

FAQs about Premarital Classes

Exploring Engagement—Are you the one? This is an 8-week course for seriously dating couples is designed to help you learn more about yourself and your partner as you consider engagement and marriage. Come join other couples and hear from experienced teachers on the topics of Family of Origin, Relational Flags, Sexuality, and more. Through this course, you and your partner will explore your relationship with honesty and transparency in order to make an educated, biblically-based decision about your future.

Engaged Class—You're the one! This is an 8-week course in which couples will gather together and address core issues around “two becoming one” through topics such as finances, sex, conflict skills, and communication. More importantly, a culture of curiosity and commitment is nurtured and encouraged. The goal of the course is that you and your partner will feel more prepared to enter the covenant of marriage and a lifetime together and that you'll be surrounded by a community of others who will share the journey with you.

How much does it cost to take the class?

Nothing! We care about your relationships and want to invest in you, so the courses are provided free of charge.

Do I have to attend Bethany Green Lake to go to class?

Absolutely not. We encourage any couple to attend!

Who teaches the class?

The classes are led by pastors and experienced members of our congregation. Most of our teaching staff are experts in the field, Marriage & Family Therapists (MFT) or have a masters in counseling.

When are future classes?

Engaged class: Typically offered every Fall, Winter, & Spring on Sunday nights. We usually offer a summer “intensive” class formatted over 1 or 2 weekends (Fri/Sat).

Exploring class: Is offered twice a year, Fall & Winter.

Check our website www.churchbcc.org for dates and registration

Is there homework?

Yes, there is a little homework. Outside of class time, we assign some light reading and intentional discussions to have as a couple which is meant to prepare you for the next class and help you process what you've learned. But don't let that intimidate you. We are fully aware that taking this class may well be coupled with the stress of planning a wedding, going to school, and working, so we try to be considerate in the amount of homework we assign.

What if only one of us can make a class or can't make every class because of work or similar conflict?

We encourage you to attend even if your fiancé can't be there with you. It's not uncommon to have just one partner there due to living out of town or work conflicts. If this is the case, we suggest that you discuss what you've learned with your partner on the next "date night". It's better to get some info than not do the class at all.

What if we both have to miss a class or two?

If it's unavoidable, we'd rather have you get some premarital than none at all. Just let your class leader know you'll be gone and see what they might have for you.

We also recommend asking another couple to take notes for you or fill you in on what you missed. This may be a great opportunity to expand community as well!

What if we are not Christians? How "religious" are the courses?

The class is not too "churchy" and much of the content draws from relational psychology and research. That said, our instructors do have a Christian worldview and the Bible is the basis of our ethic of love, grace, and mercy—that's just who we are as a church. However, questions, different views, and different religious backgrounds are honored and welcomed.

We might get engaged soon—which class do we take?

We feel both classes have great content that will help your relationship. So take as much class as possible. If you sign up for Exploring Engagement and get engaged you'll have some options.

If time is an issue you can be "promoted" to the Engaged Class. But if time allows, finish the Exploring class and take the next Engaged Class scheduled.

Yes, you can take the Engaged Class if it's not official but the ring is imminent.

What's the format of the class time?

Each class has its own flow and agenda but generally speaking, we do a mix of content, large group discussions and break out into couple groups for more intimate processing. Come prepared to interact and participate!

Around how many couples are in each course?

Classes vary, but typically there will be from 12-20 couples in the class.

Do we have to share our personal lives with others? Or be forced to talk about our feelings?

You only need to share what you are comfortable with.

However, we will encourage you to learn that sharing our lives in community is an important part of a successful marriage (& just life in general). We all have very different stories and experiences, but usually very common themes in our lives. We have excellent facilitators who create a safe environment for sharing.

When should we take the class?

Engaged couples should take the earliest scheduled class. This allows time should an issue arise to honestly address it without the pressure of a pending wedding date. Plus,

you'll start to feel the demands of wedding planning, so the earlier the better to reduce stress.

Dating couples should take Exploring Engagement where marriage is a topic of conversation.

We don't know if we have enough time before the marriage to take the whole class?

If your wedding date is fast approaching or will take place before the end of the class, we encourage you to attend as many classes as you can. Some are better than none. If you are unable to attend all of the classes, we suggest you schedule some additional sessions with your wedding officiant.

We already have a good relationship. Why should we take the course?

Research shows there is a lot of value to taking premarital preparation classes; it can reduce the risk of divorce by 31%!

In addition, some form of premarital class is required for weddings performed by Bethany pastors or in Bethany facilities.

We're a bit of a non-traditional couple. We're older, have children, pregnant, or have been married before. Can we attend?

No problem. You probably won't be alone. We all come from different backgrounds and experiences; we would love for you to participate in the class.

We just got married. Can we still take the class?

Class is just for unmarried couples. But we'd love to put you into a newlywed small group led by a mentor couple!

Are these two classes all of the premarital process?

Great question! No.

1. We feel after class you should have a couple of individual sessions to explore issues that might be unique to you as a couple. Maybe something from class needs more unpacking or discussion.
2. Typically, this should be done with the marrying pastor (wedding officiant). If they are unavailable because they are out of town it may be possible for one of our pastors or marriage mentors to step in.
3. We suggest you take an online couple survey. During the class, you'll have the opportunity to sign up for one of two online surveys: SYMBIS or Prepare. The cost is \$30 per couple. These surveys allow us to maximize your individual session time.
4. Finally, once you are married we highly suggest you get into a small group together. We have specific newlywed small groups that are forming every couple of months that are led by a mentoring couple.

I'm really not into the class thing, can't a Bethany pastor just do it all with us one to one?

Bethany pastors will not do the whole process individually. If they are your officiant or your officiant is out of town or a family member we can usually arrange to have 1-2 individual sessions with you. You can also seek another church's pastor or private

therapist for individual counseling. In most cases, this will meet the requirement for a Bethany wedding. For a professional counselor, you can expect to pay from \$80-140+ for each 50-minute session.

Our pastor or venue needs proof we took a premarital class?

Easy, just let us know. We take attendance in class and we're glad to send a note to your wedding officiant to verify you took a marriage preparation class.

If you still have questions, feel free to contact Pastor Phil, Congregational Life and Marriage Pastor at philm@churchbcc.org

