



GETTING MARRIED AT HERITAGE

Ron Hitchcock once said, “Only a decision to follow Christ will have greater impact on your life than your decision to get married.” At Heritage Christian Church, we have developed a pre-marital process that is designed to help couples celebrate their strengths and identify any growth areas that may be pertinent to address. It brings us great joy to see married couples experience a satisfying, life-long relationship that will stand the test of time.

For a Heritage pastor to conduct a wedding ceremony, it is important for him to be true to biblical standards and it is expected that he would be able to give his blessing to the marital union. When people approach a pastor about officiating their wedding, oftentimes the pastor doesn't know them very well. Therefore, the Family Life Ministry of Heritage has set up a pre-marital process, to inform each couple about the church's views on marriage and morality, and to prepare them in the best possible way for their life together. The first part of our pre-marital process is exploratory in nature.

Step One - Contact Linda Buchan, at lbuchan@heritageecc.org (or 898-9412, ext. 215), and mention your desire to go through the pre-marital process. Linda will send out a marriage application for you to fill out. Once Linda receives your email addresses and \$25, she will then sign you up for the Prepare-Enrich online inventory.

The Prepare-Enrich Inventory is an instrument that has been used worldwide by over three million couples and it provides a great roadmap for the pre-marital coaches who will be meeting with you. This important tool addresses topics like communication, conflict resolution, sexuality, finances, stress, your attitude toward leisure, and your relationship with your family of origin. Linda will send your email addresses to Life Innovations (the creator of the inventory) and they will send each of you a link to begin the process.

Once you return the application to Linda in the Heritage Christian Church office (7413 Maxtown Road, Westerville, OH, 43082) and we receive the results of the inventory, you are ready for the next step.

Step Two - You will then be contacted by Becki Brown, our Pre-marital Coordinator, to set up an interview. Please plan for this interview to take two hours. Becki (or someone who works with her) meets with each individual for about 45 minutes and then, concludes the time with a conversation with the couple.

In this interview, we feel it is important for you to have an opportunity to speak about the positive traits that drew you together as a couple *and* to be able to surface potential problems areas, like pornography, lying, uncontrolled anger, verbal and physical abuse, cohabitation, sexual impurity, misuse of alcohol or drugs, and spiritual incompatibility.



At the conclusion of the interview, you will receive two more handouts to fill out and turn in to Becki Brown, at the Family Life office.

Step Three – Once the handouts are received, for most people, the next step is to be paired up with a coaching couple who will meet with you 3-6 times to review the results of the Prepare-Enrich Inventory and map out a strategy for continued growth.

Step Four – Go through a six-week class called *Prepare2b1* that is designed for couples or individuals who want to learn more about marriage and how to choose a good partner. There is no cost for this class, but donations are encouraged for the materials.

Step Five – Once the pre-marital screening process is concluded, the next step is to meet with our Wedding Coordinator, Susan Gebhardt. Susan will assist you in finding a good date for the wedding and in planning and implementing the details of your big day. You can contact Susan at sgebby24@gmail.com or at 614-882-5933. To reserve the church facility for a wedding, a \$100 deposit must be received in our church office. If the building is returned to its original condition, the deposit will then be applied to the other fees associated with this occasion.

After going through this process, if your values and beliefs are in general agreement with the church, it is important to contact one of the Heritage pastors to see if he would be able to participate in the wedding. The officiating pastor will then meet with you to plan the wedding.

We believe that successful, satisfying marriages are still possible but they do not happen by accident. If you are interested in getting married at Heritage Christian Church, please allow yourself at least 6 months to go through the above steps. In fact, most weddings take approximately 9-12 months of preparation and it is important not to rush through the process.

We're not trying to be rigid or legalistic in our approach — we just want you to be ready for this very important decision. Please feel free to contact Becki Brown at marriagecoaching@heritagecc.org if you need any assistance.

One more thing: We also urge each couple to meet with either their pre-marital coaches or the officiating pastor for one or two follow-up sessions during the first year of marriage.

Best wishes,

Bob

Family Life Pastor – Bob Buchan, 898-9412 x340



WEDDING PLANNING

9-12 Months before Wedding

1. Follow the seven steps mentioned above. Note: We have wedding planning information for those who request it.
2. Begin meeting with the wedding coordinator and your pre-marital coaches.

4 Months before Wedding

1. Meet with wedding coordinator to discuss wedding details.
2. Continue meeting with marriage coaches
3. Contact pastor to set up any meetings that may be necessary.

2 Months before Wedding

1. Finish meetings with pre-marital marriage coaches.

1 Month before Wedding

1. Meet with wedding coordinator to finalize details and pay balance of wedding fees.
2. Meet with pastor.

MISCELLANEOUS FEES

A deposit is collected upon officially scheduling your event. Please make your check payable to Heritage Christian Church and submit it to Linda Buchan at the church office. The balance is due at least one month before the wedding.

Initial Deposit \$100

(Note: Will be applied toward other costs)

Janitor Fee \$100

Sound Coordinator \$200

Wedding Coordinator \$200

Pastor \$150

(Made out to pastor and given directly to him at the rehearsal)

Non-attendee HCC fee \$300

Traffic control – when 300+ attending \$36/hour per police officer

PREPARE2B1 Class (a donation for materials)



YOUR WEDDING COORDINATOR

It is expected that Susan Gebhardt, the church wedding coordinator, will be available for all weddings. The coordinator ensures that the couple understands and follows the wedding guidelines established by the church. The couple should schedule a meeting at least four months prior to the wedding date to discuss facility requirements, lock down rehearsal/ceremony times, and coordinate arrival and pickup of any deliveries.

Closer to the wedding date, a second meeting is necessary to go over final forms and details of the rehearsal. Based on the decisions made by the couple at this consultation, the coordinator will create an order of service for the ceremony so that the rehearsal runs as efficiently as possible. The coordinator will direct the rehearsal and assist the officiating pastor to make sure everything goes smoothly during this practice session.

It is the couple's responsibility to recruit people (not in the wedding party) to clean up after the rehearsal and the wedding ceremony. This includes any decorations, flowers, candles, and items left in the rooms that were used by the wedding party before the event begins. If flowers or decorations are to be moved from the ceremony to the reception site, someone should be assigned to do this before the wedding date. Set-up and take-down people should be the same so they know where everything goes. Any items moved around must be returned to their original placement. All rentals must be picked up by an assigned individual by 10 am on Saturday (for a Friday night wedding), or 1:00 pm on Saturday (for a Saturday morning wedding).

The coordinator is not a wedding director or planner, and can only give suggestions based on what the church can accommodate. The couple should inform all family members of the coordinator's duties so no one gets confused.

THE WEDDING WORKSHOP

The Wedding Workshop, led by Susan Gebhardt, provides top-quality, full service design and decorating for showers, wedding ceremonies, and receptions. When you work with *The Wedding Workshop* you can take advantage of some beautiful, pre-designed décor packages. Clients are welcome to come see the current inventory of wedding items, reception decorations, centerpieces and to explore ideas for creating a day to remember.

Services:

- Consultation for design of event/overall ambience.
- Shopping excursions for items desired but not in inventory.
- Workshops for hands-on creation of decorative items.
- Event day decorating (ceremony site and/or reception site).
- Event day takedown service (ceremony site and/or reception site).
- Rental of decorating/ceremony/banquet items.
- Complete bridal shower packages-from invitations to games to menus to hosting.



Also available are referrals for vendors who provide services from their homes:

- Cakes
- Ceremony Programs-Invitations-Calligraphy
- Alterations
- Music

Susan Gebhardt

Owner/Operator

614.882.5933 – sgebby24@gmail.com

6796 Regency Drive

Westerville, OH 43082

CEREMONY GUIDELINES

1. The arrival of the florist, decorator, and bridal party should be coordinated with the wedding coordinator.
2. It is the Bride and/or Groom's responsibility to instruct the florist, caterers, decorators, photographers, etc., of these guidelines.
3. If a reception is held at the church building, an open bar serving alcoholic beverages will not be permitted but a toast for the special occasion is acceptable.
4. Smoking is not permitted in any part of the building.
5. Due to constant use of our building, you are asked NOT to use any birdseed, rice, glitter, or confetti. Bubbles are acceptable outside only, away from the entrance of the building.
6. Due to fire regulations and for the safety of all attending, all aisle candles and larger table candles must be enclosed on the bottom and sides while burning, except for the Unity candle (all candles should be non-drip.)
7. The couple must designate workers to return the facility to its pre-ceremony condition. A team of five or more for clean up is highly recommended. This means removing all trash and decorations and putting away all equipment used. No changes can be made to Heritage décor (curtains, drapes, video screens, wall hangings lighting, music gear or sound equipment). This also applies to all dressing rooms and rooms used for photography. Anything that has been moved (with permission) will be returned to its original location. Chairs used will be restacked and returned to their storage location. Auditorium chairs may not be taken from the auditorium to other parts of the church building.
8. For Friday weddings, clean up is to be done by 9:00 pm, and when a Saturday wedding takes place, clean up is to be done by 1:00 pm.

9. If equipment or plants are rented for your wedding, you must make arrangements for them to be picked up after a Friday wedding by 8:45 pm and for Saturday weddings, no later than 1:00 p.m. Due to our limited space; these items may not be left in the church over the weekend.
10. Decorations can be set up on the floor or tied with a ribbon to the existing furniture. Do not use staples, nails, tacks or tape to fasten decorations. Flowers, bows, and other items may not be attached to the chairs except with the greatest of care. Do not use tape of any kind. Straight pins or wire ties are acceptable, should you want to attach items to the chairs on the aisle. All decorations must be removed at the end of your scheduled time for the wedding.
11. For safety and security, children are not permitted to wander through the church facility and should remain with a parent or guardian at all times.
12. The wedding coordinator will need the name of a designated contact person with all numbers they can be reached in case a question or problem arises around the rehearsal and/or wedding.

MORE CONSIDERATIONS

Sound System

The sound system requires a trained Heritage Christian Church technician to operate. The wedding coordinator will communicate with this person. If special attention is needed for a specific part of the ceremony, the couple should explain what is needed to the wedding coordinator.

The fee for the sound technician is \$200. This fee includes the tear down and set up of HCC stage equipment, as well as time spent during the rehearsal and ceremony. If there is a need for video or projection, an extra fee may be charged. If live music is used and a sound check must be conducted during the rehearsal, all singers and/or musicians should attend the rehearsal or arrive 60 minutes prior to the ceremony for sound checks.

Audio Taping

Upon request, the sound technician can make an audiotape of the ceremony. This request needs to be made two weeks prior to the event. When recording is requested, the groom and pastor must wear lapel microphones.

Music

The choice of music is made by the Bride and Groom in consultation with the musicians and pastor. The sound technician does not provide music for the wedding party. All pre-recorded music should be on two separate CD's. The first CD would contain pre-ceremony music and the second CD would contain the actual ceremony music itself. The songs on each of the CD's should be placed in chronological order of



occurrence. This removes the awkward pausing during the ceremony of removing one CD and placing another one into the CD player.

You will want to consider having music at some or all of the following parts of your ceremony:

- Pre-ceremony
- Candle-lighting
- Seating of the Mothers
- The Attendants' entry
- The Bride's entry
- Special Prayer
- Communion
- Recessional
- Dismissal of Guests

There is generally a program of music preceding all formal weddings. Music may be prerecorded or performed live. The pre-ceremony music should be between ten minutes and thirty minutes long. Ceremony music selections, videos, and attire should honor and glorify God.

Video

Flood lights are not permitted during the ceremony. Camera operators must stay off the stage area and should refrain from becoming distracting or moving around excessively. The church does not provide videotaping of the ceremony. The wedding coordinator or the officiating pastor must screen videos that may be shown to guests.

Lighting

Weddings are able to utilize the normal lighting system in our church facility — there is no special lighting available.

Photography

Photographic opportunities should be discussed with the wedding coordinator who will work with the Bride and Groom to assure desires can be met. Pre-ceremony and after ceremony photos need to be scheduled into the day's event to assure the timeline can be adhered to.

Cohabitation Marriage & Family Life Ministry of HCC

Heritage Christian Church defines a cohabiting couple as a man and woman living together without legal or religious sanction. Many couples are cohabiting these days and we believe it is important for us to address this issue.

Is it wrong to live together before getting married? If the living arrangement involves sexual contact, then the Bible is pretty clear on that topic:

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

⁴ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. ⁵ For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person-- such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient (Ephesians 5:3-6, NIV).

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵ not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; ⁶ and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. ⁷ For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. ⁸ Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, NIV).

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, NIV).

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body (1 Corinthians 6:18-20, NIV).

For those of us who follow Christ, it is God's plan for us to walk in sexual purity. One of the greatest gifts that we can give a marriage partner is the gift of our virginity. For us, it is not just an issue of pleasing a potential marriage partner – our supreme ambition is to honor the Lord in all we do!

What is the church's position on this lifestyle and why?



Heritage Christian Church (HCC) values the marriage union as God's intended basis for a life-long relationship between a man and a woman as well as for the nurturing of family life. What is marriage, according to the scriptures? God's definition is found in Genesis 2:24: *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh* (NIV). From this passage, four things become apparent:

- **Marriage is exclusive.** The Bible speaks of one man and one woman being joined together. No matter what the culture says: Not two men, or two women, but a man and a woman being united in Christ is God's ideal.
- **Marriage is to be publicly recognized.** This commitment is not a private thing but involves leaving father and mother and moving away from your family of origin to live together as a couple.
- **Marriage is to be permanent.** Note that it says the husband cleaves to his wife, not in a temporary relationship but in a lasting one. Jesus said, "What God has joined together, let man not separate." When we, merely out of our own selfishness, seek to divide what God joins together, we are rebelling against God!
- **Marriage is to be consummated by sexual intercourse.** For it is God's intention that the two become one flesh.

This union is more than just two bodies coming together. It is a joining of hearts, the joining of spirits. It can be the most intimate union that two individuals experience, especially when God is in the center of that relationship.

God is wise and He knows that a marriage creates a more stable and nurturing environment for both couples and children than a live-in relationship. At Heritage, we urge each couple to seek God's best in their relationship – to put Him first. The Bible says that God's love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control are available to both husband and wife as we live in union with His Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

In contrast, a relationship formed outside of a marriage covenant will struggle to sustain itself due to the high value that the couple places on *independence* rather than *interdependence*. A Christ-centered marriage with God's approval is always more stable than a relationship without Him involved. What a wonderful blessing to have access to God's unlimited resources and to know that your relationship can continue to grow over time. In contrast, cohabiting couples are much less stable and rarely last.

In groundbreaking research that examined the effects of cohabitation on the long-term quality of marriage, the Alabama Policy Institute (API) conducted a study of more than 1,300 married couples. The results are eye-opening. The study shows that the longer a couple cohabits before marriage, the less satisfied they are with their marriage.



John Hill, API's director of research, said, "Specifically, couples who cohabit before marriage tend to be more depressed, more dependent and are more likely to believe their relationship will end as compared with married couples who did not cohabit." The API study indicates that in times of stress and conflict couples who cohabit are more likely to handle their conflicts with heated arguing, hitting and throwing. According to USA TODAY, couples typically live together about two years and then either marry or break up.

Why should we refrain from sexual activity before marriage?

- Relationships that establish a pattern of sexual purity before marriage will benefit from a marital sexual relationship that is built upon trust and fidelity.
- Couples who are able to overcome their lust and infatuation will be able to guard their relationship from the cultural values and norms that threaten a marriage covenant.
- Abstinence before marriage will allow couples to establish their sexual identities in God. They will be less likely to carry the devastating affects of sexual brokenness into their marriage.
- Biblical teachings that warn against sexual immorality will protect couples from the 28 known types of sexually transmitted diseases as well as the many strains of HIV.
- Couples who live apart before marriage are less likely to fall into the trap of codependency. They will bring the characteristics of discipline and responsibility into their marriage.
- Children benefit from parents that are fully committed to the biblical values of marriage and family life.
- Couples who plan for their future are best equipped to reach their marriage goals.

Reasons and Responses Regarding Cohabitation

Couples have personal reasons and unique circumstances that guide their decision to cohabit. Some of these couples have become homeowners or co-signers on a lease agreement. Some couples have become parents together while others are co-parenting children from former relationships. The following rationale is often used to justify cohabitation:

1. *Testing compatibility: "We want to be sure that a cohabiting relationship is successful before we get married (and therefore avoid a divorce)."*

The common perception among many people today is that living together before marriage is a "training ground" for future marriage. They believe that cohabiting is the best way to become prepared to marry and stay married. However, the evidence

indicates quite the opposite. In fact, a strong argument can be made that cohabitation prior to marriage actually reduces your chances for successful marriage. According to studies conducted in Canada, Sweden and the United States, couples that cohabit

prior to marriage have substantially higher divorce rates. The recorded differences range from 50 to 100 percent higher! (Axinn and Thornton, Demography 29)

Furthermore, cohabitations themselves are not as stable as marriages and this is true in all western societies. Cohabitations tend to dissolve more rapidly than marriages. The fact is more than 50% of all these unions end in dissolution within five years (Milan, 2000).

A cohabiting couple does not operate on the same commitment level as a married relationship. In a Christian marriage, couples make vows and pledges to honor God and to remain faithful to their spouses until death. These vows make up a covenant of marriage and are made before God, family, friends and the couple's community of faith. In addition to a covenant, each marrying couple agrees to the conditions of a civil contract at their wedding. The civil contract requires them to share finances, debt, assets, parenting responsibilities, etc.

A cohabiting relationship, on the other hand, operates according to a cause and effect mentality. If it works, the partner remains; if one's needs are met, he or she is willing to continue investing in the relationship. Responsibility, accountability and financial security are absent from this type of relationship. One partner can leave if they wish or be asked to leave at any time. Therefore, cohabitation is not a true test of marriage since the very thing that makes marriage successful – a lifelong commitment – is missing.

2. *Economic advantages: "We need to live together (or remain living together) for financial reasons."*

There are most likely three different financial scenarios that motivate couples to live together.

- Couples desire to minimize their monthly expenses by pooling their resources.
- Couples become dependent on each other's finances and cannot make a decision to move apart even if their relationship is unhealthy. As a couple, their finances are enmeshed with one another.
- Couples cohabit for estate planning purposes.
- In cases where seniors are living together outside of marriage, sometimes the reason is to take advantage of tax laws or perhaps to continue receiving social security.

While economics may play a major role in a couple's decision to move in together, we should not allow economic pressures to override God's plan for our lives. Often it leads to couples becoming dependent on each other's finances and being unable to make a decision to move apart, even if their relationship is unhealthy. God desires to bless us

in ways that are so much greater than simple economics. Even before they are married, couples need to pursue a lifestyle that will meet their spiritual, relational and family needs. A cohabiting relationship is a short-term response to a long-term need.

3. *Companionship: “I don’t like being alone.”*

Our culture has placed a high priority on flexibility and independence in a relationship. Ironically, these values only increase the loneliness that many are trying to avoid by living with someone. Each party has a natural desire to love and be loved; unfortunately these deep desires can only be fulfilled through a genuine commitment to one another, not by maintaining one’s independence.

Couples learn to love more deeply only when they pledge themselves to a marriage covenant “for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, ‘till death us do part.” In a cohabiting relationship, the couple is not willing to engage on that deep of level, at least not yet. So, when adversity comes, it is not uncommon for those relationships to be torn apart.

The truth is, according to Waite and Gallagher, many cohabiters “value independence more than married partners and have more individual freedom” (cited in *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier and Better Off Financially*). This leads to lower levels of relational satisfaction, more depression, less financial support from their live-in partner and an increase in the risk of unfaithfulness and abuse of themselves and their children.

4. *“We are not sleeping together, so it is okay. It can’t be wrong to live together if we are not having sex.”*

The issue of cohabiting is greater than the debate over whether or not couples are choosing to have sex outside of a marriage covenant. With this said, sex is clearly a temptation for most cohabiting couples and the scriptures mentioned above reveal the high value that God puts on sexual purity. He is not trying to steal our joy – He knows what is best for our lives and He wants to protect us from heartache and pain. Our church is prepared to help couples experience the blessing of walking in obedience to God and His Word.

Christians who abstain sexually while in a cohabiting relationship are nonetheless creating a contradictory picture of a God-honoring relationship. In First Thessalonians 4:3, Paul the apostle says: *It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality.* Then, in the very next chapter, it says, *“avoid every kind of evil”* (1 Thessalonians 5:22, NIV).

First Corinthians 10:31-33 reads, *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God — even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.”*

Outsiders won’t assume that the cohabiting relationship is platonic — they assume that you’re sleeping together. And when that happens, the couple is being a negative witness for Christ since cohabiting is a contradiction to the faith and practices of the church.

5. *“It is better for the children for us to be living together. He/She will end up becoming their mother/father anyway” and/or “It is just the thing to do these days”.*

First, it is *not* better for the children! When kids are young, they may seem to be okay with their parents’ significant other living under the same roof, but they will question it when they get older. If a parent wishes to instruct his or her children in the spiritual values of Christianity, it is important to make every effort to live by those values even when they seem impractical.

Second, children suffer more than adults from the effects of a divorce. When parents bring their significant others into the home they run the risk of creating an emotional attachment to someone who is not fully committed to them. Youngsters are very susceptible to the devastation of growing attached to someone only to have that person walk out of their lives. Emotionally speaking, it feels like a divorce!

Third, everyone is *not* doing it. While there are more people than ever cohabiting, many are choosing to live apart until marriage. All relationships go through times of testing and strain, and the fact is, it is always better to have the blessing of God and the help of His Spirit rather than to operate independently. The Lord wants to fill our lives with His presence and peace, but we must cooperate with His plan.

Cohabiting couples do not live in isolation. Their choices are a witness to whether the source of their love is rooted in human effort alone or rooted in something greater, namely, the divine love of God!

6. *Love: “We are in love and we are going to be married anyway.”*

A cohabiting relationship is contradictory to the definition of love that we find in biblical passages such as in First Corinthians 13: *“love is patient, kind, not envious, not boastful, not proud. Love does not dishonor others, is not self-seeking, is not easily angered and keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”*

God does not want his children to settle for anything less than his definition of married love. Couples who choose to cohabit are essentially saying to each other, “I may one day love you enough to marry you and may one day love you according to First Corinthians 13, but until then you must be willing to settle for something less than that.”

Choosing to live apart from your significant other until you are legally married is a choice to love like God teaches us to love. You never have to look back with regret when you honor the Lord and put Him first in your relationship. He wants us to know His love and to learn how to share that love in the context of a committed relationship.



At Heritage Christian Church our goal is to support couples in their quest to have the best possible relationship and we believe, when it comes to living together, it is best to do so in the context of marriage.

For all cohabiting couples: Please read the guidelines mentioned below and feel free to contact the Family Life ministry of HCC with questions. Our prayer is that you will know you are loved and we are here to help you discern if it God's will for you to become engaged and married.

Marital Guidelines for Cohabiting Couples

Cohabiting couples can be married at Heritage Christian Church by adhering to these guidelines:

1. Agree to live apart from each other and to abstain from sexual contact before marriage.
2. Choose to go through the seven-step process mentioned earlier in this booklet.

A rare exception to these guidelines is permitted in extreme circumstances at a pastor's discretion. For example, if a cohabiting couple has produced dependent children, it may not be wise to separate. Certainly is not wise to have couples split up (until marriage) and be forced to live in an unsafe environment with dangerous relatives or friends. These are the kinds of practical issues that should be prayerfully sorted out with a pastor, perhaps in consultation with a licensed Christian counselor.