

A Marriage Ceremony Guideline

There are several different ways that the Scriptures approach the issue of marriage ceremonies, the official pronouncement of the joining together of a man and a woman to be husband and wife. Most corporate denominations have their guidelines codified in print, and there are on-line suggestions for such events.

In some cases there were no ceremonies whatsoever to consummate a marriage, such when our first parents — Adam and Eve — were married shortly after the creation (Genesis 2:21-25). The two were joined as husband and wife without any indication of a formal ceremony, for there was no one else around to witness the occasion, only the Creator who had made them both. Also, after Abraham's servant had procured Rebekah from Bethuel in Mesopotamia and brought her to Isaac in Canaan, "Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (Genesis 25:67). There was no ceremony, just a coming together of the two.

Through the centuries various customs have grown up surrounding marriage. For instance, in Norway a tradition states that the bride wears a gold crown that has small bells that will deflect evil spirits when she walks. In the Congo, couples must keep their happiness day. The two are not allowed to be laughing or joking during the ceremony. In the Philippines, after the ceremony, the bride and groom release a pair of white doves — one male, one female — into the air. The birds are said to represent a harmonious life together for the newly married couple. In America it is common to lighting a rope around the couple's



who wears an ornate silver and gold crown that has small bells that will deflect evil spirits when she walks. In the Congo, couples must keep their happiness day for the entire wedding. In the Philippines, after the ceremony, the bride and groom release a pair of white doves — one male, one female — into the air. The birds are said to represent a harmonious life together for most every country has its customs over the years. In modern America it is common to lighting a rope around the couple's hands during the ceremony. In most Western countries it is expected that a minister, priest, or pastor be enlisted to perform the wedding, thus giving the couple a government-recognized certification of marriage. Each state has its own laws regarding who has the authority to perform marriage. In legal terms, this act is referred to as "Solemnization of Marriage."

In most Western countries a priest, or pastor be enlisted to perform the wedding, thus giving the couple a government-recognized certification of marriage. In the United States, each state has its own laws regarding who has the authority to perform marriage. In legal terms, this act is referred to as

Although the wording and specifics of the laws vary from state to state, in all states "ordained ministers" have the authority to solemnize marriage. In other words, being an ordained minister gives you the authority to act as a wedding officiant in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, Washington DC, and US Territories. Beyond being an ordained minister, some states require ministers to register with a government office prior to performing marriage. The state marriage laws indicate if minister registration is required in that state.

In Texas, for instance, the Texas Family Code states the following: (a) The following persons are authorized to conduct a marriage ceremony: (1) a licensed or ordained Christian minister or priest; (2) a Jewish rabbi; (3) a person who is an officer of a religious organization and who is authorized by the organization to conduct a marriage ceremony; and (4) a current, former, or retired federal judge or state judge. (b) For the purposes of Subsection (a)(4), "federal judge" and "state judge" have the meanings assigned by Section 25.025, Tax Code (b-1) Repealed. (c) Except as provided by Subsection (d), a person commits an offense if the person knowingly conducts a marriage ceremony without authorization under this section. An offense under this subsection is a Class A misdemeanor. (d) A person commits an offense if the person knowingly conducts a marriage ceremony of a minor whose marriage is prohibited by law or of a person who by marrying commits an offense under Section 25.01, Penal Code. An offense under this subsection is a felony of

the third degree.

The emphasis of these various state laws is to have someone who is “approved” by some government agency perform the ceremony. This is usually a person who has been “credentialed” by an approved, government registered religious organization, such as a minister of a Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, or Church of Christ denomination, or a Catholic priest or Muslim Imam. These rules telling who may officiate at weddings are the rules of men, not of God, and refer to adherence to the agencies established through governments of men.

God’s people, however, are on a different course. There is no restriction in Scripture for anyone who has God’s spirit, in particular an elder (older person), to conduct a wedding. The key is for the couple to be old enough, have their families’ approval and backing, be mature enough in character to know what responsibilities are involved in being husband and wife, and be able to support the two of them and children that might be born to them. The person performing the wedding needs to know the couple adequately to judge if they are indeed ready to commit to a lifelong journey together. If they are not, then he is negligent of the truth and responsible to the Creator for encouraging their union.

I have put together a sample marriage ceremony that can be used by anyone of God’s people to join a husband and wife. It can be modified as the couple to be wedded desires, but there are elements of commitment that are in it which every couple needs to fully understand. They are:

1. Marriage is a lifetime commitment, “until death do they part,” through sickness or health, poverty or riches, good times or bad.
2. They must strive to love each other as the Eternal God shows in His word.
3. The husband has the responsibility to support the wife.
4. They both must live in service to the Creator.

With that introduction, here is a sample marriage ceremony.

A Sample Wedding Ceremony

Introduction

“We are gathered here together today to mark a most important event in the lives of _____ and _____. Next to a commitment to God at baptism, this is the most significant event in a person’s entire life. Marriage is extremely important in the life of any person. It is a divine institution from Almighty God, and our great God does not spare any words in telling us so. Let’s notice what He says regarding marriage in His word, which starts at the very beginning of mankind’s sojourn on earth.”

Scriptural readings

Genesis 2:20-24. “So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of this ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

Ephesians 5:22-33. “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

Here we read of the instruction for the wife to submit to the husband as her head, and at the same time the husband is to love his wife as his own body, and cherish and nourish her. He must even lay down his life for her like Christ laid down his life for the church, which is His bride — the saints.

This relationship is emphasized in **I Corinthians 11:3**: “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”

I Peter 3:1-7. “Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward — arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel — rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”

The vows

To the man: “Do you, _____, take _____, to be your wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do you part, according to God’s eternal law?”

To the woman: “Do you, _____, take _____, to be your husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do you part, according to God’s eternal law?”

The rings

To _____: “Please repeat after me. I give you this ring — as a sign of our love and commitment to each other. — I promise to support you — care for you — and stand beside you for all of our days.”

To _____: “Please repeat after me. I give you this ring — as a sign of my faithful

devotion. — I will always love you — cherish you — and honor the vows spoken here today.”

The blessing

“Now, will the fathers and mothers of the bride and groom please come forward and lay hands on and bless these two children of our heavenly Father.”

[The two will kneel on a cushion, facing away from the front toward their parents.]

First, the parents of the groom will come forward and lay hands on the two and pray over them

Then, the parents of the bride will do the same.

The pronouncement

“Based on the words and promises of the Eternal Living God who binds your marriage in heaven, I pronounce you husband and wife.”

[They turn to face the audience.]

“I present to you Mr. and Mrs. _____!”