GOFAMINT AUSTRALIA POLICY STATEMENTS ON MARRIAGE

GOFAMINT GUIDELINES ON MARRIAGE PROCEDURE –



INTRODUCTION

Marriage as one of the oldest institutions ordained by God is taken very seriously in The Gospel Faith Mission International Worldwide.

In all GOFAMINT churches, marriage committees are established to help intending couples navigate safely through the complex terrain of courtship to a happily married life.

. In order to achieve the aforementioned, this guideline is made to cover seven areas which are:

(i) ​Pre-marital counselling

(ii) ​Introduction and Engagement

(iii) ​Marriage Celebration

(iv) ​Stages in Marriage Procedure

(v)​Time For Wedding Service

(vi) ​Reception after Church service and

(vii) ​Remarriage.

*PART A*

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Anyone whose marriage will be conducted in any GOFAMINT

Assembly must attend an interview, seminar classes, counsel-

ing and get a clearance letter from the Pastor prior to the day

of the wedding.

2. Counseling and prayers should be conducted regularly for un-

engaged mature Singles. This should be one of the major duties

of the local Assembly Marriage Committee.

3. The Marriage Committee should be reporting its activities to

the Assembly Pastor, as the case may be.

4. Young Adults should be encouraged to look inside first (within

GOFAMINT) for marriage partners, as GOFAMINT has a wide

coverage. It has to be understood that people of similar convictions usually have better matrimonial homes.

5. To encourage marriages among the Young Adults of GOFAMINT, regular conferences and interactive sessions should be organized at Assembly and national levels.

6. Interdenominational Marriage: In case of a marriage between a GOFAMINT sister/brother and a brother/sister from another denomination, there must be a letter from the Pastor-in-charge or a Senior Minister of such a denomination.

7. The couple-to-be, possibly with their parents, should be educated by the Pastor/Marriage Committee on the need to plan a marriage ceremony that is convenient and affordable for them.

8. We encourage holding the wedding ceremony within the church

facilities; however, the intending couple is at liberty to choose any other decent, safe, conducive and affordable venue.

9. The Church is against premarital sex and pregnancy before marriage, based on Biblical injunction in Hebrew 13:4.

10. The Church recognizes Civil and Traditional Weddings. However, it is advisable that all genuine members of the Church should experience Church Wedding.

11. In case a couple is disciplined due to pregnancy before wedding, they should be assisted to settle down and be reabsorbed, after demonstrating genuine repentance. (Galatians 6:1-2)

12. Marriage Thanksgiving offering is allowed during the wedding.

13. Marriage rehearsal is a necessary condition prior to the marriage ceremony if it would be conducted by the Church.

14. Complication/crisis in marriage would be resolved according to the Bible standard and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

15. Anyone who has any physiological complication or human deficiency should confess this to his/her proposed spouse, long enough before the day of wedding.

*PART B*

Qualifications of Marriage Committee Members

Members of Marriage Committee should be;

1. Born again and filled with the spirit.
2. People with good testimony and peaceful homes.
3. They should be those who love the Youths and have good relationship with them.
4. They should be people who have exposure and experiences on the given subject

What The Marriage Committee IS NOT meant for.

1. The marriage committee is not meant to determine the will of God for intending couples. The intending couple is expected to have prayed through. The job of the marriage is to use the wisdom of God to determine the strength and validity of the couple’s conviction about each other. 2Cor.1:24
2. The marriage committee is not to lord anything over the intending couple. Their job is to simply make the will of God and the policies of the church, known to the intending couple. It’s up to them to accept or reject it.
3. Pastors and Marriage Committee should not put unnecessary restriction or delay on marriage proposal or program.
4. ​Marriage committee should not make demands for their sitting from the would-be-couples.

 **Responsibilities of the Marriage Committee**

1. Pray with the intending couple.
2. Make Thorough findings to get details about the couple. Areas of findings include; (a)​Life history: Date of birth, place of birth, nationality; (b)Family history: family name, brief about each parents, siblings, etc; (c) academic history: schools attended and completed, academic qualifications; (d) Employment history: job experiences, former employers, current employers etc; (e) Spiritual history: salvation experience, baptism in the Holy Ghost, Service unit in church, spiritual gifts known and exercised, other talents and abilities, (f). Church Membership History: current pastor, former pastor, former church, date baptized in water etc; (g) Sexual History: Abstinence from sexual intercourse, virgin- yes/no...

(h)​Relationship history- past relationships, what happened and how did it end? Any areas of concern about former relationships or have both parties moved on? Former any previous marriages? Any child given birth to before?

(i)​Medical history/ health challenges.

1. Supervise Marriage Discipleship Classes for the intending Couple. This includes discussions, specialized teachings, books to read etc. GOFAMINT AUSTRALIA reserves the right to not marry any couple that fails to undertake the marriage classes.
2. The Marriage Committee must organize all intending couple, marriage/pre-marriage teachings and seminar before the date of the wedding.
3. Guide intending couples in the will of God for their lives as it relates to marriage. From courtship to the altar and beyond
4. Make the couple aware of biblical rules and GOFAMINT policies on courtship, wedding and marriage. These are the actual DOs and DONTs when in courtship so that their testimony is unblemished.
5. The Committee should be notified immediately a brother and a sister makes a marriage proposal. In case of those who have agreed before telling the committee , the committee should be duty bound to investigate the genuineness of their proposal.
6. Help them to determine that the relationship is founded securely upon Christ, by guiding them through His Word. This will give the assurance that they are in the perfect will of God
7. Act as accountability partners in the fight for sexual purity according to Hebrews 13:4. This is one key area that soils the reputation of the church and weakens the foundation of the future home.
8. Navigate the intending couple through premarital challenges and family issues by lending them sound biblical counseling on handling difficulties and differences etc.
9. Evaluate the readiness of the intending couple for marriage based on their successful completion of their premarital counseling and adherence to biblical standards of courtship.
10. The Marriage Committee is under the office of the Pastor and must report all its activities to that office.

 Responsibilities of Intending Couples

1. Cooperate fully with the marriage committee
2. Attend all counseling sessions and marriage classes promptly, faithfully and fully. GOFAMINT AUSTRALIA reserves the right to not marry any couple that fails to undertake the marriage classes.
3. Respond honestly, truthfully and sincerely to all questions, enquirers and investigations.
4. Demonstrate willingness to go through medical tests.

(a)​Blood group

(b)​Genotype

(c)​Pregnancy test

(d)​H.I.V

(e)​All other medical reports

*Part C*

*Rules During Courtship*

Courtship is that phase in a relationship during which the intending couple get to know each other better and also grow together in their relationship with God.

Courtship not only exposes the intending couples to themselves at deeper levels of friendship, it also exposes them to various sexual temptations.

Many have soiled the marriage sheets during courtship, thereby creating cracks in their marriage foundation. In order to avoid these, rules must be observed.

“*Marriage should be honored by everyone, and husband and wife should keep their marriage pure. God will judge as guilty those who take part in sexual sins.”*

These rules are meant to protect the intending couple from messing up themselves and giving Satan a foothold in their lives. Ephesians 4:27.

Marriage approval may be delayed or postponed if the rules are violated. The goal of these rules is to bring sanity and sanctity to the institution of marriage, to encourage purity and holiness and to strengthen the proposed marriage on a solid foundation.

1. Create time to pray, fast and study the word of God together on a weekly basis. There’s a lot to pray about- your future, God’s plans for each of you, your wedding, your families, the church and the world at large.
2. Intending couples should not sleep over in each other’s houses, especially if either lives alone except under highly anomalous circumstances.
3. Shacking up- is not only culturally disgraceful but biblically unacceptable. Shacking up means to sleep or live together as unmarried sexual partners.
4. Do not perform wife roles. Cooking, cleaning, washing etc are not part of your duties to the one you’re engaged to. You have plenty of time to do those things when married. Yes, you can cook and clean on visits. But don’t accept it as responsibility until marriage
5. Avoid every opportunity to be together at odd times and odd places.

*So run away from sexual sin. Every other sin people do is outside their bodies, but those who sin sexually sin against their own bodies.”1Corinthians‬*

1. Having sex before marriage is like drinking stolen water or eating stolen food. Hear what the Bible says about such in *Proverbs 9:17-18 (NIV) “Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!” But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are deep in the realm of the dead.*
2. Finally, don’t do anything that you won’t be proud to watch if it were put on screens in your church today or on the evening news so that the whole world might see.

Remember, Courtship time is a great blessing if well handled but can also be regretful if mishandled.

Comments On Blood Test

Blood group and genotype tests must be done immediately a brother and a sister come into agreement before proceeding to courtship. Preferably, Pastors and Marriage Committee should teach the Youths to know their blood group even before having a marriage partner.

All the medical tests must be done in a medical centre approved by the Marriage Committee. They have to be done under their supervision.

 Period Of Courtship

 GOFAMINT does not encourage unusually short or unduly long courtships. It should be re-echoed that the period of courtship should not be less than one year. Exceptional cases with permission from the authorities in charge could be sought (e.g. those who are above the normal age, emergency traveling out of the country and the like).

​ Clearance letter:

This should be issued to the would-be-couple on the last week of the wedding date by the Senior Pastor. The letter should indicate the age, duration of courtship and the medical tests result as stated above. This will enable whoever is in position to join them to have confidence that he is joining the right people.

​A copy of the clearance letter should be given to the couple.

*Part D*

*STAGES IN THE MARRIAGE PROCEDURE*

STEP 1: CHOOSING A PARTNER

* If a brother and a sister decide to enter into a courtship, after fervent prayers, seeking the face of the Lord, and having received the conviction, the brother/sister will keep the pastor of his/her church informed.

STEP 2: INTRODUCTION TO THE PASTOR

* The pastor will call each of them to verify their conviction and the relationship.
* If the pastor is satisfied with their responses, the marriage proposal form will be given to them to fill. This must be completed with two passport-sized photographs.
* If, for any reason, the pastor is in doubt or not thoroughly convinced about their courtship, the pastor may tell them to go and pray again and be sure of such conviction before meeting the pastor again.
* When the forms have been completed and returned to the pastor, two copies will go to the church’s file (one copy for the husband and the other for the wife). The form should be accompanied by the following:

1. Two passport-sized photographs each.

2. Parental consent letters

3. Premarital medical test results

4. Reference letter from the Senior Pastor (for non-members)

STEP 3: FORMAL PROPOSAL

While we do not discourage memorable proposals, it is recommended that this be done without unnecessary or risky activities

or expenses that could jeopardize the success of the marriage eventually or endanger the lives of people involved. It is advisable that official marriage proposal be moderate as much as possible.

Please ensure that the entire process and place of the proposal is safe and secured. It is important to state that an exorbitant proposal ceremony does not determine the success of the marriage.

It is advisable that the Pastor should be notified before a brother

or a sister makes a marriage proposal.

STEP 4: COURTSHIP

Before the courtship starts, it is imperative for the brother or sister to secure the approval of the Pastor of his or her local assembly.

It should be re-echoed that the period of courtship should not be less than one year. Permission could be sought from the authorities in-charge for exceptional cases, e.g. singles who are advanced in age, emergency traveling out of the country and the like.

STEP 5: APPEARING BEFORE THE MARRIAGE COMMITTEE/THE BOARD OF ELDERS

The pastor will bring the partners before the marriage committee for

further interview and advice. The board of elders of the church could

perform this role if there is no marriage committee. The Pastor, with some selected mature leaders or workers, could perform this role

if there is no board of elders in place.

STEP 6: KNOWING THEIR PARENTS

The would-be partners may introduce themselves to their families, first to the fiancee’s family, then to the fiancé. There should be no undue delay or prolonged courtship once there is no hitch from any quarter. The fiancé may keep the Pastor informed from time to

time about the following activities - like knowing the fiancee’s family, engagement (where applicable), etc. Both need to get a letter of consent from both families. This letter is to accompany the marriage proposal form. Also, in case the culture of the bride permits paying of dowry or any traditional rite that is not contradictory to the scriptures, this should be honored.

STEP 7: PREMARITAL TEACHINGS, COUNSELING & MEDICAL TESTS

*Part E*

PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING

It has been discovered that most of the problems in matrimonial homes have their origin right from the days of courtship, as a result of inadequate guidance and mentoring. Some of the young people did not have enough information about the person they proposed to marry. After the marriage, the reality began to dawn on them. As they are being confronted with such problems they did not prepare for, they began to react against the word of God. In order to curtail this, the marriage classes and premarital counseling becomes necessary.

 PreMarital Counseling Module

The module includes;

1. Sunday Bible School. This is compulsory for the intending couple. Their readiness for marriage will be determined by their consistency and full participation in the Sunday Bible school.
2. Recommended reading. Specific books on the subject of marriage will be perused by the intending couple in preparation for marriage.
3. Specialized interactive sessions with the marriage committee.
4. Prayer and fasting sessions with marriage committee
5. Compulsory attendance at marriage seminars, and such events organized by the church
6. Specialized mentoring sessions with married couples. The mentoring sessions will be along very specific lines. The intending couple will be assigned to specific married couples to be mentored.
7. Deliverance sessions before marriage to deal with carryovers from past life, relationships etc and check out hidden demons.
8. counseling before the wedding. This should begin at least six months before the proposed wedding. The subjects to cover should include but not limited to:
* Understanding Christian Marriage
* Communication in Marriage
* Handling Finances God’s Way
* Sex in Marriage
* Parenting
* Dealing with In-Laws
* Maintaining Work/Ministry & Family Balance

MEDICAL TESTS: The following medical tests pertinent to the spiritual and physical health of the would-be-couple must be strongly recommended and obtained by the Pastor or the Marriage Committee.

(a) Blood Group

(b) Genotype

(c) Pregnancy Test

(d) H.I.V. & other STIs

(e) All other pertinent medical tests

NB: Blood group and genotype tests must be done immediately a

brother and a sister come into agreement before proceeding to courtship. Preferably, Pastors and the Marriage Committee should teach

the youths to know their blood group even before having a marriage partner. The Pastor should encourage the intending partners to open

up to each other about their past and present medical state.

STEP 8: FAMILY INTRODUCTION

1. This is meant to provide opportunity for the families of the would-be-couple, to officially meet and know one another. It should be done with moderation and consciousness of our identity in Christ.

STEP 9: GETTING A MARRIAGE DATE

Marriage partners must give a minimum of three months’ notice

to their Pastor. The Pastor will take them to the Senior Pastor, who will then go through their files. Their forms will be thoroughly scrutinized. Efforts would be made to contact the spouse’s Pastor in case of an interdenominational wedding. A date will be chosen that fits into the calendar of the partners and the church.

*Clearance Letter*:

This should be issued to the would-be-couple on the last week of the wedding date by the Pastor. The letter should indicate the age, duration of courtship and the medical tests results as stated in (iv) above. This will enable whoever is in position to join them to have confidence that he is joining the right people.

* A copy of the clearance letter should be given to the couple.

STEP 10: ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE CHURCH

The marriage announcement should commence in the church three months before the wedding date.

STEP 11: MARRIAGE REGISTRY NOTIFICATION/CERTIFICATE

The couple-to-be should make sure that they register their marriage at the court registry to get the government approved certificate or documents.

STEP 12: TRADITIONAL WEDDING & ENGAGEMENT CEREMONY

This should be done to portray our faith and manifest the glory of

God. Therefore, all things should be done “decently and in order”, without prolonging the ceremony unnecessarily and dabbling into

ungodly practices.

Traditional wedding should precede Church wedding, and the dowry payment should be done, if the culture permits or requires it.

STEP 13: WEDDING REHEARSAL & WEDDING

The Pastor will conduct a wedding rehearsal with the couple to familiarize them with what they need to know before the wedding day. It must be noted that a wedding Bible should be made available at the wedding for joining.

 Although the officiating Pastor would provide an opportunity for an exchange of rings, in GOFAMINT, we use the Holy Bible for Joining.

* If due to parental instruction or other acceptable reasons both parties who are members, are requested to wed in another church or denomination, they are still required to pass through the procedure of the church. In such a case, provision will be made for participation of our pastors, subject to the discretion of the officiating

church/denomination.

*Bride and Bridesmaids Outfits*

* The bride’s and the bridal train’s outfits on the wedding day should not be exposing. Everything should be done decently and in order.

The service should not be prolonged unnecessarily. The would-be-

couple must be told not to come late to Church on the day of their wedding. Coming late will not be tolerated. The marriage covenant to be used shall be as approved by the Church.



 *Part F*

​ Interdenominational marriage:

 In case of a marriage between GOFAMINT (the sister/brother) and any other denomination (the brother/sister), there must be a letter from the Pastor-in-charge or a Senior Minister of such a denomination. Any situation different from this should be handled by the leader in charge under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

​Anyone whose marriage will be conducted in any GOFAMINT Assembly must attend interview, seminar classes, counseling and get clearance letter from the Senior Pastor prior to the day of the wedding.

*Part G*

*DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE*

Biblically, both divorce and remarriage are possible, but only under certain circumstances.

1. When a spouse is guilty of sexual immorality such as adultery or homosexuality and has no intention of repenting or seeking God’s forgiveness and living in faithfulness to his or her spouse (Matthew 19:9).
2. When one partner dies (1 Corinthians 7:39-40).
3. When one partner deserts the other, especially when an unbelieving partner deserts a Christian spouse (1 Corinthians

7:15). Having an unbelieving spouse is not, however, an automatic ground for divorce. To the contrary, the Christian spouse is encouraged to “live in peace” with an unbelieving partner, with the goal of winning him or her to faith in Christ.

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As a Church, we would not support an abusive relationship that is life-threatening. We would submit to the authority of

the Land. It is wrong for a man to verbally, emotionally, or physically abuse his wife and vice versa. Such a person is an

unbeliever (Matthew 18:15-17).

For the ministers and members who find themselves in the conditions stated in Romans 7:2-3, the following steps are expected:

1. Remarriage should not be immediately after the death of the spouse but be given enough time so as to show love and

respect for the departed one.

2. It should be in the Lord with the approval of the Pastor and Marriage Counseling Committee.

3. The Traditional Wedding or Engagement Ceremony, Church Service and Reception in connection with the remarriage

should be made simple.

*CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH MARRIAGE WILL NOT BE ALLOWED IN THE CHURCH*

1. Same-sex marriage or other forms of unbiblical union.

2. Proven case of fornication.

3. Unbiblical case of divorce.

4. Bride is pregnant.

5. Proven case of cohabitation.

6. Interdenominational wedding without pastoral support/ approval.

7. Medical incompatibility (except the couple-to-be and the parents consented against medical, and pastoral advise).

8. Unequal yokes – We encourage our members not to marry an unbeliever.

Pre Marriage Classes.

1. Emotional intelligence in marriage -
2. Love: the Bible Way. A study of 1Cor.13-
3. Understanding the difference between a man and a woman; making the differences work for you.
4. Submission in Marriage-
5. Tips to make marriage work- personal relationship with God, corporate prayer and fasting, family altar and Bible studies, Quick Forgiveness etc; -
6. How to divorce proof your marriage-
7. Raising Godly Children/ children from previous relationships/ relating with the ex-
8. Relating well with your in laws-
9. Tips on Financial prudence and investments-
10. Preparing for wedding- dos and don’ts .