

Dear prospective newlyweds:

Congratulations on your engagement and upcoming marriage! Marriage was designed by God to be honored and celebrated as the most important of all commitments among our human relationships. I am honored that you've asked me to be a part of your ceremony.

Please understand that as a Christian minister, it is my role to officiate ceremonies where both the bride and groom are Christians. Marriage is a sacred covenant before the Lord, so I am unable to officiate a wedding where either the husband or wife will not be fully committed to Christ. This mutual commitment to Christ is the most important foundation for a Christian marriage.

Before I can officiate a wedding, I require couples to undergo pre-marital counseling, either with me or with another pastor I recommend—unless both have been married before and both of their previous spouses have passed away. This counseling takes a minimum of four hours over four weeks. (Completion of this counseling also qualifies you for a \$45 discount on your marriage license.) During this time, I will ask the bride and groom about their individual relationships with Jesus Christ and the specifics of their Christian testimony. If you're uncertain about your faith, I'd be happy to share with you what it means to be a Christian.

The Bible teaches that God's design for marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman. For that reason, I am unable to officiate same-sex ceremonies, ceremonies for plural marriages, or ceremonies where either the bride or groom has been previously divorced for anything other than a Biblical reason (e.g., adultery or abandonment by the other spouse) while the previous spouse is living.

The Bible also teaches that God designed intimate or sexual relations to be experienced only within marriage. I am unable to officiate ceremonies for sexually active couples unless they are willing to repent and abstain until they are married. This abstinence includes living separately until the wedding if they are currently living together.

My intent is not to judge anyone, but to be open and honest with you about the conditions that I believe God places on a Christian minister officiating a Christian ceremony. If you're willing to agree to the conditions outlined in this letter, please email me, and we'll discuss the next steps.

Yours, in His service,

Jared Byrns
Pastor, Trinity Baptist Church—Seminole, Oklahoma
jared@jaredbyrns.org