

## **New Directions Community Church Wedding/Pre-marriage Procedures**

By Caleb Horn

Marriage is one of the biggest choices a person can make in life. We want to make sure that couples are ready for marriage before entering this sacred bond. For this reason, we both provide and require pre-marriage counseling before anyone can be wed by an NDCC pastor.

Biblically defined, marriage is the joining of one man and one woman in a life-long commitment. Husband and wife are equal in value and responsibility in serving God, although their roles differ. Some examples of how these roles differ: the husband is responsible to love, provide, protect, and lead his family, while the wife is responsible to support and honor her husband, manage the household, and nurture their children. This is not to say that each marriage can be unique in how the details work out (for instance, one spouse may have stronger financial or organizational skills than the other, which should be utilized).

### *Requirements*

The couple must consist of one man and one woman.

Neither person can already be married.

Divorced persons are not necessarily disqualified from being married by NDCC staff, though it will depend upon the situation.

Couples must go through pre-marital counseling in some form from NDCC (this may be done in conjunction with another ministry, subject to the discretion of the officiating pastor and director of counseling ministry).

The couple must be eligible to obtain a legal marriage license.

Based upon their own personal convictions, each pastor may have additional restrictions on who they will marry.

## *Counseling*

This can either be done individually with one of our staff members or in conjunction with a marriage building formation group. The class is offered regularly as a part of our Formation Groups. The class also requires meeting individually with a pastor at least once before the class begins and again at its conclusion. Individual counseling will take about three months and is subject to pastoral availability.

During the counseling process, there may be times when the pastor may recommend that the couple either not marry each other or hold off on getting married because they are not ready to be married. This is not because we do not want the couple to be happy, but because we care about them so much that we want to do everything we can to help them have a solid foundation for the most important relationship in their life.

The pastor will not tell the couple that they should get married. The reason for this is that marriage is an individual choice. He may say that as nearly as he can see, they are prepared as best as possible, but he will not give a “yes” or “no.” His role is not to make this choice, but to help the individuals make this choice in a way that best honors God.

It may be a good idea to start counseling a bit earlier than three months before the wedding as counseling may take a bit longer and until counseling has been completed. The couple is not eligible to be married at NDCC/by NDCC staff until the counseling requirement has been completed. Again, this is not to be harsh, but we hold marriage so highly that we want to do everything we can to help lay a solid foundation.