

CHURCHLEADERS
PASTORAL POCKET GUIDES

WEDDINGS

WEDDINGS
CHURCHLEADERS
PASTORAL POCKET GUIDES

Copyright © 2022 Outreach, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, without prior written permission.

Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission.

All rights reserved worldwide.

First Edition: Year 2022

Weddings (ChurchLeaders Pastoral Pocket Guides) /
Outreach, Inc.

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-958585-02-3

eBook ISBN: 978-1-958585-03-0

CHURCHLEADERS
P R E S S

Colorado Springs

CHURCHLEADERS
PASTORAL POCKET GUIDES

WEDDINGS

Written by
Mikal Keefer

General Editor
Matthew Lockhart

CHURCHLEADERS
P R E S S

Colorado Springs

Contents

<i>ChurchLeaders Pastoral Pocket Guides Introduction</i>	5
Getting Started	
1. Welcome to the Weddings Pocket Guide	7
The Basics	
2. Do This Now	9
3. Before the Wedding	16
4. The Rehearsal	25
5. The Wedding Ceremony	36
6. Sample Wedding Ceremony Outlines	40
7. Unity Celebrations	50
Helpful Tools	
8. Wedding Checklist	52
9. Premarital Counseling Guidance	57
10. The Vows	66
11. Significant Scriptures	69
12. The Follow-Up Meeting	73
13. Pro Tips	75
<i>About the Contributors</i>	78

ChurchLeaders Pastoral Pocket Guides Introduction

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

(1 Peter 5:2-3)

The work of a shepherd is never done. One minute you're preparing a sermon and the next you're making an emergency hospital visit or planning an unexpected funeral.

When called to your common and recurring ministerial duties (such as hospital visits, weddings, baptisms, and funerals, to name a few) where do you turn for practical advice or just a couple fresh ideas?

You could spend hours online, scrolling through dozens of sites, or pull that thick, old minister's manual off your shelf. Now you can turn to these new **Pastoral Pocket Guides**, designed especially for busy pastors like you. They're quick reads, each book laser-focused on a specific area of ministry. Packed with practical

guidance, tips, and tools, they'll help make taking care of your flock a little easier.

Thank you for being a willing shepherd. May God bless and guide you in your ministry!

—**Matthew Lockhart**, General Editor

1 WELCOME TO THE WEDDINGS POCKET GUIDE

Here's something pastors seldom admit out loud: many would rather officiate a funeral than a wedding.

Surprised? Don't be. They've got their reasons:

- **Weddings can be emotional minefields.** Tense brides, feuding families, church pews packed with people who haven't spoken since bitter divorces—one careless word can turn weddings into wars.

- **Weddings are complicated.** There are dozens of moving parts in a typical wedding, from cake delivery to song selection to convincing the flower girl to not eat the rose pedals. And it all has to come together seamlessly.

- **Expectations are sky high.** Any day that needs to be “perfect” is guaranteed to fall short. Something somewhere will go wrong—and someone will consider it a disaster.

- **Plus, weddings are legally binding contracts.** Brides and grooms tie knots that can be loosened only by death or divorce. Pastors understand what's at stake even if lovestruck couples don't, and wise pastors feel the weight of signing marriage licenses.

But as a church leader, officiating weddings is likely in your future. When a happy couple catches you after church to ask if you'll handle their ceremony, you'll hear yourself say "yes."

You'll also hear—though only in your own head—these words: "And now what?"

Because there's *plenty* to do before you pronounce that couple man and wife. You need to navigate premarital counseling, set and right-size expectations, sort out schedules, run a rehearsal, deal with in-laws, and that's all before the Big Day arrives.

But relax; we've got you covered.

This book walks you through all the details that quickly slip through the cracks as you prepare to officiate a wedding. You'll find practical advice from veteran pastors about what to do and when to do it. What to say and what to not say. And how to ride the emotional rollercoaster of a wedding without falling off.

Best of all, you'll discover how to keep the focus of a wedding less on show and more on substance: the power of Jesus to fuel exactly what's needed in marriage: patience, forgiveness, and sacrificial love.

So shine your shoes and get ready.

Wedding bells are ringing!

2 DO THIS NOW

*B*efore you're asked to officiate a wedding, here's a to-do list that will help you avoid awkward pauses and eventual regrets.

Confirm you can legally solemnize marriages

In the United States, who can legally solemnize a marriage by performing a formal marriage ceremony before witnesses varies by location.

In some states, only pastors licensed by a country clerk or probate court can solemnize marriages. Generally speaking, those pastors have presented proof of ordination, paid a fee, and been trained to complete marriage licenses. It's not complicated but is necessary—because any couple declared husband and wife by an unlicensed pastor aren't legally married.

In other jurisdictions, there's no need for licensing on the pastor's end. Though, if you need a license, allow several months to receive it. You're dealing with the government; delays are part of the process.

Couples must usually obtain a marriage license that the officiating pastor will complete and return to the proper civil authorities, who'll then issue a marriage

certificate. A certificate allows for updating social security records, sharing health benefits, filing taxes, applying for loans, and proving identity.

So contact your local county clerk's office now to confirm what rules apply to you as a pastor. Also, find out how couples go about getting marriage licenses and how long those licenses are valid before the couple must be married or reapply. Couples will appreciate your giving them those details.

That's especially true if you announce that, unless you have a license in hand the day before the wedding, the event is off.

Clarify your wedding boundaries

Conducting weddings is often viewed as a core function of the church, but nowhere in Scripture are pastors instructed to marry people. This means, as a pastor, you've got latitude as to how you'll handle weddings—including which weddings you'll officiate and which you'll turn down.

Maybe.

Will you marry people who've been divorced, are living together before marriage, or are of the same sex?

What's your policy regarding Christians marrying non-Christians? Will you marry only church members

or anyone who asks? How willing are you to share officiating with clergy of a different religion?

Do you view weddings as an evangelistic opportunity or a civic duty? How much input, if any, will you take regarding your message in the wedding service? What traditions are non-negotiable for you, and which don't matter?

And do you expect to be paid?

Your ability to set boundaries may be limited by your denomination's stance regarding specific issues or by your local church's governing body. But, as a matter of personal integrity, share with your leaders your thoughts and why you've reached the conclusions you've reached. Ask that you not be put in a position of contradicting what you believe to be biblical or forced to do something you find questionable.

You may find you're given permission to not conduct some weddings even though your leaders don't think doing so would be a problem.

Wherever you land, put your policies in writing—it clarifies your thinking and equips you to explain your decisions.

And be consistent...always.

If you refuse to officiate a wedding because of a boundary and then bend the rules for a son or daughter of the Elder Board chairman, nothing good will come of that.

Set a policy about premarital counseling

Some pastors insist on personally meeting with couples several times before officiating their weddings. Other pastors are willing to marry couples who receive counseling elsewhere, and some don't require any counseling at all.

Decide where you stand, put that decision in writing, and stick with it until experience suggests you revise your policy.

A note: If you have no extensive counseling training, accept you might not be the best person to provide premarital counseling. If your idea of counseling is to run through a series of biblical teachings about marriage while couples take notes, well...that's not counseling. It's valuable teaching but likely won't do much to help couples explore how they'll move forward after walking back down the aisle into their new union.

If you'll be doing premarital counseling, some suggested topics to address are in Chapter 9. If you want couples to get counseling but don't wish to provide it yourself, identify professional counselors you can refer couples to. Update your list annually.

Review the house rules

Nail down the logistics of using your church building. Are there fees associated with the building