



Engaged Couple Letter

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Congratulations!

Thank you for considering Jersey Baptist Church as the place where you wish to seal your marriage vows. We are honored by your interest, and want to let you know what is involved in preparing for your wedding so you can come to a more informed decision.

The marriage preparation and counseling process at Jersey Baptist Church, which is outlined below, is both intensive and extensive. Considerable time, effort, and commitment will be required of you....which is good training for marriage!

1. Premarital Counseling

ALL couples being married at JBC must complete pre-marital counseling/classes. Due to the complexity of our Pastor's schedules their calendars do not allow for them to provide individual counseling. This is why we have created a Discipleship course for couples to take prior to marriage. Donna and Carl Sauder head up these classes for our Pastors. As you can imagine their schedules are also very full teaching, mentoring and counseling several couples at a time. With their own responsibilities at home and in order to protect their family time we do not ask or expect them to counsel couples individually, outside of class. They graciously give of their time to serve our church and pastor's in this capacity.

Duration: minimum of 5, 1-to-2 hour sessions over a 7 week period. Special needs/circumstances/problems may require additional sessions with the pastor or a professional counselor, as the pastor deems necessary. Please contact Nancy in the church office for the next available class.

Priority of counseling: The importance of premarital counseling cannot be overstated. You will be acquiring knowledge and skills to help you the rest of your lives. Therefore, please assign the meetings your highest priority, and be willing to adjust your regular agenda if necessary to schedule and attend them. *(This may involve, for example, taking time off work.)*

2. Marriage Preparation

- a. **Approval of wedding:** The pastor will tentatively inform you by the end of the first counseling session whether he can officiate at your wedding. This will be based on his knowledge at that point. Should he agree to officiate, then later become aware of matters that could have a significant negative impact on your relationship; or if either of you fail to meet the agreed-upon requirements of the marriage preparation/counseling process, the minister may have to rescind his approval.
- b. **Church attendance:** A church wedding is a service of worship to Almighty God. The significance of such a service can best be appreciated by those who regularly participate in church. Therefore, for couples who have no present church relationship, the minister will require attendance at this church's services of worship for at least six months before the wedding; and will also want to discuss your religious beliefs.
- c. **Church relationships:** Since we work so closely with the people we marry, and invest so much time and effort in their lives, it is our normal policy to perform weddings only for couples who are involved in the life of our church. If you are active in and committed to another church, and plan to continue that involvement after your marriage, it is recommended that you arrange to have your wedding there. If that church is too small, we recommend using a larger church of the same denomination, or securing the use of a private hall, as we cannot rent our facilities for weddings.
- d. **Difficult issues:** If any of the following is a past or ongoing issue in your lives or relationship, it must be resolved to the pastor's satisfaction before the wedding can take place: couples living together; history of divorce; lack of openness to spiritual counsel; emotional instability, immaturity or incompatibility; substance, spousal, or child abuse; financial mismanagement; history/practice of immorality; Christians marrying non-Christians; and any other matter which the pastor considers a significant barrier to a happy, lasting marriage.

If you have any questions concerning any of the above issues, or disagree with any of the stated positions, please mention it to the pastor at your first meeting. We are here to understand and help you, not to judge you. If we can agree with you on reasons why any of our standards and requirements should be waived in your case, we will do it.

May God bless you as you continue to prepare for your marriage!