**Introduction to Pre-Marital Counseling at Carlisle Baptist Church**

We’re very excited for your engagement and for all that God will do as you move toward marriage. Thank you for the *privilege* of assisting you and your fiancée as you seek out pre-marital counseling at CBC. What you’ll find in this brief introduction is a short guide to premarital counseling at CBC, including a description of the contents of this binder.

**WHAT’S THE POINT OF PREMARITAL COUNSELING?**

There are five purposes for premarital counseling.

 *First, we want to help you build a solid, biblical foundation as you start your marriage.* So, we’ll spend a lot of time in Scripture and thinking through biblical ideas as they apply to marriage.

*Secondly, we want to help you* begin *a dialogue about your marriage.* There are a host of topics (communication, finances, sex, parenting, etc.) that we think are important to consider *before* you get married. The good news is that the conversation we are beginning is a life-long process. We’ll solve some problems, but many others will be left for you to work though over the course of your entire marriage. We’ll start the dialogue, and leave the rest to you.

*Thirdly, we will point out areas of concern in your relationship.* We are all sinners. No relationship is perfect. Despite all of your premarital bliss, you are going to have problems, conflict, and struggles in your relationship. We want to help you address these difficulties sooner rather than later. So, the more honest you are about your struggles, the more you will facilitate the pastor’s ability to help you in preparation for marriage.

*Fourthly, we want to preserve you from temptations.* Lots of Christian couples do a good job of preserving themselves from premarital sex, but once they get engaged, they let down their guard and begin falling into sexual temptation. Men and women rationalize premarital sex with thoughts like, “We’re engaged, which means we are practically married already;” or, “We’ll be married soon, so what does it matter?”. Even worse, some guys feel a sense of entitlement to the woman’s body because they are now engaged. We (the pastoral staff) want to help you fight temptation and stay pure until the wedding day!

*Fifthly, we want to prepare you for the marriage, and not just the wedding day.* We often find that couples get caught up in the frantic details of preparing for the wedding day, and don’t spend much time getting ready for the marriage. Premarital counseling is meant to slow you down and help you think about the relationship. The wedding day marks the beginning of your life together, but the marriage will last for the rest of your life. So, it is good for you to take time to prepare for this life-long journey together.

**WHAT’S INVOLVED IN PREMARITAL COUNSELING?**

Premarital counseling involves four sessions with one of our pastoral staff. The counseling will range anywhere from 8 to 10 hours total (approximately 2 to 3 hours per session).

Here is our five-fold strategy behind the premarital counseling:

**READ:** You’ll be assigned reading from Gary & Betsy Ricucci’s *Love that Lasts* and C.J. Mahaney’s *Sex, Romance & the Glory of God*.

**STUDY:** In each session you will study Scripture to set a solid, biblical foundation.

**LISTEN:** On the CHBC website, you will find sermons that relate to topics covered in each session. To reinforce the material we are studying, we will encourage you to listen to a few of the sermons.

**APPLY:** Each session has application exercises that apply the key ideas to your specific relationship.

**TALK:** You will have lots of conversations—with your future spouse, with the pastor, with your parents, and with other couples in the church. These conversations will both prepare you for the wedding day and help you to grow in godliness.

**WHAT’S IN THIS BINDER** In this binder, you will find most of the materials you will need for premarital counseling at CBC.

**In the first section of this binder you should have:**

* The introduction
* A marriage preparation inventory

**In the middle section of this binder you should have:**

* Materials for the four pre-marital counseling sessions. Each session includes a Scripture Study guide, applications exercise, sermons to listen to and readings.

Here are the four counseling sessions in depth:

Session 1—A Theology of Marriage

* Scripture Study: Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-24; Ephesians 5:21-31
* Exercises: Pt. 1 Questions about Leaving your Family of Origin / Pt. 2 Wedding Vows / Pt. 3 Your Strengths & Weaknesses
* Sermons: Mark Dever and John Piper
* Reading: Ricucci’s *Love that Lasts*, chs. 1-3

Session 2—A Theology of Communication

* Scripture Study: Matthew 12:22-37; Ephesians 4:17-32; James 3:1-18; 4:1-12
* Exercises: Pt. 1 Communication in Proverbs / Pt. 2 Working through conflict
* Sermons: Zach Schlegel and Paul Tripp
* Reading: Ricucci’s *Love that Lasts*, chs. 4-6

Session 3—A Theology of Sex

* Scripture Study: Song of Solomon, 1 Peter 3:1-7;1 Corinthians 6:12-20,7:1-7
* Exercises: Pt. 1 Sex questions / Pt. 2 Interview a married friend
* Sermons: Al Mohler, Mark Dever, Thabiti Anyabwile, and John Piper
* Reading: Ricucci’s *Love that Lasts*, chs. 7-8, CJ Mahaney’s *Sex, Romance and the Glory of God*

Session 4—A Theology of Everything Else: Love, Money, Forgiveness, and Children

* Scripture Study: 1 Corinthians 13: 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; Matthew 18:21-35; Psalm 127
* Exercises: Budget & Scheduling
* Sermons: Al Mohler, John Piper, and Andy Davis
* Reading: Ricucci’s *Love that Lasts*, Epilogue
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**WHEN ARE WE “OFFICIAL”?**

In other words, when does the worship hall reservation at CBC turn “officially” from pencil to pen (i.e., from tentative to permanent) and when can we send out public announcements (i.e., mail your invitations and list things in the church newsletter)? From the staff’s perspective, you are official only after you have finished your four premarital counseling sessions. This means the sooner you get your premarital counseling done, the sooner the pastor can “sign off” on your use of the worship hall and the mailing of your invitations.

**HOW DO WE START?**

* Call the pastor and set up your first premarital counseling session.
* Finish the marriage preparation inventory (which should be located just behind this introduction) and drop it off for the pastor about a week before you start counseling. This is the most important thing to do before your first meeting.
* Do the Scripture study, readings, sermon listening, and exercises for each session, before the session.

I hope you find these resources helpful and the time profitable as you prepare to be married!

Blessing in Christ,

The Pastoral Staff at Carlisle Baptist Church

Callaway. Florida