

PREMARITAL COUNSELING FAQ

Premarital counseling is in order before a couple proceeds with their wedding and marriage. No matter your age or life experience, marriage is a major life decision. A wedding requires planning, hard work, and money. Most couples spare nothing to create a wedding ceremony they will remember forever. However, all that planning, hard work and money are gone in the blink of an eye. Marriage, on the other hand, is designed to last a life time. Couples need every tool to succeed in a relationship that is extremely challenging under the best of circumstances. Taking advantage of Biblically based counseling can make a major difference for most couples. Studies show that couples who take advantage of premarital counseling stand an 80% better chance of remaining together than those couples who forgo premarital counseling. Our goal is to give couples the foundation for a marriage that will stand the test of time.

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What is Premarital Counseling?

Premarital counseling is an investment in the relationship of a couple. It is a time for couples to ask questions, learn about each other and receive input from a trained marriage and family therapist. Premarital counseling also addresses the normal issues and challenges that all couples face in the course of their marriage. Premarital counseling through Summit Counseling of First Baptist Church Jackson (FBCJ) will include activities to give you skills and arm you with knowledge to succeed in a committed relationship. Our program is designed to last 4 hours, however, additional hours may be scheduled if necessary.

Why is counseling required for couples marrying at FBCJ?

Currently a little over half of all first marriages end in divorce, including Christian marriages. Marriage itself is such an important step, to not make adequate preparations beforehand can be foolish and costly, both emotionally and financially. Premarital counseling helps couples prepare constructively for future challenges and conflicts that everyone will inevitably face at some point in their marriage. At FBCJ we believe premarital counseling can help a couple beat the odds and remain married for years to come.

When is premarital counseling offered?

Engaged couples have two options to receive premarital counseling. First, an Engaged Couples Seminar (ECS) is held three times a year or secondly, premarital counseling appointments may be made during Summit Counseling's office hours by calling 601-949-1949. ECS is the primary focus of this FAQ segment.

How do we register?

Couples may register by contacting FBCJ Wedding Coordinator, Terri Pigford, at 601-949-1925 or tpigford@fbcj.org. Upon receipt of the fee, online tests will be ordered.

What is the format of the Engaged Couples Seminar?

The seminar begins with lunch at 12 noon with registered couples, their assigned therapist and representatives from the wedding committee. Dr. Charlie Boudreaux, Counseling and Congregational Care Pastor, talks to the group during lunch. Each couple spends from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm with their assigned therapist covering their Prepare Inventory.

Is the Engaged Couples Seminar group or private counseling?

The engaged couples seminar begins with a group of other couples. The four hour personalized portion of the counseling is done privately by a trained marriage and family therapist.

What is the cost?

The Engaged Couples Seminar cost is \$135 per couple for those couples marrying at FBCJ. For non-member couples marrying away from FBCJ the cost is \$275.

For premarital counseling done during weekday appointments the cost is \$235 for church members and \$275 for non-members.

What does the fee include?

The ECS fee includes testing, lunch, 4 hours of counseling, and various materials. For counseling done in the Summit Counseling office, the fee includes testing and 4 hours of counseling.

What are the topics covered?

Family and Friends	Leisure Activities
Communication	Partner Style and Habits
Financial Management	Conflict Resolution
Sexual Relationship	Role Transitions
Personality	Commitment
Spiritual Beliefs	Abuse
Stress	

When should counseling take place?

It is recommended that premarital counseling take place at least six months before the wedding and not less than three months before wedding. Premarital counseling can greatly reduce the stress of the pre-wedding period.

Are we required to take a test?

Yes. The Prepare Inventory. The test is actually a survey or assessment that may be taken online or you may take a hard copy.

Can we fail the test?

No. The test shows the strengths and weaknesses in your relationship. Your therapist will give you tools to take advantage of your strong areas and to grow in the weak areas.

How many couples attend the Engaged Couples Seminar?

Attendance varies from season to season. Anywhere from 6 to 20 couples attend.

Who leads the counseling?

Counseling is done by trained marriage and family therapist and also by interns in the marriage and family therapy program of First Baptist Church Jackson's Summit Counseling.

May I request a specific therapist?

Yes. For the Engaged Couples Seminar we do everything we can to accommodate your request. For premarital counseling done in our office, you may schedule your counseling with your preferred therapist.

What do I need to bring?

Please come with an open mind. Other than that, you will not need to bring anything. Feel free to bring a list of questions concerning your relationship if applicable.

What is the dress code?

The afternoon is informal. We encourage you to dress casually.

Will we receive a form to document completion?

Yes, couples may ask for the therapist to fill out a Certificate of Completion. If any issues arise during your counseling, your therapist may recommend further counseling before awarding you a Certificate of Completion. Your wedding date at FBCJ could be affected if the counseling requirements are not completed.

What if one (or both) of us has been married before?

We encourage you to discuss prior serious relationships including marriage during your counseling.

What if one of us is not Baptist?

The program is designed for engaged couples, regardless of your religious traditions, backgrounds, or church affiliation.