

EVANGELISTIC EVENTS: MARRIAGE VOW RENEWAL

A formal, complete Christ-centered re-enactment of wedding vows

ATTRACTION

For many people, the most “spiritual” time of their life was their wedding. Some have not been in a church since. Some did not have a church wedding but wish they did. This event attracts a variety of people. Normally, it is good to move an event outside the church building, but even most unchurched people were married in a church, so you will probably want to leave it there.

Many of the ideas used by the church in the story at the beginning of this manual can be used, including the surprise use of similar music. The key will be sharing the opportunity outside the church. Invite couples in your church to renew their vows, but stress the outreach element, asking each couple to invite other couples who are unchurched. You may also want to advertise in a community newspaper, on public bulletin boards, or by sending out “Wedding Invitations” to homes in selected neighborhoods.

BRIDGE

An emotional bridge is always a good one, and this one is the commitment of each person to the other through vows. Weddings bring back warm memories and cause people to reconsider their steps. It provides a natural bridge for sharing God's purpose for marriage and His empowerment for marriage if He is the basis.

COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL

A natural progression has been built to the point of sharing how a person can know Jesus as their personal Savior. The pastor, in his charge to the couples, has set forth the Biblical foundation of marriage (perhaps using Genesis 2:18-24, or other Scripture). After the wedding vows, it is a natural time for the pastor to share the way of salvation, stressing to the couples that perhaps they'd like to now “start over” (rededicate) with God, or perhaps they would like to now commit their marriage to God by accepting Jesus as their personal Savior.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

Plan effective follow-up, perhaps even listing or offering (free or for sale) marriage-building resource materials. Scheduling a marriage-building discipleship class to begin the week after the renewal service would be timely.

Make the event special by dressing it up. Some churches have had marriage licenses suitable for framing. A table can be set up where the pastor meets each couple and signs their “renewal” license. A photographer can take their picture (free or for sale). A reception can be held, including cake and other refreshments.

Keep the details of the actual service quiet. The element of surprise in some of the music and pastor's comments (see story at beginning of manual) is very important. Therefore, involve as few people as possible in the actual planning of the service itself.

Do just the opposite for the reception, however. Involve many creative people. They will have great fellowship putting together the event, and that will motivate them to invite more unchurched couples and to encourage others to do the same.

Be mindful of the needs of your single people in your congregation if you do this event as a part of a regular church service. Address the needs of singles in a constructive manner, perhaps with the pastor briefly addressing them to the effect of: "This is the type commitment you will make when and if it is the Lord's will for you to marry." Some single people can feel very hurt or left out, though not intentionally, by such a service. However, it is difficult if not impossible to be all things to all people at once, so do not let the singles' issue discourage having this event.

You may want to have your couple's Sunday School class or small groups make this a prayer focus for two months before the event. They should identify by family name several couples they would like to invite, and then, have them pray specifically for those families.

Always get the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all participants so the church has a record and means of immediate follow-up.

PLANNING SHEET – MARRIAGE VOW RENEWAL

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Schedule event on church calender	Pastor	6-12 mos prior to event
2	Secure program personalities	Pastor	6-12 mos prior
3	Select and enlist Ministry Teams	Pastor	3 mos prior
4	Select and secure music	Pastor and/or Music Minister	3 mos prior
5	Order NAMB follow-up materials (see Resources)	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
6	Secure equipment, decorations	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
7	Promote prayer strategy	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
8	Make hospitality arrangements	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
9	Print publicity, tickets, attendance	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
10	Promote in church newsletter, bulletin	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
11	Mail attendance letter to members	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
12	Enlist commitment counselors	Pastor	3 wks prior
13	Distribute publicity	Ministry Team designated	3 wks prior
14	Call prospects	Church Members	2 wks prior
15	Train commitment counselors	Pastor	1 wk prior
16	Reconfirm hospitality arrangements	Ministry Team designated	1 wk prior
17	Pick up program personalities	Ministry Team designated	day prior to event
18	Complete physical arrangements	Ministry Team designated	day of event
19	Follow-up with new converts	Church Members	immediately following event
20	Visit prospects	Church Members	immediately following event
21	Evaluation meeting	Pastor, Ministry Team Leaders	immediately following event

EVANGELISTIC EVENTS: VALENTINE’S EVENING CHILDREN’S PARTY

A church offers to keep the children of couples while they enjoy Valentine's night together

ATTRACTION

Offering something for children that is free and safe is always attractive to parents. Valentine's Day is always associated with the expense of gifts and a “night out,” and it is often difficult to find a baby-sitter on night when everyone else is going out. The church can meet that need.

BRIDGE

An organized event for children should include games, food, and teaching. Many times, if you get the children, you get the parents. Also, many parents do not mind their children hearing stories about Jesus and getting some “church influence,” though the parents do not express interest themselves. Use this opening to reach the family for Christ.

COMMUNICATION

Through creative literature and methods developed for children, the story of Jesus and the plan of salvation can be shared. Remember, most people are saved before age 12, yet we target so much of our evangelism efforts toward adults. Tracts and information about the church, perhaps including an explanation of what the child was taught, can be sent home with the parents. Through this activity the opportunity exists to evangelize children and their parents.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

Set aside a “prayer room” for the event, and enlist several men and women to pray throughout the evening for the salvation of the children. If the event is long enough (and the prayer partners numerous enough), individuals may take turns being in the prayer room. As a prayer follow-up, divide the names of families whose children visited the event among Sunday School classes, asking them to pray for the children for several months.

A key to this is getting church family members to give up (or change the date of) their Valentine's time together. This isn't much to ask for the cause of sharing Jesus, and it can be promoted as an exciting, fun time for the workers, as well.

Enlist and advertise the use of a variety of workers with a variety of skills. For instance, if you can have three nurses on hand, advertise that to the parents. If you have 30 adult workers, advertise it. Parents are comfortable with a good child-adult ratio and with health-care workers.

Advertise through community newspapers, secular radio, bulletin boards or flyers/letter sent to select communities. Have the church family tell their unchurched friends. A key is stressing that this service is not for the church family (except perhaps in the case when both parents are working in the event).

The event should have a Valentine's theme for the children. Have appropriate decorations and refreshments, and prepare children's teaching materials centering on the love of Jesus. This is a perfect bridge to sharing how to accept Christ.

Be sensitive to, and perhaps have pastoral staff set a policy for, what age children you are sharing the plan of salvation with. Separate groups accordingly.

Prepare a duplicate release of liability agreement to be given to the parents when they bring the children. On the same sheet of paper have contact information for the parent so they can reach by telephone the location where the children are being kept. Get information on where the parents will be, in case of emergency.

Location of event is flexible: church, apartment clubhouse, and so on. Consider location with relation to surrounding communities and whether having it off the church grounds might cause some parents to feel more free about leaving their children.

A variation of this would be to encourage church members to volunteer to keep the children of an unchurched family for free, simply as a way of sharing the love of Jesus.

Always get the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all participants so the church has a record and means of immediate follow-up.

PLANNING SHEET – VALENTINE’S EVENING CHILDREN’S PARTY

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Schedule event on church calender	Pastor	6-12 mos prior to event
2	Secure workers	Pastor	6-12 mos prior
3	Select and enlist Ministry Teams	Pastor	3 mos prior
4	Select and secure music	Pastor and/or Music Minister	3 mos prior
5	Order NAMB follow-up materials (see Resources)	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
6	Secure equipment, decorations	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
7	Promote prayer strategy	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
8	Make food arrangements	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
9	Print publicity, tickets, attendance	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
10	Promote in church newsletter, bulletin	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
11	Mail attendance letter to members	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
12	Enlist commitment counselors	Pastor	3 wks prior
13	Distribute publicity	Ministry Team designated	3 wks prior
14	Call prospects	Church Members	2 wks prior
15	Train workers	Pastor	1 wk prior
16	Reconfirm food arrangements	Ministry Team designated	1 wk prior
17	Reconfirm workers	Ministry Team designated	day prior to event
18	Complete physical arrangements	Ministry Team designated	day of event
19	Follow-up with new converts	Church Members	immediately following the event
20	Visit prospects	Church Members	immediately following the event
21	Evaluation meeting	Pastor, Ministry Team Leaders	immediately following the event

EVANGELISTIC EVENTS: VALENTINE’S BANQUET

An evening of food and entertainment in a wholesome environment

ATTRACTION

Free or inexpensive food and entertainment are always attractive. Fellowship with others is attractive, as well. The object is for couples to invite unchurched couples to church or a banquet-type facility for a free (to the unchurched couple) meal and entertainment.

BRIDGE

Through fellowship over the meal and wholesome humor via skits, drama, etc., a relational bridge is established that says, “Christians can have great fun!” With barriers broken down in this way, the stage is set for someone to share the message of Christ with the entire group.

COMMUNICATION

A pastoral staff member can do this, but it can be effective if a layman shares. This puts the layman in the “one of us” category with the guest, further personalizing the appeal, thus strengthening the bridge. It does not take a long time to share the gospel, and on a night of light entertainment, the evening should not be allowed to turn very “heavy.” As such, the presentation should be well thought out, yet succinct.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

Here's your chance to be creative, have some fun. Skits, music, drama are good starting points. A popular idea is to have the staff be the entertainment. Have them do things you know they cannot do! They may be so bad at whatever they try that it will be funny and will help build a rapport between the church body, the visitors, and the staff. Whatever you do, make it funny. Humor is contagious. Some of the funniest moments are when people mess up or forget a line. Remember, this is not the Easter Passion Play!

Enlist creative individuals to work with decorations. You will be surprised how a fellowship hall or banquet room can be transformed into a beautiful, festive setting.

The key, as always, is inviting unchurched couples. Excitement for the event is essential. The great thing about evangelistic events is that they are non-threatening to the Christian, too, so your people should not have much trouble with doing this.

This is not an event to advertise. You need an accurate head count for food, space, and so on. Find out how many couples are coming from your church, and make a standard that they must bring one unchurched couple with them.

Print tickets, perhaps in the form of a Valentine's card. Be creative. The tickets allow you to keep up with the number to be fed and space availability. People are more responsible to attend when they have a ticket, even if the event is free.

Financing for this can vary. If affordable, make it free to guests. If you must charge, encourage your people to buy tickets for their guests.

Have a "night of prayer" two weeks before the event. Invite everyone in the church, stressing to those involved, to come and pray that many unchurched people will respond to invitations to the event and will accept Christ.

Your singles should not be left out of this one! Dating couples and singles can come, and can bring the same. In entertainment programming, be sensitive to singles who may be present. Use them. Do not make all the skits or jokes pertain to "couples."

This event is easily adaptable for youth. A youth-only Valentine's Banquet does not need to be a "couples" event. In fact, stressing "couples" might alienate some youth who do not date. While remaining light and funny, the focus of skits and dramas could be right definitions of love. (Perhaps the adults can serve at the youth Valentine's Banquet and the youth serve at the adult banquet on separate nights, perhaps even using some of the same decorations.)

Always get the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all participants so the church has a record and means of follow-up.

PLANNING SHEET – VALENTINE’S BANQUET

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Schedule event on church calender	Pastor	6-12 mos prior to event
2	Secure program personalities	Pastor	6-12 mos prior
3	Select and enlist Ministry Teams	Pastor	3 mos prior
4	Select and secure music	Pastor and/or Music Minister	3 mos prior
5	Order NAMB follow-up materials (see Resources)	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
6	Secure equipment, decorations	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
7	Promote prayer strategy	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
8	Make hospitality arrangements	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
9	Print publicity, tickets, attendance	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
10	Promote in church newsletter, bulletin	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
11	Mail attendance letter to members	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
12	Enlist commitment counselors	Pastor	3 wks prior
13	Distribute publicity	Ministry Team designated	3 wks prior
14	Call prospects	Church Members	2 wks prior
15	Train commitment counselors	Pastor	1 wk prior
16	Reconfirm hospitality arrangements	Ministry Team designated	1 wk prior
17	Pick up program personalities	Ministry Team designated	day prior to event
18	Implement final physical arrangements	Ministry Team designated	day of event
19	Follow-up with new converts	Church Members	immediately following the event
20	Visit prospects	Church Members	immediately following the event
21	Evaluation meeting	Pastor, Ministry Team Leaders	immediately following the event

EVANGELISTIC EVENTS: FREE MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT COUNSELING

A several-hour session of marriage counseling designed to help engaged couples understand the depth and challenge of their commitment.

ATTRACTION

Wise counsel, price, and timing are the things that may attract couples to attend an event of this nature. Marriage counseling can be expensive, and some couples feel like they “just don't have time.” This free session gives them an overview that will give minimum guidance and should encourage them to continue. Also, June is a very busy wedding month, so February is perfect timing for counseling engaged couples, as well.

BRIDGE

Being with other couples excited about their future is an excellent bridge. So is being in a church, where weddings usually occur.

COMMUNICATION

Marriage counseling gives an easy transition to sharing the Gospel by sharing God's plan for marriage. Many Scripture passages apply. Sharing the plan of salvation can flow naturally from many, but especially from Ephesians 5:25 (NIV), "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Explaining "gave himself up for her" is a clear transition.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

Who conducts this seminar is critically important. If a staff member is capable, fine. If not, find another local pastor or Christian counselor and enlist them.

Obviously, marriage counseling can't be thorough in a several-hour time block. Provide follow-up materials (free or for sale), possibly offer follow-up counsel (at a fee or free), even offer written materials on how to put together the wedding. All of these will provide natural follow-up opportunities for the church.

This should be widely advertised in the secular media. As in all evangelistic outreach events, the point is to involve unchurched couples. Advertise in newspapers, on radio, on community bulletin boards. Get your singles group involved by asking them to enlist their single unchurched friends who are getting married.

The event location can be the church, but if a suitable meeting room setting can be found, it will be less threatening to the un-churched to have it there.

There should be at two or three married couples from your church at the session for encouragement, perhaps to lead any small-group time, and to be available for commitment counseling. A brief testimony by one or two couples could be effective.

This activity does not require a lot of hands-on involvement by the church body. Keep the church body aware of the event so they can be inviting engaged unchurched couples and so they can be praying.

Always get names, addresses, and phone numbers of all participants so that the church has a record and means of immediate follow-up.

Pair couples (perhaps through the structure of the Sunday School) that show an interest in praying for one another's marriages. The couples could meet regularly before or after church or in homes to pray. This can be as brief as five to 10 minutes, or it can be longer. This develops accountability and a sense of support among families in the church. It is important to note to your couples that marriages do not have to be "in trouble" to need prayer.

PLANNING SHEET – FREE MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT COUNSELING

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Schedule event on church calender	Pastor	6-12 mos prior to event
2	Secure counselor(s)	Pastor	6-12 mos prior
3	Secure counseling areas	Pastor	3 mos prior
4	Review church insurance	Pastor	3 mos prior
5	Order NAMB follow-up materials (see Resources)	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
6	Secure equipment, furniture	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
7	Promote prayer strategy	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
8	Make hospitality arrangements	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
9	Print publicity	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
10	Promote in church newsletter, bulletin	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
11	Mail attendance letter to members	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
12	Distribute publicity	Ministry Team designated	3 wks prior
13	Call prospects	Church Members	2 wks prior
14	Reconfirm hospitality arrangements	Ministry Team designated	1 wk prior
15	Pick up program personalities	Ministry Team designated	day prior to event
16	Implement final physical arrangements	Ministry Team designated	day of event
17	Follow-up with new converts	Church Members	immediately following the event
18	Visit prospects	Church Members	immediately following the event
19	Evaluation meeting	Pastor, Ministry Team Leaders	immediately following the event

EVANGELISTIC EVENTS: SINGLE AGAIN DINNER

A simple, warm time of fellowship to encourage widows, widowers, and divorced individuals at a time when they are often lonely or hurting.

ATTRACTION

Fellowship with people in like circumstance.

BRIDGE

The bridge for this event could include a meal and community time of support. Common circumstances break down barriers with ease.

COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL

Most widows and widowers are senior citizens. As age advances, thoughts of eternity are crystallized. The same is true when one has lost a mate. Maturity has often brought with it the understanding that this life is temporal, and so seniors can be searching as much if not more than young people. All of this creates a natural circumstance for sharing God's comfort and plan for eternal life. (2 Corinthians 1:3-8 is an excellent text for sharing God's comfort and it's purpose.)

Divorced individuals are dealing with deep hurts. The themes of healing, reconciliation, peace, God's faithfulness, strength, and salvation (wholeness) are pertinent ones.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

This should be a tasteful and tactful event—not overly festive, yet not drab. A speaker, a nice meal, and fellowship opportunities are all that is necessary. If the meal is for divorced individuals specifically, do not address only the tragedy of divorce. Deal also with the victory and fulfilling life that Christ can and will give to all who come to Him by faith.

Widows, widowers, and seniors are often overlooked at Valentine's Day, enhancing this event's appeal as an outreach. Encourage the church family to invite widow and widower friends.

If the right situation exists, consider utilizing a widow or widower within the church to share a testimony of God's comfort and healing after the loss of their spouse. Contrast this with a testimony from one focusing on the godly attributes of their mate, on something funny they did, or on their favorite Valentine's Day traditions together.

If your focus is divorce recovery, consider using a spiritually mature divorced individual to share about God's provision during this storm of life. The pastor should review with this person what will be shared.

Most of the advertising for this event should be by word of mouth, but it can be advertised in newsletters and on bulletin boards at seniors' centers and retirement homes, but if you do this, be prepared for the numerical onslaught.

This event allows for some creative means of service. How about the young couples Sunday School class serving the widows and widowers? If the theme is a dinner for those recovering from divorce, what about using the youth of the church as servers?

Have divorce recovery, bereavement, and senior-related follow-up materials available free or for sale. This is a clear opportunity to get people involved in intense prayer for one another. Form a "Single Again Prayer Chain" and storm the gates of Hell with prayers to God.

As always, get names, addresses, and phone numbers of all participants so that the church has a record and means of immediate follow-up. The use of a response card after the meal is suggested. The speaker or pastor should instruct every attendee at the dinner to fill it out completely. If they prayed with the speaker to receive Christ they should indicate that on the card.

PLANNING SHEET – SINGLE-AGAIN DINNER

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Schedule event on church calender	Pastor	6-12 mos prior to event
2	Secure program personalities	Pastor	6-12 mos prior
3	Select and enlist Ministry Teams	Pastor	3 mos prior
4	Select and secure music	Pastor and/or Music Minister	3 mos prior
5	Order NAMB follow-up materials (see Resources)	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
6	Secure equipment, decorations	Ministry Team designated	2 mos prior
7	Promote prayer strategy	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
8	Make hospitality arrangements	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
9	Print publicity, tickets, attendance	Ministry Team designated	6 wks prior
10	Promote in church newsletter, bulletin	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
11	Mail attendance letter to members	Ministry Team designated	4 wks prior
12	Enlist commitment counselors	Pastor	3 wks prior
13	Distribute publicity	Ministry Team designated	3 wks prior
14	Call prospects	Church Members	2 wks prior
15	Train commitment counselors	Pastor	1 wk prior
16	Reconfirm hospitality arrangements	Ministry Team designated	1 wk prior
17	Pick up program personalities	Ministry Team designated	day prior to event
18	Complete physical arrangements	Ministry Team designated	day of event
19	Follow-up with new converts	Church Members	immediately following the event
20	Visit prospects	Church Members	immediately following the event
21	Evaluation meeting	Pastor, Ministry Team Leaders	immediately following the event