

(Spiritual Guidelines for Courtship) Godly Weddings

by Rick Leibee

A Godly Wedding is a wedding that is conducted in a way that honors God and reflects the principles of the Bible, and it requires careful planning and involvement of church authorities to ensure that it is a meaningful and God-honoring experience.

Duration: 1:11:53

Scripture: Matthew 22:37-39, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 10:31, 2 Corinthians 1:12, Ephesians 5:22-33, Colossians 3:17, 1 Peter 3:1-7

Topics: "Christian Marriage", "Godly Relationships"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of having a godly wedding. They emphasize the need for a solid foundation in courtship and engagement before planning a wedding. The speaker acknowledges that not all weddings are godly and joyful, but they encourage the audience to strive for a wedding that honors God. They conclude by offering to continue the discussion on this topic in future sessions.

Transcript

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Well, this afternoon, I've been asked to have the closing message on this series on the Christian or Godly Wedding. My title is Godly Weddings and that is something that I've been able to attend a few in my time in the ministry and through the years and have found quite a contrast in some of them and I'll be reflecting a bit of that in my message here this afternoon. I realize that this is not going to do justice to this subject.

It should have probably been two sessions, but I'm very open to continuing it on a Wednesday night in an open discussion. I'm going to lay out some of the principles, I believe, of what we would see as acceptable principles for Godly Weddings where we trust that the Spirit of God can move freely amongst us and it can be a God-honoring, blessed time together on a wedding day. Nowadays, it's a little difficult to find those sometimes, even though we've had so many of them in our past 25 years.

Yet, we happen upon weddings these days that are more grievous sometimes than so blessed and joyful and I'll explain that a little bit later. But shall we just bow our heads at this time for a word of prayer before we begin? Father in Heaven, thank you once again for Godly courtship and the blessing of a young man and a young lady being able to come together and fulfill the command of Scripture to marry, to procreate the earth, raise up a Godly family. In between there, Lord, is this Godly wedding which is a very pertinent, very important, very influential service that has so much to do with general church life, especially when they happen quite frequently in our midst.

Thank you, dear God, for all the young people you've given us and I do pray that we may continue to guide them in right paths in all the affairs of life, but especially, I would say, in this matter of courtship and marriage so that they can do it with joy and not with grief. I pray for your spirit, Lord, to bring to mind the things I may have forgotten or out of the brothers' mouths too in our open time we can open it up for some questions, Lord, and be able to share together here and have a Christian balanced view on this subject. Thank you, Father, for Brother Rick's teaching thus far and may that tie in well with what we have to say here at the end.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. All right, we have the Godly courtship that was laid out to us in the last three messages.

We have the couple coming to fruitfulness there and the hearts blending together. Engagement takes place and the agreement is made by both of them very firmly and solidly that they are ready to plan a wedding. And here's where we want to start in and take up our message.

What happens next? And I believe that is of great importance when we come to this subject. We believe that is of great importance. Now, unfortunately, I would say unfortunately for some, at least that they have been planning their wedding for five to six years ahead of this and they have listed ideals and plans, especially I think girls are more vulnerable to this than boys are because when I talk to boys, a lot of times they just say, I really don't care, I just want to get married.

You know how boys are, they take an overview more of things. But when you talk to girls, they have some very specific things they'd like to do at their wedding and they have made plans in their own private diaries and notes of perhaps they have a sheet in the back somewhere where they begin to list some of the details that they would like. Another dilemma that we find our young people find themselves in is that they don't want to be average and so they just simply despise a cookie cutter type wedding where it's just the same routine.

And I have seen a number of those and I agree with you that many of them that I have been at, I have seen many of them that are so standardized and so routine that I would agree that there's nothing special hardly to it. Everything is paper plates and plastic cups and on a white paper tablecloth and I'm just using that as an allegory. And that's it, you know, it is very mundane and very, very average.

But on the other hand, I believe that especially the young ladies should take great precaution in that they want something unique and something special and something different than all the rest. And that is what leads us on a trail that will deviate from the acceptable practices of the godly wedding that has been a bit standardized, if I may use that word, in the Christian church here for the last 25 years. And so there's that desire that we're going to do something that the people are all going to ooh and aah and say, hey, that's nice, wasn't that beautiful, I like the way you did that, that was different, you know.

And, you know, some of us are made to be creative and that just seems to want to kick in to produce this special wedding or special reception or special plan or method of doing things. And the next thing you know, we've got problems in our hands with the conscience of the parents and the conscience of the ministry and the practice that is normally done here as a church that most of the brothers would have had seen before, and we're in a conflict. Now the reason I say that at the beginning is, and the dangers of that, we want to look at that because in my attending weddings, I would have to say, and this has happened to me, I don't know, I don't think I'm unusual, but I've been able to walk through the door so many times and been blessed at the atmosphere of the wedding when I walk through those doors back there, or many other places, church houses.

And there is an air of beauty, charm, anointing, blessing of God, worshipful attitude, joyous, exciting atmosphere, and it is such a joy to be at weddings like that. And I love them and I've had dozens and dozens of them, and so I will not complain that the averages are out of bounds in that way. On the other hand, when you discover, and you don't even know this at times, but when you find out later that there was strife between the couple and the parents before the wedding, right up to the day, because of the tug of war of what we can allow and not allow, and do and not do, then that, of course, is also able to be felt.

Or maybe it's between the couple and the ministry, and so there is a lack of communication on purpose for fear they would get a no, so they just try and slip it in there, and believe me, you can also feel that when you walk through the door. There is an atmosphere of tension that goes with a wedding like that that can be felt by those who are a little more sensitive, maybe some of the visitors wouldn't think about it, but those of us who know what it is to be at a wedding that is so free and has the anointing of God on it, and the approval of all the authorities involved, and doesn't have any of that, I can't describe enough the difference between those two. And so I'm very jealous, I'm very jealous that when I say godly weddings, I do not want to settle for what everyone would call a godly wedding, but rather the kind of wedding that I believe meets the approval of the authorities as we look at them, and sometimes there are discrepancies there.

I acknowledge that they might have the approval of the parents and not of other authorities, and then there's a big discussion as to who should rule and what we should go by, and should the ministers have any concern and all of that if the parents are okay with it, and we get down, bogged down in muddy waters, tension, disapproval, grief, and the atmosphere of the entire wedding, of the entire day is affected by it. Well, let me turn to a few scriptures. Now, I have to say that there is very little instruction for the godly wedding in the Bible.

As far as examples, we have the wedding at Cana, we have no detail except that Jesus turned water into wine. But as far as the layout of the wedding, and how they were dressed, and what type of festivities they had, I would assume it was a Jewish wedding, and it followed Jewish custom. But I'm here to say I do not believe that Jewish weddings or Jewish custom is to be followed.

In no way do I see that being the way that weddings were held in the early church, or that came down through the years, and that was to be held to and kept. So, I rather would say culture varies, and there again, there's a lot of variations in what can be made a godly wedding, bringing in some of the culture that we grew up with. However, I would also like to say there is an entire worldly culture out there that I do not, am not interested in, and I don't believe has the blessing of God in it.

And so, therefore, it seems to me what we need to do is take the godly principles that are applicable, or applicable, I would say, to every other situation and every other activity and church life that we now practice, and make that applicable to the weddings we have. In many, many places, listen to me, the church policy standards and ways of doing things take a vacation at the weddings. It's like there's no authority present, the bride and maybe the groom a little bit are in charge and have planned the whole thing from beginning to end, and everybody else just submits to it, and there is really no spiritual authority on top of it.

And in charge with it. And so, if we have weak parents yet, in that condition that just let the children kind of do whatever they want, and there are those kind, then all at once the church is coming up with many questions at the end of the wedding and say, how did that one happen? Also, I'm reminded of, in one of our churches, a young lady got married to a boy from outside, from another congregation, and the minister came along and his friends and family and the young minister there was groaning a bit at some of the things that looked like they were taking place, and he discussed it with the minister from the other church, because obviously it was two cultures coming together here in order to plan this wedding, and the minister said, we have surprises like this at every wedding. We have no idea what's coming when we walk in for a wedding on a Saturday morning, and so we're used to that.

Well, I would like to say we don't want to get used to that. May God help us to that. So anyway, I think we need to, and I'm not going to take the time to lay out all the principles in detail again that I believe are applicable from the New Testament principles of life and godliness, but I'm going to tell you up front that you should assume that even though we're going to do some borrowing of culture here and culture there and practice here and there through the Christian church, maybe through the ages, I am going to believe that they must coincide with the clear principles of the word of God and that we don't take a vacation from those principles in order to have a wedding and pattern it after the world.

Colossians chapter 3 verse 17 is a verse that I would like to begin with. Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him. So there we have one of those clear principles that not only should our weddings be godly, but all the things that we do or say, they need to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him.

I think another scripture says, Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord. And then in 2 Corinthians 1.12, maybe that is that scripture, there it says, For rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, for by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world and more abundantly to you were. I would like to lift that up as an overruling principle for godly weddings that we would have them, that the testimony of our conscience would be that we would have them and experience these weddings in simplicity and godly sincerity.

It is not a time to have the froth and frivolity and foolishness of this world and bring that into the Christian wedding, but rather in simplicity and godly sincerity. Then he says, not with fleshly wisdom. And I would emphasize that likewise for godly weddings, not to have them in the flesh or in fleshly wisdom, but allow

them to be guided by men and women of maturity and have them in godly sincerity and simplicity.

Now, there are very few direct commands in the word of God. But first of all, I would like to suggest to you, and again, I'm not here to make a lot of laws, although there are a few things that I would like to emphasize rather strongly, hoping that we will not come into an embarrassing situation where you will be embarrassed if you maybe attempt something like that. So, I would like to make that clear where we stand, I believe, collectively as a ministry and as church brothers, I believe, and hopefully that enough of those things can be clarified here that we have no stress, no strain, no embarrassing moments that we enter into with a wedding.

All right, the first thing is the whole group should come together to worship. Now, my suggestion would be that the worship service should be a worship service. Especially the ceremonial part or the part up here, we'd say, rather than the reception part, should be a worship service.

And again, it doesn't seem right that that is planned by the bride and groom alone. Because there should be a church service there, more of a church service, and should be a little bit more of a normal service where we expect the normal things of worship to take place, which would be a time of singing, a time of praise. I believe that weddings should be an exciting time, and we should gather together with great enthusiasm and great joy.

It should not be a funeral. It should not be coming in here with long faces, you know, and acting like, well, this is all something we have to go through in order to have a wedding. I think the whole atmosphere should be charged with joy and approval and blessing.

And I think at the wedding day we should be saying, okay, we've had a chance for opposition to this if we ever wanted one, but from today on we're going to make this thing go to the best we know how. And simply shower it with love and blessing and admonition and encouragement in order to make the best and most glorious experience of it possible. But anyway, back to the worship service.

Somehow it seems to me it is in the couple's mind that they should be planning the worship service. And I don't think that should be the case. I think the normal singing and preaching of the Word of God and those kind of things should be more, let's say it this way, going back, maybe I'm a little bit ahead of myself, but after the couple's engaged and begins to project the date, then one of the things they will want to do is to find out whether it suits to have the building and whether it suits the minister that they want to perform the ceremony and to preach the message.

So there is usually at least a phone call made to the minister anyhow. But I think very shortly as the plans begin, they should sit down with the minister, ask him personally whether he would officiate, and there be a dialogue and an exchange on what the wedding, basic wedding procedures are going to be. And what you have in mind, what you have in mind, what we have in mind, and bring that to a unified blend as to what makes a good worship service.

I find many times that young couples have enough of worries and enough of concerns, enough of adjustments to work through that they shouldn't have to get involved in planning every part of the worship service and have everything so written down, so documented as to exactly what should happen. Because it is a worship service, and I think we ought to make sure that it remains that. I know that we're from many different backgrounds.

We're used to a lot of different cultural persuasions and so on, but I believe it's very possible, I've experienced that in the past 25 years, very possible to come together, reach an agreement on what constitutes godliness and simplicity and sincerity so that everyone can be excited and be blessed and enjoy it and have no embarrassment. And I would like to say this, I've been able to watch. I knew that our weddings were a bit different than where I came from and where some of you have come from.

I think we can say that on both sides of the spectrum, whether you come from the Protestant evangelical world or whether you come from the Amish Mennonite or Hutterite world, that our weddings have been different. But yet what has blessed me, if it is truly anointed by God and it is a true godly, joyful service, you can bring all of those people together and they, for the most part, go home blessed and encouraged and said, you know, I've never seen such a practical wedding or heard such a practical message or seen such a joyous group of people together. Those kind of weddings have been many in our past and I'm very jealous that they should continue and we don't drift into something like the world is offering on this.

The other encouragement I would have to start with, in order to have a godly wedding, yes, you plan it and sit down with your authorities, but then in order to have a godly wedding, you must have godly people here. If your unconverted family is large, then I would recommend you have a larger wedding because if half the people or more of the congregation are not converted and you are going to incorporate ushers that are not converted and people in the bridal party that are not converted because you want to use them, you know, their relatives and all that, you will bring an atmosphere that is not going to be a godly one. Many times because, you know, our countenance does show who we are and I just don't think it fits right that we have a church wedding and we have all those other people that are not Christians having part in the wedding and filling up our benches.

So if you want to invite them and want to preach to them and have them all invited, that's fine, but then invite so many more other church people so that you can overcome the spirit of which they bring. I believe when the world comes into our services, be it a regular church service or a wedding, I think they should sit like this because they are under the presence of God. But you know what happens if you have about 50-60% of them out of the world and the church is just kind of sparsely maintained and the Christian is sitting there like this and they are doing all kinds of frivolities and things that we don't feel good about and I don't think they should take over.

And so therefore I say you invite enough people that you can have a godly Christian wedding and to do that you are going to have to have Christians here to do it. Now may I just finish that on the other hand since I already mentioned it. I'm not sure what to say about ushering, but at least I would say the bridal party, and I'm big on this, I believe the family of God is a closer family than the earthly family.

And that to me should be universal in the Christian church. The Christian family should be the closest to you, not your earthly family if they are not Christians. And so it would be my encouragement not to use unconverted rebellious youth in your bridal party.

Or even I would probably say in any other key area of service or involvement that day. They are welcome to sit there and hear the word of God preached. They are welcome to sit there and have the overflowings of a godly wedding.

But to bring them in when they have long hair or have trouble with modesty or just because they are related and they look like a rebel standing up front there facing the congregation at a bridal party, I think it's out of order. That would be a personal conviction of mine and I would encourage you to deeply

consider it before you too strongly consider it should be otherwise. You say, well, I want them to feel love.

I want them to feel accepted. Well, they can feel love and they can feel acceptance for coming and being treated kindly and all that. But as far as being a part of the real program, I think there is where we should draw a line and make a difference.

Now, we have come together, as I mentioned here, to worship the Lord and to celebrate the vows of a lifelong marriage commitment. A lifelong marriage commitment. That also means, dearly beloved, that it is a note of sobriety, especially in the first half of the service.

We are going to see a couple be put together for life and can only be relieved of each other in death. A new home is established. And therefore, I believe that there should be an air of sobriety on that part.

I do not believe that that should be a frivolous and light service. I believe it can be just very joyful and we can be smiling from the pulpit and be blessing the couple and the couple can smile as we talk about married life and all of those things. But at the same time, there is that awesomeness of when they get married, that this is for life and God shows up by His Spirit in those kind of meetings and tears come to our eyes as we hear the vows.

And you know, have you ever noticed that and watched that, how every ear is tuned to hear the vows? There is something very electric, something very exciting about hearing a beautiful young couple commit themselves to each other before God and man and make those vows. So that is what is happening and there should be a real note of sobriety surrounding that part of the service. I think the reception can be a little lighter often.

So, there are many principles in the Bible that are applicable. God's standard is not going on vacation. All the normal principles of the Word of God still apply in a wedding.

Many churches do not do it that way. They seem to have a separate standard completely for their weddings than they would from their normal Sunday services. Attendance.

Let me just talk about the attendance a little bit also. Something that seems to me is creeping in more from the world. You know, normally, according to the laws of the land of the state of Pennsylvania and I would say in most states of the Union, I understand, the witnesses, only two witnesses are needed in order to marry a couple.

It is usually considered one couple is all that is needed as witnesses. And that has been the standard for probably a couple of hundred years. It has become somewhat of a law thing or a cultural thing in our country.

But what is happening here is that in the world especially, and I am not sure if the church is worse in the world almost or almost as bad, is that they have tried to make the bridal party a real show. Kind of a fashion show and kind of a... where they pick specific friends of theirs, you know, and this thing is going to two couples and to three and then to four, and today we see five up there. And the thing has just taken on an extreme note that I wonder where this thing is going to stop and where it is going to quit.

Personally, I would say a few couples is ideal there. Two couples preferably is the norm through the years that I understand the culture here in Lancaster County and not the four, three couples, four couples, five couples and so on, all going to great expense in order to wear new clothing or borrowed clothing, but often

it is new clothing and so on. It just seems like that that is probably a dimension that is more borrowed from the world.

It should be God honoring, not bride honoring. In a typical worldly church, the bride seems to be honored by the entire wedding as the main focus of the wedding. That is not how a Christian or Godly wedding should be.

Godly wedding should be God honoring. And we should come together as a church, like I said, to worship the Lord and to very seriously marry this couple together, see them unite their hearts and hands together in holy matrimony. Though you can bless the couple and you can talk about them and you can preach to them and all of that.

It is a very special day. Maybe I should say a little bit more of that later. But I believe it should be a God honoring day.

And you don't decorate the bride to the hilt and then, you know, make her a showpiece and the whole focus of the wedding is on the bride. And as far as that leader, that she's supposed to marry, he just kind of follows her along, you know, around through the wedding. That's how many evangelical and worldly weddings are.

And I don't think they should be that way. I think we should honor the couple together, lift them up in an honorable way, but not forget we are here to worship the Lord Jesus Christ and honor Him, not just honor a bride or honor the couple. I hope I don't forget to come back to that other subject later on.

Just slipped my mind what I was going to say about that. And it makes such a difference. I think one of the things that changes the atmosphere so much in a couple when they have a godly wedding is if they have been under authority, if they are totally at rest with their authorities and they have no ambitions or desires that are outside of the norm, that somehow brings the blessing upon the couple in a very great way.

Now, the other thing is there ought to be uplifting praise and worship singing and hymns as a part of the service. We have the slipping, I would say, into the whole idea of just special singing and I am not against special singing. We have had some of the most beautiful songs and hymns being sung by special singers in the back there.

We are not against that. We have been moved to tears many times because they have been songs that are uplifting and are sung well and you just sit there and that sound comes forward to us through the benches here or through the chairs and we are greatly blessed and enhanced in the atmosphere of godliness by those songs that are picked. But if they are light songs or, worse yet, love songs or, worse yet, lovely songs which have been sung by the opera house of New York City, is where they originated, like Here Comes the Bride, that's where that one comes from, I think, and other similar ones like that, then that pulls down the service into more of a frivolous and worldly atmosphere rather than in godliness.

You cannot have a godly wedding in a godly atmosphere if you are going to bring the world into the wedding. It would take away from it. And so my encouragement very much there again is to have, if you are going to have special singing, don't have just that but have special singing and congregational singing because it is also good to bring the entire congregation into the spirit of worship in the service.

Remember, it is a worship service. We are not here just to have these special music effects that the bride has always desired or the bridegroom always wanted at his wedding and made plans for for many years

and are a bit questionable, if not completely on the edge or outside of the edge. We have in weddings today pre-recorded music.

If your wedding is very small and you do not have those gifted in singing, I would say some of that would be a rare possibility. I would have the flexibility for that but not contemporary Christian music played to the modern instruments of the day. I believe that is out of order and should not be a part of a Christian and godly wedding.

If you have a situation and you can't find singers, then I would say go to all congregational singing rather than to go to pre-recorded contemporary music. But I would especially like to say, somehow I cannot understand why the good god-honoring worshipful songs, some of you couples have used the song, The Master Has Come and various other songs like that are so enjoyable, so uplifting, so clear in their notes and their music and are such a blessing. Why you would stoop to the worldly songs, the love songs for the worship service? Personally, I do not find that.

That is usually a grief to me, especially some of them that are just brought out of Nashville or somewhere else perhaps or came out of there and do not belong in the Christian church. Hallel music is another negative I would feel and simply because Hallel has changed to more and more contemporary over the years and we find a lot of Hallel singing going on at weddings that I find unacceptable. The accent is on the end of the music phrase.

It is syncopated music many times and not acceptable for a worship service. I don't appreciate a worship service with that kind of music and neither would I a wedding. And I think there should be no difference made in general for the type of music that we go to.

The preaching of a message. I believe there should be a clear message preached. Now I would still favor the opening.

In fact, I would have to say, I will be up front with you right now, I believe that our wedding should start in the morning. I enjoy the 10 o'clock wedding, the 9.30 to 10 o'clock or something like that. Where there is enough time to do what you need to do without running everybody into 8, 9 o'clock at night in the clean up.

But I would like to stretch the wedding out a lot more than what I see. The church shrinking it down. There used to be an opening message on salvation, a main message on the practical side of marriage and all that.

Well, then that gets too long, you know. We're all so in a hurry, you know. And I don't know where the hurry is.

But anyway, we bring it down to only one message. And then finally we say, not longer than 40 minutes, you know. And we trim that thing down to a half an hour.

And that's the way the world has gone. You know, and the evangelical has gone there down to about a 15 minute. And they only stay in.

They don't even sit down and relax in a good message when they've been under so much stress to prepare and all that. I just don't think that is right. Come in, sit down and relax.

And if you have unconverted people here, which often we do by relatives, then let at least a 15 minute gospel message be preached in an opening. And then let another brother get up and preach the actual wedding message in a practical way with practical admonition and encouragement for that part of it. And if you start at 10 o'clock in the morning, you have plenty of time for that.

If you want one in the afternoon at 3 or 2 or 1 o'clock, then yes, I'm sure you're going to get squeezed a little bit. But I would say I'm one that's great for fellowship and interaction. I'll tell you one of the reasons that I don't like the short wedding.

Often I find it here and other places. Likewise, visitors come from Ohio and New York and other states, you know. And if I'm not really on the ball, I only get to meet about 10% of them, you know, or 15.

And even then I have to get out of my chair while the rest of people are sitting down and still meet about a half a dozen of them and talk to them. Because at the end of the reception, I mean, everybody wants to clean up and get you out of there and fold the tables. And the fellowship is just over.

And a half an hour after that, most of the people are out of there except for the workers. I don't think that's the way it ought to be. I think there ought to be a special day and all that work is going through.

For the festivities of a wedding and guests coming in from a thousand or hundreds of miles away, I think there ought to be an opportunity to sit down like we did here this afternoon at one table for a while and you get fellowship with them, and then you move to another table and you fellowship with them. I'd love to see a couple hours of that at the end of the reception personally. If a few people have to leave, that's fine.

But I think we've had, you know, what happens is you're ushered from here right into the reception, you know, and you get your seat. The food is served, you know, and the program is given. And some have no program whatsoever at the reception, and then everything is dismissed and the people are out the door, and you don't even get to meet many people except the few that were on the other side of the table.

Consider that. I know it's hard to change tradition, but if I would have, if I'd be able to, I'd change that one and get more visiting and more fellowship. But may I again emphasize a clear preaching of the truth.

Preach against divorce and remarriage. Preach on the permanency of marriage. Preach against fornication and adultery.

Preach against sin and worldliness. Preach on the Christian home, godly children, bringing up godly children. Those subjects are compatible with weddings.

I said this before and I'll say it again. There was a wedding just a month or so, my sister-in-law got married before my wife and I did, and there were some businessmen there. And he said, there was messages like that.

That was the tradition in those days. We had those kind of messages, always an opening. In my wedding, we even had a stranger from Canada showed up the night before, and the preacher called me and wondered if he could have a little time in the middle.

He hadn't had the third little speech up front, and we said he could and all that. But there was a businessman in the crowd, and he said, how much education does that fellow have? That was up there preaching. And they said, oh, about eighth grade.

I know the fellow was from Holmes County, Ohio, who had the message. He said, I have never heard a message like that. And I remember it was a practical sin that he preached against that he never heard anymore.

That had him in awe there. So anyway, I believe purity should be upheld. Virginity, purity, hands-off courtship, blessing the couple for their stance in that, and making a mention of it is good.

And just uphold the true principles of God that the non-Christian can see what he's missed and what he hasn't had all these years. Vows. Let's talk about vows a little bit.

I just have a little practical one to give there. I noticed that some of the vows are quite lengthy, and I truly believe that a lot of them are not true. They're not true.

I don't think you want to lie on your wedding vows, but you are lying. Some of you. You hear statements there that I will always put your interests ahead of mine.

That's not real. If you're lying in bed with 104 fever, and you can hardly move until it hurts, you're not going to put your husband's interests ahead of yours. You're simply trying to stay alive, and you want him to serve you in every way and try and make you comfortable and help get your fever down.

There's just a lot of things like that that you don't think when you make a statement that I will always put your interests ahead of mine, or I will always do this or that. You know, let's come down to reality. Let's come down to a practical truth here.

And so, don't stretch them out. Oh, they sound great. But when you get down the other side and you face the kind of sicknesses that we face at times and trouble in the flesh, the same thing with childbirth, you know that that's the time for your husband to serve.

You're not going to serve him in the midst of those things. God has you in a place where you're bringing a soul into the world. Don't try to imagine that it's something very different than that.

All right. So I would like to... But anyway, keep your vows short. I think it is very important to mention the fact that you will stay together for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer.

I don't care how you word that. But word it in such a way that you will stick with this man, you will stick with this woman, whether you prosper in business or whether you have a financial collapse, whether you happen to have a disease that you're diagnosed with in a couple of years and you have to be in a wheelchair or sick or what have you, you think of those things enough that you say, My love for this individual is of such that I will commit my life to caring for the other one rather than all the honey stuff that is a bit fluffy. Be honest and realistic.

It's a sober time. And God does something from heaven when the vows are given. I thank God for that.

I believe that's the way it should be. That we recognize that something supernatural is taking place on that day and that should bring a real sobriety and yet a real joy and excitement in the wedding. All right, a little bit about dress.

That's a difficult one that I hardly know what to say except I would like to just give you a few principles likewise. Don't make a dress that cannot be worn in other occasions. Use material that is compatible.

I don't care if it's new. I don't care if it's nice. But I think it ought to be worn in other occasions.

It's not right that you make all these clothing. I just heard about some of these young girls that have been in the bridal party for so many of their friends and how many dresses they have in their closets that came about just because of going to weddings. And it gets a little expensive for dad to continue to do that.

And I say, okay, if you want to wear, want your bridesmaids and attendants maybe to wear new clothing or a certain color, but let it be of a color, of a material, and made in a way that it can be worn for any Sunday morning service and including the wedding dress. Let it be made in such a way that it can be worn for couples' nights, anniversaries, special times, special dates or whatever and something of that nature to bring the memories back of the wedding day and not something that is tucked away for life and never can be worn again. And, of course, there's so much to be said about many other parts.

The veil. I believe the normal prayer veil or the covering that you're wearing now, once again, it can be new, it can be special, but that's all that's needed. I do not believe we should go to the worldly bridal veil, which is so transparent that it's almost worthless anyhow.

Just a symbol, I would say, that has come from the world. I believe the prayer covering is sufficient for the veil that is worn at a wedding. Let me, again, stress modesty and here where, again, I would like to say that that is the standard that has fallen so out of order in many of the Christian churches, but everything should be of modest apparel according to the Word of God.

In 1 Peter 3, let us remember that these principles are true for weddings. Likewise, they are for all of life. In 1 Peter 3, 3, whose adorning, let it not be the outward adorning of the plaiting of the hair, of the wearing of gold, or the putting on of a pearl, but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, like Sister Anna Joy gave testimony there this morning of the change that came about. She lost her independence, and on her wedding day when she sat up there in Bedford at that wedding, I remember the day, I believe that something was really changed in her life while she was in Haiti. I remember well how she was able to climb those hills like a man and nurture all the sick people there in the mountains of Haiti, but now came the day to put on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, and God says that is of great price.

I don't remember to this day what her dress was like, but I do remember the change in the Anna Joy Coffman that I had known of the past years, and I believe as a single girl she had the right to be more aggressive there and go out there and minister to the people, but when it came time to be a wife, you put on that ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, and that is beautiful. That is the beauty that so enhances the wedding, that so inspires it, that brings such an anointing of it. But you know that girl will do him good and not evil all the rest of his days, you know, when girls prepare themselves in that way rather than to try to hang it on the outside and impress people by jewelry or by fancy clothing.

But one of the big things that is such a grief is the modesty issue in our day. You know, there are so many weddings that are hardly fit to attend in the church, in the church, all the spaghetti clothing, or now even the totally bare shoulder, you know, without proper covering, or spaghetti strap clothing is what I mean, by the bridesmaids and so on. I believe that is totally out of order.

To come to a wedding and expect to see a couple being joined together in holy matrimony and you don't know what to do with your eyes, you're constantly distracted by flesh and by the display of immodesty, that is so far out of order. You know, I don't know what you people do with all that, but as far as we're concerned, it matters to us whether we go or not. And I recommend the same for you.

You make your choices to whether you go, and don't again let relationships, earthly relationships rule you, but make your decisions. Not extravagant or competitive. We find there again for the wedding dress or, well, it has to have buttons a half an inch apart the whole way down the back.

I've always dreamt that that's the way I want it, you know. You have those kind of things that surface at a time like that, or just something else. Oh, that's too mundane.

Others have done that. I want something different. And so patterns are changed and stretched.

And again, surprises are given, because often the wedding dress is not seen by the public or very much of the church. And I would to God that we as elders never have to ask to see it, but I believe there are times when it would be better off that we would and give some guidance on it, just perhaps due to the weakness in that family or the parents not having the judgment or discernment on it. Photography.

Let me say a little bit about photography. Another extremely drifting situation in our time, in our culture, in the churches in general. You know, it has gone from 40 years ago in the churches that I was married in for a few pictures to be taken, and most of them were outside the church house up against with some bushes or something like that in a nice place in the sunshine.

Some pictures were taken at a specific place, but never a flash in the church, and no photographer, guy reading all over the place, front to back, side and every which way, taking pictures during the service. That was considered a full distraction to a godly service and was not allowed. Well, here we are, and we've come the whole way where one isn't enough.

We have to have two, and you talk about a few pictures being taken. We are now taking hundreds and building huge volumes. How can you justify the whole matter of pride and the showiness of that as you then show it off to everybody? You show yourself off as a couple to everybody who comes to visit you.

Think about those things, but I would like to say it would be my desire to take pictures very discreetly without flash during the service by one person. That would be my desire to see it go that direction, and the reception likewise, and then a time being made at the end of the reception in front of the fireplace here or somewhere like that outside, and then let everyone take their picture if they care to. But for the photographer and 35, 40 others to be constantly flashing throughout the reception and even in the church just standing up in the bench and taking pictures, I believe is out of order for a godly wedding and a godly worship service.

And the one who does it, I think, should keep himself or herself very obscure, very discreet, and like I say, using time exposure, not flash. All right. Many, many more things that I'm sure I've missed or could have been spoken on, but I'd like to speak a little bit about the reception.

Like I mentioned before, I believe the reception is a time of festivity. It is a time of feasting. I believe God does allow a feast to be held by the church.

I think it's okay to have a full course meal. I don't think that's extravagant. I think that can be normal.

But I would also say if the budget does not allow it, then it's fine to have lesser, a lesser meal. However, I, of course, traditionally I would say to have just a few crackers and some pretzels or cheese or what have you, it doesn't seem to me like a time of great, joyful festivity together as a group. I would encourage something more than that.

But the main part, it could be visitation and fellowship, a time of sharing poems and songs and spiritual contribution being made to the couple, giving encouragement to their life, giving them practical accounts and stories of how they can improve or how they can build their marriage. Also, I think it's a good time to bless a couple for their past faithfulness. I have seen very touching receptions recently.

In the last year, I believe it was, that individuals got up and complimented the service or the, yes, the service of a sister or of a brother, the unselfishness, the going into other homes and ministering to other moms. Some of those compliments were given throughout the reception at the microphone. Very touching, very blessed.

I don't believe it's a time for a lot of foolishness and frivolity, but rather I have shed many tears at receptions because of the sincerity and the beauty and the blessing and the joy. It was a, it was a sincerity and an honor given to the couple and yet many smiles and even we were able to laugh about a few things that were mentioned and things that happened. But it's not a time to save the worst embarrassing moment in the couple's life to expose at their wedding day.

I find a lot of people say, I'm going to save that for your wedding day and I'm going to get up and tell everybody what you did and how you stumbled and made a big mistake that day and we just try to embarrass you and make you blush and get red-faced over the whole thing. I think that's out of order. It's out of order.

And I see it happen so many, so many places these days. It's a time for good clean humor, I believe. I don't think it has to be overly sober.

I think the messages should be practical and very short at a reception. Just words of encouragement, words of blessing, words of honor, words of advice and so on. I think poetry is very, very good at receptions too.

Quote or write special poems for the couple. Very, very edifying and you just come away just feeling so warm and overwhelmed and blessed when you come away from a wedding like that. And I've seen it over and over again.

Family sharing, also a good thing for the whole families to get up with all their children, the older children speak a few words of blessing to a sister or brother that's getting married and then they sing a song, give a poem or something of that nature. And just a few other closing things that I would like to give and then I'll open it up perhaps for some of the things I've missed. I would say never allow any pranks to be pulled.

It is my conviction and has been for many years that the young man should be able to park his car outside the building here and nobody would ever think of touching it. That's the way I think godly weddings should be. And I'd like to give you this warning.

Don't ever tempt us to catch you doing those things. You may not be so happy with the outcome of that. But I just believe it is so out of order to try to do things to the car to make it mean or miserable for the couple as they start their wedded life and to just torment them and try to get in their suitcase and play

jokes on them and put shaving cream on the car and balloons and tin cans and what have you.

I think that is all totally of the world and out of order for a godly wedding. May that never be the case here. Car decorations, same way.

Wedding trips, I believe it is recommendable in a godly wedding there has been a lot of stress and a lot of pressure. That especially the early days of a wedding trip should be that to find a quiet place and just be able to unwind, get to know each other in a deeper way than you have before and not be pressed again for a high expectation long trips or things like that. Rather find yourself a quiet place, a cabin in the woods or a private apartment or maybe even your own home.

I think those things are in godly order. And again, the influence of the world is so great there. We hear of Caribbean cruises, Hawaii flights to Hawaii, modern beaches full of nakedness and ungodliness.

I don't believe that is compatible with the godly wedding, with the Christian church. Those things and the money that is spent, I would think in five years you would find a hundred ways to spend that money to a better cause than for a fleeting honeymoon trip to an exotic place in the world and enjoy that for like I say a fleeting few days and the money is going once and forever. Amen.

Alright, at this time I would just like to open it up. Perhaps there are some questions. I did have one that was given to me that I'll just give it this time.

Why does it seem like more and more young people marry later in life, like 25 to 30 instead of the younger 20 to 25? Is it because of the worldly influence that the world has concerning freedom, enjoying your freedom, the only single wants? I'm not sure what all the reasons are there. Or is it, he writes here, because of doing mission work or is it because young men love their single life too much? And that's a right question. Brother Rick and I just discussed that some time ago maybe with Brother David.

It would still be my encouragement and likewise we felt united in that, that we encourage marriage where possible in the younger years, 20 to 25 or 21 I should say, 22 to 25. Reason being, I believe you are more flexible when you're young than you are when you're 30, 32, 33, 35 years of age. And we find that there's just the compatibility and the working out.

We are just more flexible. When you pass from father's authority right into husband's authority, that all seems to take place much smoother in the younger years. However, I must also say some of you young people can't help it if nobody comes around till you are 25 or 30.

And so that's not your fault. I'm sure that many of you would probably, would have decided to take place at a younger time, but the right one didn't come until later and that's understandable. But I would just like to comment.

I think the ideal times of full bodily maturity is all in place usually and mental, spiritual maturity should be in place. Sometimes due to conversion being so late, 19, 20, 21, they are not ready for marriage for a number of years for those reasons. We've run into that a lot in Manitoba.

Not having a clear conversion until 19, 20, 21 years of life. You know, of age and then the whole Christian maturity was out ahead of them that they had to take time to learn many things and understand what a Christian home is all about when they didn't come from one and that took some years. So that's some of the reasons I believe that the age was later in some of our churches.

Maybe there are other thoughts that someone would have there. But I would favor the younger there rather than the later years. The other reason is because of the childbearing years ending usually in the early 40s.

I do believe that it's normal and good if a woman has more than 10 years of childbearing years. All right, other questions someone might have on Christian maturity. What did I miss? I'm sure that you can find some things.

Or what do you need to add? All right, Brother Dean over here. It was 14 years ago this year that you had this message on the godly wedding. And it was a memorable time for my wife and I because we were courting at that time and didn't know.

I mean, I didn't have much of a frame of reference as to what to do after we were married other than every one that I had known and seen sort of. It was just you travel to the West Coast or just spend a lot of money type thing for a couple weeks there. And I didn't have a vision for doing that, but I didn't have a vision for what I was supposed to do.

So when you had that message and you expounded a little more there on the honeymoon time and getting a cabin and spending some time in a cabin, we just look back on that now 14 years later with very fond memories and are so thankful for that message because that is what put the vision in our hearts for just being away at a cabin for a week or so. And my wife has said to me many times she'd like to live that week over again. Rather than the rat race of traveling and seeing things and whatever people do on their honeymoon, it's a wonderful time to get to know each other, build a right foundation to just go and be alone.

You don't have to be seeing the world and being involved in all kinds of exotic trips during your honeymoon. Yeah, we had spent some time in northern Pennsylvania in ours and we had no idea how much tension was built up and all the hustle and bustle of getting ready for the wedding and getting ready to leave home and pack everything. And we were heading for Ohio.

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