



The Wedding

At the very first wedding, God the Lord led Eve the bride down the aisle and gave her to Adam. The first public miracle of our Lord Jesus Christ was at the wedding in Cana of Galilee.

For the Christian, the Wedding is the formal, public beginning of your married life together. Although there are lots of social and cultural assumptions about what the wedding should have (white dress, hundreds of guests, catered banquet meal), the Holy Scriptures allow the Christian great freedom in terms of the wedding.

As Christians, we want to have the pastor present at the wedding, that he might speak God's Word, offer prayer, and invoke the Lord's blessing. This can take place at the church during a worship service (where all the usual rules apply), but it does not have to be there. God's people can gather for a marriage at home, in the park, on a ship, just about anywhere in God's Creation. Many of the details can be worked out in a spirit of Christian liberty. It can be as big and fancy, or as quiet and small as you like. Remember, the wedding is just the *beginning*, and that helps the Christian keep a proper perspective.

Marriage is good!

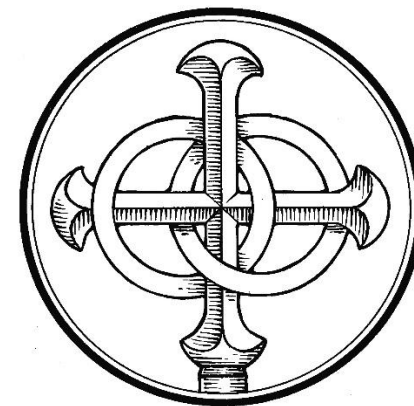
"He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22).

What should I do?

- Boy meets girl. Talk. Spend time together. Do you like each other? Do you love the Lord God? Do you both believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures and that His Word should guide your life together?
- Talk to your folks in keeping with the Lord's commandment, "Honor your father and your mother" (Ephesians 6:2). Ask for their counsel, permission, and blessing.
- Talk to the Pastor. Meet together and study the Bible and review what God says about marriage, what promises God makes, and what blessings He will give to those who fear and love Him.
- Set a date. Make an announcement (engagement). Don't set it too far ahead. Better to marry than to let your passions overwhelm you as St. Paul taught (1 Corinthians 7:9). Remember, the wedding is only the beginning—don't let the money or the planning or stress overwhelm God's word and blessing.
- Because of God's command for us to honor the civil magistrates, the marriage requires a certificate. This paper does not make a marriage (the public promises and the consummation do).
- Finally, live happily ever after. True happiness is not measured in how you *feel*, but rather, your certainty as a child of God knowing that you are living in accord with God's Word and He has promised to bless you richly! *Thanks be to God!*

MARRIAGE

What does God say?



The Bible begins with a marriage, and it ends with a marriage, and through the entire scope of salvation history, God's love for His people is portrayed as a marriage. Marriage matters! It matters to God. Thus, as God's children, we Christians seek to live to please our Heavenly Father. Our Lord Jesus Christ promises, "Blessed are those who hear God's word and keep it" (Luke 11:28). This is also the admonition of Saint James to us, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22). The Lord God is the original designer for marriage, He tells us what it is, He gives promises about it, He places commandments around it to protect it, and His own love for us His children is framed in marital language. Thus, we want to hear from God and live according to His good and gracious will.



Creation

God tells us in the Scriptures how He created the universe and everything in it. As the pinnacle of His Creation, God made mankind—male and female. The history is told in Genesis 1-2. In the very design of our bodies as male or female, the Creator shows us His purposes. As the Lord God says, “It is not good for man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). Man and woman are designed by God to be together in a special way. “For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). The one-fleshness of the man and woman is to take place within the holy estate of marriage. That special togetherness is lived out in bodily intimacy and, Lord willing, in the gift of children. Because of the Lord’s creative design and His word of blessing to Adam and Eve, there is no shame for the Christian in recognizing and rejoicing in God’s purposes in marriage. These are good gifts to be cultivated, confessed, and practiced by God’s children in fear and love for His good will.



Sin

Adam and Eve broke God’s commandment in the garden by eating from the forbidden tree. Adam’s sin then spread to all men, including us today. That sin impacts our entire being, thinking, words and actions, and results, sadly, in our death (Romans 6:23). Sin impacts how we use and think about our bodies and the gift of intimacy. God gives us the commandment, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). He warns us in the Scriptures that any intimacy that takes place outside of marriage is contrary to His good and holy will. He condemns as fornication the intimacy that mimics what He blesses between a husband and wife in marriage. The Lord warns us, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?... neither fornicators, nor adulterers...” (1 Corinthians 6:9). If this is you, the Lord calls you to repentance, to turn away from this sin. The Lord promises that those who live according to His will, including in marriage as husbands and wives, have His favor and blessing. Our sins are covered in the blood of the Lamb, washed away, that we might live as Christians, that is, according to His good will.

What makes a marriage?

All of us have been shaped in our thinking about marriage by many different sources: your home life growing up (parents), marriages portrayed on TV and movies, music, books you’ve read, your friends at school. But the Christian must ask: what does God say? What does the Bible teach?

From the Holy Scriptures we learn that the following things are included in God’s design and purpose for marriage:

- ♦ First, that there is one man and one woman. This is not just the pattern laid out with Adam and Eve at Creation, but the eternal pattern of the divine love of Christ for His bride the Church (Ephesians 5:32).
- ♦ Second, a new household is created. “For this reason, a man shall *leave* his father and mother...” (Genesis 2:24). Now, this does not necessarily mean a change of residence, but rather the recognition that this is a new family, a new household, things have now changed in terms of life, status, and relationships.
- ♦ Third, this is a public institution. Thus, the groom and bride make promises about forsaking all others and being faithful in good times and bad times, and these promises are witnessed by others (it’s the same purpose the rings traditionally serve for).
- ♦ Fourth, the gift of marriage is for receiving and nurturing children as the Lord grants them. The Lord bids us to be “fruitful and multiply,” and receive the children He gives us for our blessing.
- ♦ Fifth, it is a lifelong commitment. “Til death us do part.” St. Paul says that the married woman is only “freed” from her husband by death (Romans 7:2).