that Holy Communion is the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ given and shed for the forgiveness of sins. With this understanding, baptized Christians who usually commune in other Christian congregations are welcome to join us at the Lord's Table. Those who are not yet communing may come forward for a blessing from the pastor.

2. Will the "Giving the Bride" be a part of the worship service? Yes / No

The "giving of the bride" is not a necessary part of the wedding worship service. However, it has survived as a tradition in some families. There are many options for this part of the service, which you may discuss with the pastor. In many cases, the bride is simply escorted down the aisle by her father or another attendant and the father places her hand into the groom's hand at the head of the aisle.

3. Readings

Please select one or two Scripture readings (see the next page for suggestions). The pastor will choose at least one additional reading. Some suggestions are given in this booklet. We use the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible for the reading of Scripture in worship. *Readings from sources other than Holy Scripture (poems, etc.) are generally not appropriate during the wedding worship service, but may be included as part of your reception, etc. When in doubt, check with the pastor.*

Some suggested readings are

Genesis 2:18-24

Ephesians 5:20-33

John 2:1-11

Who will read the lessons? Pastor / Others: _____

All Scripture texts, vows, music (lyrics and music) must be reviewed by the Pastor **at least one month** prior to the wedding. The following are some suggestions for Scripture readings for the service. Other passages from the Bible may be appropriate. You are welcome to choose one or two Scripture readings. The pastor may choose additional texts.

Genesis 1:26-31: Creation of man and woman

Genesis 2:18-24: They become one flesh

Psalm 23: *The LORD is my shepherd*

Psalm 67: *May God be gracious to us and bless us*

Psalm 112: *Happy are those who fear the LORD*

Psalm 148: *Praise the LORD!*

Psalm 149: *Sing to the LORD a new song*

Psalm 150: *Let everything that breathes praise the LORD!*

Song of Songs 2:10-13: *My beloved speaks*

Song of Songs 8:6-7: *Love is strong as death*

Jeremiah 31:31-34: *I will be their God, and they shall be my people*

Isaiah 54:5-8: *For your Maker is your husband*

Hosea 2:16-23: *you will call me, "My husband"/I will take you for my wife*

Romans 8:31-39: *If God is for us, who is against us?*

Romans 12:1-2: *Present your bodies as a living sacrifice*

1 Corinthians 6:12-20: *"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are beneficial*

1 Corinthians 13:1-13: *Love is patient, love is kind*

Ephesians 3:14-21: *That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*

Ephesians 5:20-33: Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ

Colossians 3:12-17: *Bear with one another*

1 Peter 3:1-9: *Wives/Husbands*

1 John 4:7-12: *Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God...*

Revelation 19:5-9: *Blessed are those invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb...*

Matthew 5:1-10: *The Beatitudes*

Matthew 5:13-16: *You are the salt of the earth*

Matthew 7:24-29: *House on rock/sand*

Matthew 19:3-6: *What God has joined together, let no one separate*

Matthew 22:35-40: *The greatest commandment*

Mark 10:6-9: *The two shall become one flesh*

Mark 10:13-16: *Let the little children come to me*

John 2:1-11: The wedding in Cana (water into wine)

John 15:1-17: *I am the vine, you are the branches*

4. Vows

Choose the wedding vows you will use. Some suggestions for the form of your vows may be found below.

[1] *I take you _____, to be my wife/husband from this day forward, to join with you and share all that is to come, and I promise to be faithful to you until death parts us.*

[2] *In the presence of God and this community, I _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/husband; to have and to hold from this day forward, in joy and in sorrow, in plenty and in want, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.*

[3] *I, _____, take you, _____, for my wife/husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death us do part.*

If you would like, you may write your own vows. These must be reviewed with the pastor well in advance of your wedding date.

Text for Alternate Vow:

5. Will a Unity Candle or Other Symbols be part of the worship service? Yes / No

The lighting of the unity candle is an *optional* portion of the service with only a very recent history in the tradition and practice of the Church. During the lighting of the candle, special music may be played or a **hymn may be sung by the congregation**. When the unity candle is lit, the individual candles are not extinguished afterward. (*This shows that though the “two become one,” we as individuals do not “disappear” into one another.*) The congregation has a unity candle holder that you are welcome to use. Candles are provided by the couple.

The mothers of the bride and groom often light the two individual candles when they are seated during the processions and the beginning of the service.

Hymn during the lighting of the unity candle: _____

6. Will an Aisle Runner be used? Yes / No

Aisle runners may be ordered through most florists and are the responsibility of the couple.

7. Aisle Candles? Yes / No # needed? (up to 12) _____

Aisle candles are available to attach to the pews during the service. Please let the pastor know in advance so arrangements may be made with the congregation’s custodian. Often aisle candles are in the way for a photographer; you may want to check with your photographer before deciding to use the aisle candles. Sometimes 10 (5 sets) are used instead of 12.

8. How would you like to be introduced as a couple following the Benediction?

Examples:

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Smith

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Smith

Mr. Joseph and Mrs. Josephine Smith

Introduction of Couple as _____

9. How many people will be in the Wedding Party? (including the bride and groom)

Total Number _____

Number of Adults _____

Number of Children and Ages _____

10. What plans do you have for music and musicians? Have you contacted an organist?

Organist: _____ Contacted? Yes / No

Musician #1: _____ Contacted? Yes / No

Musician #2: _____ Contacted? Yes / No

All music used during the wedding worship service must have *clear Christian content*. If you are unsure if a piece is acceptable, please check with the pastor well in advance of your wedding date. *A list of all music to be played during the wedding service (including pre-service music) should be submitted to the pastor at least one month in advance of the wedding—no exceptions.* Couples must have written copyright permission to use any pre-recorded music.

It is your responsibility to make arrangements with all musicians, including the organist and to secure any copyright permissions for pre-recorded music. Please be sure to give all musicians a copy of the wedding music guidelines.

11. Hymns and Other Music

If someone were to ask me, “How can we make our wedding celebration the best it can be?” my first answer would be **“Celebrate Holy Communion!”** and my second answer would be **“Have the congregation sing lots of hymns!”** Hymns are an appropriate way for the whole congregation to join in the blessing and celebration of your marriage. Singing familiar hymns (or not-so-familiar hymns to familiar tunes) is a great way for the whole congregation to bless your marriage. Hymn numbers listed below refer to the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (red) hymnal. You may borrow a copy of the hymnal to look more closely at the hymns. Simply check with the pastor during one of your pre-marriage meetings.

Great places in the service for hymns include

- Gathering hymn (at the beginning)
- Hymn of the day (following the sermon, before the vows)
- After the vows and exchange of rings (e.g., during the lighting of the unity candle)
- Sending hymn (at the end)

(See next page for suggestions.)

Some suggestions for additional hymns appropriate for weddings are:

We Praise You, O God 870
Let the Whole Creation Cry 876
All People That on Earth Do Dwell 883
Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty 533
Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now 527
Holy Spirit, Truth Divine 398
Hear Us Now, Our God and Father 585
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling 631
If You But Trust in God to Guide You 769
O Master, Let Me Walk with You 818

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee 836
Jesus, Come! For We Invite You 312
I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry 732
You Who Dwell in the Shelter of the Lord 787
This is a Day, Lord, Gladly Awaited 586
Beloved, God's Chosen 648
Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life 816
Now Thank We All Our God 839
O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright 308
Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness 488/489

Hymns or songs from other sources may be copied and used *if copyright permission is obtained in writing*. This is the responsibility of the couple, though the congregation does carry several copyright licenses.

12. Who will put together and print the bulletin? You / The Church

Be sure to provide a copy of the bulletin to the pastor at least two weeks before the final printing, even if you are printing them on your own.

13. Do you have any other special worship plans or ideas?

This is an appropriate place to record any special plans or questions you may have.

*When you have completed these pages, please copy a summary of your answers to the **Wedding Service Worksheet** and give a copy to the pastor.*

6. The Wedding Order for Worship

Below you will find a brief outline of the wedding service (from the red *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* hymnal, pp. 286-291). It is arranged in the form of a sample bulletin.

Order for Worship Celebrating the Wedding of
<BRIDE> and <GROOM>
Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Pemberville, Ohio
<DATE>, <TIME>

Prelude Music	"Here We Are"
Processionals	"Canon in D"
Greeting	
Prayer of the Day	
Scripture Readings	Genesis 2:18-24
Sermon	
Hymn of the Day	
Wedding Vows	
Giving of Rings	
Pronouncement of Marriage	
Lighting of Unity Candle	
Hymn	"Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"
Prayers of the People	
Lord's Prayer	
Blessing	
Dismissal	"Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring"
Postlude	

[The information below also may be listed in the bulletin.]

The Bridal Party

This listing can be as simple or as detailed as you would like.

Thank You

A thank you to family and friends is often included in the bulletin.

Reception Information and/or Directions

Bride and Groom's New Address

7. Pastor Matt's List of Helpful Books and Resources

Highly recommended resources are in bold below.

Ambassadors of Reconciliation: <http://www.hisaor.org/>

Anderson, Kevin. *The 7 Spiritual Practices of Marriage*.

Chapman, Gary. *The Five Love Languages*.

Cloud, Henry. *Boundaries in Marriage and Boundaries*.

Dawn, Marva. *Sexual Character*.

Eldredge, John and Stasi. *Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman's Soul*.

Eldredge, John. *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul*.

Ethridge, Shannon and Stephen Arterburn. *The Fantasy Fallacy: Exploring the Deeper Meaning Beyond Sexual Thoughts*.

Ethridge, Shannon and Gary Thomas. *The Passion Principles: Celebrating Sexual Freedom in Marriage*.

Feldhahn, Shaunti and Jeff. *For Men Only: A Straightforward Guide to the Inner Lives of Women*.

Feldhahn, Shaunti. *For Women Only: What You Need to Know About the Inner Lives of Men*.

Smalley, Gary. *The Two Sides of Love*. Focus on the Family Publishing, 1999.

Thomas, Gary. *Sacred Marriage*. Zondervan, 2002. 288 pp. ISBN 0310242827. \$13

Wangerin, Walter. *As for Me and My House: Crafting Your Marriage to Last*.

Wangerin, Walter and Ruthanne. *A Prayerbook for Husbands and Wives: Partners in Prayer*.