

shared faith. It creates a shared sense of purpose that goes beyond the individual relationship and connects it to something larger – the work of the Kingdom of God. Paul’s encouragement in Hebrews 10:24-25 resonates deeply with us: “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...”.

Remember, our Anabaptist community is here not just for guidance, but also for celebration. As a community, we joyfully participate in the union of two individuals under God, rejoicing in their happiness, and walking alongside them in their new journey. Marriage is not just an individual or familial event; it is a celebration of unity, love, and covenant within the larger body of Christ.

8 Conclusion: Continuing the Journey

Marriage is a beautiful journey, one that is enriched with shared joy, mutual growth, and boundless love. As you embark on this path together, remember that you do not walk alone. Our Anabaptist community walks with you, but more importantly, God walks with you. The covenant you are about to make is sacred, a symbol of the steadfast love God has for His people.

Encouragement for the Upcoming Journey: Every marriage has its seasons, each with its own blessings and challenges. There will be times of profound joy and times of trial. Know that both are integral parts of the journey. James 1:2-4 reminds us, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.”

Assurance of God’s Presence and Guidance in Marriage: As you bind your lives together, God is there, weaving His love and grace into your shared story. He is the third strand in your cord of marriage, making it strong and resilient. As you navigate this journey, you can lean on His wisdom and strength. In Proverbs 3:5-6, we are told, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all

your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Closing Prayer for the Couple’s Upcoming Union: As you step forward into this new phase of life, we close with a prayer for your union. “Heavenly Father, bless this couple as they prepare to enter into the covenant of marriage. May they build a relationship grounded in Your love and grace. Guide them, strengthen them, and equip them for the journey ahead. May their marriage be a reflection of Your divine love, and may their home be a place of peace, joy, and abundant blessing. In Jesus’ name, we pray, Amen.”

As you set forth on this new journey, we encourage you to hold onto the principles of faith, mutual love, and respect. Your marriage, like your faith, is a living testament to God’s love. May His guidance and peace be upon you as you begin this remarkable journey together.

9 Resources

Equip yourselves for the journey ahead with a rich variety of resources that explore the Biblical perspective of marriage, the Anabaptist understanding, and practical tools for cultivating a thriving union.

Books: “The Meaning of Marriage” by Timothy Keller, “Sacred Marriage” by Gary Thomas, “Anabaptist Essentials” by Palmer Becker.

Online Resources: Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (<https://gameo.org>), Canadian Mennonite Magazine (<https://canadianmennonite.org>), Anabaptist Resources (<https://anabaptistresources.org>).

Biblical Studies: BibleGateway (<https://biblegateway.com>), YouVersion Bible App - Bible reading plans for couples (<https://youversion.com>)

Do not hesitate to reach out for support and guidance as you prepare for your journey into marriage.

Pastoral Care and Pre-Marital Counseling: To engage with pastoral care or pre-marital counseling, please contact your bishop, pastor or deacon.

The commitment to marriage is a beautiful and profound step. Equipping yourselves with understanding and an openness to learn will greatly benefit your journey. We pray these resources will provide you with insightful knowledge and guidance. God bless your union.

Anabaptist Marriage

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1 Introduction

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and congratulations on your upcoming nuptials! This is a joyous occasion and a beautiful testament to God’s design for companionship and unity.

In the Anabaptist faith, marriage holds a profound significance. It is more than a legal contract; it is a sacred covenant, a lifelong commitment made before God and the community. It is a representation of Christ’s love for His Church and a journey embarked upon together in faith, love, and mutual submission.

The purpose of this leaflet is to offer you a better understanding of the Anabaptist perspective on marriage, providing spiritual insight and practical guidance as you prepare for this significant chapter in your lives. May this resource help equip you both as you approach your wedding day and the many years of shared life that will follow. May God bless you and guide you in this journey. “

2 Understanding Marriage: An Anabaptist Perspective

Marriage holds a significant place in the Anabaptist faith, deeply rooted in the teachings of the Bible. From the very beginning, as portrayed in Genesis, God instituted marriage when He united Adam and Eve, declaring, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). This divine pronouncement sets the cornerstone for our understanding of marriage.

Anabaptists perceive marriage not as a mere contract between two individuals but

*(<https://anabaptist.ca> <https://1being.org> <https://lyis.ca> <https://distributist.org>)

as a sacred covenant made before God. As in the biblical covenants between God and His people, a marriage covenant involves solemn commitments, profound promises, and a divine witness. It is a lifelong pledge of fidelity and love, a covenant that reflects the enduring relationship between Christ and the Church, as described in Ephesians 5:25: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”

Importantly, in an Anabaptist marriage, love, respect, and mutual submission are paramount. This is not a hierarchy but a call to a loving and sacrificial relationship, echoing the words of Ephesians 5:21: “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Husbands are called to love their wives with the selfless love of Christ, and wives are called to respect their husbands, all within a context of mutual submission and reverence for God. This reflects not domination or subjugation, but the servant-hearted love Christ exemplified.

As you prepare to enter into marriage, remember that it is a profound union, a blessed covenant, and a journey of love, respect, and mutual submission. It is a significant step of faith and obedience to God’s plan and a beautiful portrayal of Christ’s relationship with His Church. As you take this step, be assured that your marriage, rooted in God’s love, can be a powerful testament of His grace and truth to the world around you.

3 Preparing for Marriage

Marriage, being one of life’s most profound commitments, requires thoughtful preparation. It’s not just about the wedding day, but about the life-long journey that follows. This journey calls for spiritual, practical, and emotional readiness.

Spiritual Preparations: Spiritual readiness lies at the heart of a successful Christian marriage. It involves prayer, meditating on Scripture, and seeking wise counsel. Pray individually and together, asking God’s guidance for your future life. Meditate on Scriptures about love, marriage, and faithfulness, such as 1 Corinthians 13, Ephesians 5:22-33, and Proverbs 3:3-4. Seek counsel from pastors, spiritual mentors, or mature Christian

couples in your community. These actions help nurture a spiritually healthy and Christ-centered marriage.

Practical Preparations: Pre-marital counseling is a practical and highly beneficial way to prepare for marriage. It facilitates open discussion about expectations, roles, financial management, conflict resolution, and other critical aspects of married life. It's also a space where you can address questions or concerns about marriage. Don't hesitate to talk about expectations regarding household responsibilities, finances, family traditions, and future planning. Having these discussions beforehand helps mitigate misunderstandings and unmet expectations down the road.

Emotional Preparations: Understanding the role of love, patience, and forgiveness is vital for the emotional health of your marriage. Love in a marriage is more than a feeling; it's a choice to be patient, kind, and selfless (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). There will be times of challenge and disagreement. In these moments, the virtues of patience and forgiveness become essential. Embrace the truth that you are both human, capable of making mistakes, and remember the grace that God extends to us, as written in Colossians 3:13: "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

As you engage in these preparations, remember that marriage is a journey, not a destination. It's about growing together, serving each other, and reflecting Christ's love in your relationship. As you prepare, may God bless you and guide you in His wisdom and love.

4 The Union of Flesh and Spirit

Marriage in the Anabaptist tradition, as in the broader Christian faith, is profoundly more than a legal or societal contract. It's a sacred union, an intertwining of body, heart, and spirit that echoes the very nature of God's relationship with His people.

Two Becoming One Flesh: As stated in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." This becoming "one flesh" is a profound mys-

tery, marking both a physical union and a deep, personal integration of lives, a sharing not only of bodies but of hearts, minds, and souls. It speaks to the wholeness, intimacy, and mutual interdependence in a marriage, reminding couples that they no longer journey alone but together.

Sacredness and Intimacy of the Marital Bond: This union of marriage carries a profound sacredness, a reflection of God's holy love. The marital bond is a haven of mutual love, respect, and trust. It is within this bond that intimacy, in all its dimensions, finds its rightful and beautiful expression. As you honor this bond, you honor the One who instituted it.

God as the Third Member of the Union: An often-overlooked truth is that marriage is a union of three, not just two. As an Anabaptist couple, you invite God into your marriage to guide, strengthen, and grace your union. His presence provides an unshakeable foundation, guiding in times of decision, providing strength in times of difficulty, and extending grace for each other's shortcomings. As written in Ecclesiastes 4:12, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

In embracing these aspects of marriage, you recognize its depth and sacredness. Remember always to keep God at the center of your relationship, for it is His love that will sustain and enrich your union throughout your married life.

5 The Anabaptist Marriage Ceremony

The Anabaptist marriage ceremony is a heartfelt expression of simplicity, sincerity, and profound spirituality. It's a public commitment before God and the church community, symbolizing not only the love between the couple but also the unity of the church and the grace of God.

Outline of a Traditional Anabaptist Wedding Ceremony: The typical ceremony begins with a period of silent prayer or hymn singing, followed by a sermon emphasizing the responsibilities and blessings of marriage. The couple then exchanges vows, while some may choose to exchange rings. The service concludes with the minister's prayer of bless-

ing on the marriage, the reading of a benediction, and a communal hymn. The order and specific content can vary among different Anabaptist groups and according to the couple's wishes.

Significance of Vows and Rituals: The marriage vows are the heart of the ceremony, reflecting the couple's promise to love, honor, and cherish one another, following the model of Christ's love for the Church (Ephesians 5:25). The exchange of rings symbolizes the unending love and fidelity between the couple. Some Anabaptist couples choose not to exchange rings, emphasizing that their commitment is based on their mutual vows before God, rather than on physical symbols. Other traditions may include the washing of feet (John 13:1-17), symbolizing humble service to one another.

Role of the Church Community in the Ceremony: An Anabaptist wedding is a community event. The church congregation witnesses and affirms the couple's commitment, standing as supportive participants in the couple's marriage journey. The community's role underscores the interconnectedness of individual marriages with the life of the broader church.

Each part of the Anabaptist wedding ceremony is imbued with deep significance, reflecting our faith, our communal identity, and our commitment to living out the teachings of Jesus in our relationships and daily life.

6 Married Life: Living Out the Covenant

Married life, as understood in the Anabaptist tradition, is a living testament to the sacred covenant entered into on the wedding day. It's a lifelong journey of love, service, and spiritual growth, grounded in the teachings of Jesus and reflecting the nature of God's love for His people.

Explanation of Mutual Roles and Responsibilities in Marriage: In an Anabaptist marriage, both spouses are called to mutual love and submission, following the example of Christ's selfless love for the church (Ephesians 5:21-33). This involves shared responsibility in decision-making, household chores, parenting, and other aspects of family life. Both partners are equally valued, each bring-

ing unique strengths and capabilities to the marriage.

Emphasis on Service, Forgiveness, and Love in Marriage: Marriage offers a practical arena for living out Christ's teachings on service (Mark 10:45), forgiveness (Colossians 3:13), and love (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). It's through these daily acts of care, patience, and forgiveness that the marriage relationship is nurtured and strengthened.

Navigating Challenges and Disagreements in a Christ-like Manner: Disagreements are a natural part of any relationship, including marriage. The key lies in addressing these disagreements in a way that honors God and respects each other's dignity. This involves open communication, empathy, patience, and a commitment to seek reconciliation (Matthew 5:23-24). The goal is not to "win" the argument, but to deepen understanding and nurture unity.

Living out the marriage covenant is a joyous and challenging endeavor, a journey of shared growth that reflects the transformative power of Christ's love in our lives. In this, we bear witness to God's kingdom here on earth.

7 Community Involvement: Walking Together in Marriage

Anabaptists have long recognized the vital role of community in sustaining and nurturing marriages. We believe that it's not just two people entering into a union, but two families becoming intertwined, and indeed, two people becoming a deeper part of the fabric of the larger community.

The Role of the Broader Anabaptist Community in Supporting Marriages: The Anabaptist community serves as a spiritual family, ready to offer guidance, assistance, and prayerful support for married couples. We firmly believe in the verse from Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, "Two are better than one...For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow." In times of joy and in times of trial, our community stands ready to encourage and uphold marriages.

Importance of Regular Fellowship and Accountability: Regular participation in communal worship, fellowship, and service helps couples to stay grounded in their