

Copy of Bridgetown Church Wedding Policy Guidelines

[copied in August 2021]

This policy applies to all weddings conducted under Bridgetown's authority at any venue by any authorized persons associated with Bridgetown.

Our policy for the bride and groom requires that:

- Both have regularly attended Bridgetown Sunday gatherings for at least 6 months and are in a Bridgetown Community
- They are abstaining from all sexual activity and are living separately until married
- They are a cisgender man and a cisgender woman.
- The couple has read and agrees with the Bridgetown wedding Statement
- They have completed our Premarital Request Form a minimum of four months prior to their wedding date. This provides enough time to complete their premarital mentoring. (NOTE: Exceptions are occasionally made due to unique circumstances.)

Requesting a Bridgetown Church Pastor

While Bridgetown would love to serve all officiant requests, we also want to value our pastor's schedules and time with family. Our pastors are not compensated by Bridgetown for officiating weddings and cannot expense their incurred costs to the church. Since they devote a great deal of time to serve the couple and carefully prepare each wedding they officiate, Bridgetown requests a minimum honorarium of \$150 for each wedding. (Any monetary gift should be written out to the pastor officiating. Please do not write checks to Bridgetown)

Bridgetown Marriage and Wedding Ceremonies Policy

Bridgetown Church is committed to supporting marriage as seen in the Scriptures. We believe that God created marriage and clearly defined it. We believe that marriage is a life-long covenant between one natural-born (cisgender) woman and one natural-born (cisgender) man (*Gen 1v27-28; 2v18-25; Matthew 19v3-6; Ephesians 5v31*).

Bridgetown believes the marriage covenant is intended to be a beautiful reflection of God's covenant with His people and a picture of the Gospel. God's grace allows us to believe that even the most broken marriages can be restored. At Bridgetown, we advocate for reconciliation and restoration of all marriages.

We believe the Scriptures teach that followers of Jesus should only marry other followers. However, if a believer in Jesus is already married and their non-believing spouse is willing to stay with them, they should remain married to them (*2 Corinthians 6v14-18; 1 Corinthians 7v12-16*).

In response to these firm beliefs, our policy applies to all weddings conducted under Bridgetown's authority by any Bridgetown pastor, elder, or other authorized persons associated with the church. Our policy is established not to be unnecessarily offensive or to cause difficulty, but rather to help people respect the marriage covenant. Our policy is as follows:

- Our ultimate goal is that both bride and groom are followers of Jesus and are involved in a local church.
- We will only officiate a wedding for a couple if both the groom and bride are followers of Jesus or both groom and bride are not followers. We will not officiate a wedding where one party is a follower of Jesus and the other is not.
- If bride or groom has been previously married, questions will be asked regarding the grounds of divorce, attempts that have been made regarding reconciliation, current status of the previous spouse, etc. The pastor may ask for permission to contact the previous spouse. In cases where divorce has occurred under questionable conditions, the pastor will use wisdom and discernment to handle the marriage as the elders see fit.

- We will not officiate a wedding for a couple that is sexually active. Areas in which the couple is not practicing sexual purity, we will pastor them to begin doing so. We ask that all couples would live separately until the day of their marriage.
- We only perform marriages between a natural-born (cisgender) man and a natural-born (cisgender) woman.
- Generally, Bridgetown needs to be contacted at least four months prior to the proposed wedding date.
- All couples are expected to go through premarital mentoring with a person approved by Bridgetown. This mentoring typically takes 3-4 sessions to complete. To help ensure the best care possible, we request permission to speak with any counselors or support groups leaders either party has been involved within the past year. All information will be treated as confidential.
- Any Bridgetown pastor or elder reserves the right to suggest making minor adjustments to the above policy due to specific circumstances. The Bridgetown elders must approve any such changes. The officiant may also choose to postpone or decline officiating a wedding.

Bible References Using New International Version

Gen 2v18-25

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Matthew 5v31-32

"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 sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Matthew 19v3-12

Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry." Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

1 Corinthians 7v12-16

To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord)v If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has

been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

2 Cor 6v14-18

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." Therefore, "Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." And, "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."