

# The Christian Wedding

There are few people whose hearts do not quicken at the thought of love and marriage, at the sight of two Christians walking to the marriage altar in purity of heart and single-minded devotion. May the Lord bless you as you prepare for this occasion.

The church is interested in your wedding, and the success of the marriage which stretches away from that glad occasion. The church wants your wedding day to be one to which you can look back with joy, and recall with tender reminiscences and no regrets.

## **Significance of the Christian Wedding**

Let us remember first of all that marriage is a Christian ordinance, that it symbolizes the tender love and relationship which exists between Christ and His church. The wedding ceremony is a sacred religious rite, and everything about it should be in keeping with this holy character.

According to the Scripture, God's plan for marriage is for as long as you both shall live. There is no anticipation of divorce. Remarriage while a former partner is living is forbidden. Have you thought well what it means to commit one's self for life? Do you realize that the well-being of your future wife or husband and children, now stands above your own individual desires? The church and the community are both affected by the success or failure of your home. Devotion, kindness, and daily Christian discipleship must be a part of your life if the wedding day is to fulfill its golden promises.

The popular wedding is very much a bride-centered affair; and very often a great deal of extravagance and display is expended upon it. The Christian wedding in contrast should be Christ-centered.

Our Conference Statement of Faith identifies a number of Biblical principles which should govern marriage and the occasions of Christian weddings. Marriage should be only in the Lord. The Christian should never think of marrying an unbeliever. So important is spiritual harmony in marriage that even a denominational difference puts an unnecessary strain on the marriage relation. Wedding occasions are to be characterized by a simplicity that is becoming to a Christian ordinance, and nothing about the ceremony, or the attire of the wedding party, should constitute a denial of

the Biblical standards of simplicity and nonconformity.

The Conference statement further recommends to engaged couples that as part of the preparation for their wedding day they should seek premarital counseling by their pastor or bishop. Expect your counselor to discuss with you the spiritual nature and meaning of marriage, the mutual responsibilities of husband and wife, and the practical problems of the daily operation of a home. Be prepared to share with your counselor the plans for your wedding including such things as the attire of the wedding party and the songs you plan to use. He is charged with the responsibility of faithfully representing the Word of God and the teaching of the church to those for whom he has been made responsible. It is his responsibility to help you avoid being taken in by the popular and often extravagant customs associated with weddings which infringe upon the simplicity of Scripture and later may be a source of embarrassment to you.

### **A Plea for Simplicity**

The Christian wedding should evidence the dignity and spiritual atmosphere which befit the observance of a Christian ordinance.

There should be no special decorations used either by the wedding party or in the place where the service is held.

The attire of the entire wedding party should be modest, simple, and in keeping with the church's standards. The bridal veil and train shall not be used.

We believe that the binding power of any marriage rests in the solemn and unfeigned vows given between man and woman in Christian faith. Therefore, the ring ceremony has no part in the Christian wedding.

Music used during the ceremony should be without instrumentation and only such as is appropriate and acceptable in public worship service.

When planning your wedding, you ought to think first of your own bishop or pastor. If there are legitimate reasons for calling for the services of a minister friend from another community, be sure that all arrangements are properly and courteously cleared and are in proper order with respect to the laws of the state and the standards of the church.

We appreciate church weddings as a means of signifying the spiritual nature of marriage and emphasizing the mutual relationship of Christian

home and Christian church. Do not secularize the Christian wedding with unnecessary ceremony, decorations, vulgar jesting, rice throwing, or pranks.

A wedding occasion should be a time of joy, but Christians will avoid unbecoming hilarity which so often attends such occasions. Any harassment of the bride and groom, or playing embarrassing pranks on them should be avoided.

Newspaper reports of weddings should be in harmony with our profession. Popular descriptions of the bride's attire and that of her attendants is unbecoming to Christian discipleship. Such obvious bids for publicity as sometimes appear in the published reports of Mennonite weddings are a hindrance to our Christian witness.

The sacredness of the ceremony should not be disturbed by the activity and distraction of photography. The following guidelines have been adopted by our church to maintain the dignity of the occasion:

The minister in charge of the wedding is responsible for the order and progression of the service. The wedding may be recorded under his direction. All other pictures or video recordings should be taken before or after the service. Visual recordings will be taken from the position that the audience views the ceremony. The photographer is to use no flash, sound, or additional lighting, and is to remain in the approved location during the recording of the service.

When the church and its facilities are used for a wedding, and particularly a reception, the family should see that it is properly cleaned and restored to readiness for worship. It is your responsibility to see that this matter is given proper attention.

A consistent Christian atmosphere planned and carried throughout the wedding ceremony will help to prevent certain vulgarities often promoted by attending parties with lesser ideals. The entire activities associated with a wedding should be in keeping with the seriousness of the ordinance of marriage, the sanctity of the home, and the propriety associated with the Christian life.

*Adopted July 1977 by Southeastern Mennonite Conference*

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