

## Weddings

From time to time preachers are asked to officiate at wedding ceremonies. Most preachers are happy to be accommodative in these matters. Weddings are supposed to be occasions of great happiness because marriage is ordained of God, and beginning a new home is the beginning of many joys, Gen. 1:27-28; 2:21-24. God has set forth standards of conduct and qualifications for those who wish to become husbands and wives. And, He sets forth standards of conduct within marriage, Ephesians 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:1-7; 1 Cor. 7; Mat. 19:3-12; Mat. 5:31-32. All mankind is obligated to follow and obey God's standard for entering into marriage, and then to maintain God's standard within the marriage relationship. Our eternal destiny depends on our humble submission to His will in this matter.

The marriage relationship is so serious that man cannot ignore nor disregard God's will concerning it. Nor are we to have a flippant or nonchalant attitude about it. Some who seek to "get married" may qualify (based on the Bible standard) for marriage. Others may not be qualified for marriage due to immaturity, previous divorce for an unscriptural cause, or other reasons, such as failing to meet the qualifications of civil law, etc.

Preachers are not required by the Bible to perform marriage ceremonies. However, many do so as a courtesy to those seeking to be married because civil laws allow them to do so. Preachers who choose to perform wedding ceremonies must follow the principles of the Bible in uniting two people in marriage. The preacher's respect for the authority of the Scriptures will not permit him to be complicit in uniting in marriage those who are not Biblically qualified to be married. To do so would compound sin and make him a partaker in wrong-doing (2 John 9-11).

Many preachers are very willing to perform the wedding ceremony of those who are qualified to be married, but the preacher may have a few requirements or stipulations of his own that must be met prior to performing a wedding ceremony. This is due to preachers witnessing the unhappiness that exists in many homes and the high divorce rate. Among those requirements (and not limited to them) may be the time element (in making the request) for his participation several months prior to the wedding date. It may also be that he requires several marriage counseling (or discussion and study) sessions with the engaged couple in the months prior to the wedding. Many preachers will not perform a ceremony without such sessions. Some preachers will not perform a ceremony for those he believes are too immature or unprepared for marriage in other ways. Thus, it would be wise to inquire of him about this.

Marriage is such a serious matter that those who plan to be married need all the Biblical counsel they can obtain prior to the wedding day. There are many matters that they must consider, and which (after due consideration) could even cause one or both parties to change their minds before the "big day." Many who plan to be married think only of the wedding day and the physical relationship involved. Some never consider what lies beyond the honeymoon.

The wedding day should a most joyous occasion. With God as the "third partner" in such a marriage and His Book as the basis for this relationship, two hearts may be joined together in holy matrimony and have the foundation for a happy home "until death do us part."  
SPW