

## **Great Oaks Community Church - Marriage Guidelines**

### **Pre-Marital Counseling**

We require your attendance for 3 to 4 one-hour sessions over a 3-4 month period. Special needs, circumstances or problems may require more sessions with a counselor. Another session will take place sometime after your wedding during your first year of marriage.

### **Approval of the Wedding**

As a church, we take seriously our responsibility to prepare and unite couples who demonstrate a strong commitment to one another that we all hope will last a lifetime. Unlike being married before a judge or any civil official, when a person is married by the church, they are asking for God's blessing on the marriage. In order to honor that request, we do not automatically grant requests to perform wedding ceremonies, but through prayer and some time spent with the couple, we try to discern the appropriateness of the couple's request and/or the timing of the request.

Your Pastor will tentatively inform you during the course of your counseling sessions whether Great Oaks can officiate your wedding. After affirmation, should your Counselor 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 requirement for the marriage preparation/counseling process, the Pastor may rescind approval or recommend that the wedding be postpone to another date.

### **Church Attendance**

When it comes to family matters, such as weddings, our first priority is to those who consider themselves active participants in our church family. Church involvement is a critical element in building a strong marriage. Therefore, we encourage couples to be as active in the life of the church as possible. At the minimum, we require that at least one of you has been attending services at Great Oaks for no less than four months prior to your request to be married.

### **Difficult Issues**

If there are ongoing unresolved issues in your lives or relationship, we may ask you to work on them before performing the wedding. Examples of potential issues could be involving abuse, financial matters, spiritual incompatibility, infidelity, addictions, etc. If a person is divorced, we require that at least one year of legal divorce pass before consideration for remarriage. Our desire is to participate with you in building a marriage that will stand against the storms of everyday living.

### **Sexual Purity**

We recognize there are many pressures in our society that make sexual purity a difficult practice for couples today. However, we believe that one of the reasons God prohibits pre-marital sexual activity is because it fogs ones ability to be objective. Therefore, if you are currently living together, we will ask you to live in separate residences until your marriage date while maintaining sexual purity. If you are sexually active, we will ask that you make a commitment to abstinence until the marriage date.

**If you have any questions concerning any of the above issues, please discuss them during your first session with your Pastor. We want to understand you and your situation as much as possible.**