



TRINITY BIBLE CHAPEL

Congratulations on your engagement. Marriage is central to human life and the Bible. The Bible is bookended by the wedding of Adam and Eve at the beginning and by the wedding of Christ and His Church at the end. For this reason, I am particularly fond of weddings and always enjoy officiating them. For your wedding, I want to ensure a very memorable and special day, but my greatest concern is that the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted in your ceremony. That is why I am asking you to read this piece before I agree to officiate.

We have been very influenced by social media, so much so that weddings are often coordinated around that perfect picture much more than they are coordinated around the honour of the Lord. The impetus behind many weddings is not what will showcase the Lord Jesus in all His glory, but rather what will showcase the couple, or the bride, or the day, etc. Pop culture has become a major driving force in wedding planning, and it is often at odds with some very basic Christian principles. All things find their centre in Christ, including and especially weddings. In this little piece, I am offering some advice and correction, with the aim to have Jesus Christ as centre of your wedding.

The Minister of the Wedding

When I was first engaged, my pastor congratulated me, and then he immediately advised that I consult with him prior to making any wedding plans. He wanted to ensure that he could officiate the wedding and that it did not conflict with something else on his schedule. I'm thankful he said that, and my bride-to-be and I met with him immediately to plan.

If the wedding is to showcase the Lord Jesus above all else, the priority of any newly engaged couple should be to find a godly minister to oversee and officiate the ceremony. A good pastor will advise on how best to showcase Jesus Christ during the wedding, and a wise couple will seriously consider what he has to say. The pastor's job is to plan the entire service, and ultimately items will be included and excluded from the ceremony at his discretion. Securing a godly minister will ensure a godly service.

For too many couples, the minister is a necessary add-on that they consider little until they find the venue, secure the caterers, and consult with their bridal party. They anticipate potential conflicts in everyone else's schedule just as much that they anticipate that the pastor will not have any conflicts in his schedule. This is disordered. The proper order is to find the minister, and when the minister's schedule is confirmed, perhaps with a few potential dates, he can help them plan the ceremony. Without a godly officiant you will not have a Christ exalting service, and, if a Christ exalting service is paramount, then securing the minister is among the first orders of business.

The Place of the Wedding

There are several practicalities to consider when choosing a venue. Historically, weddings are public events. Allowing the public to attend has several purposes. First, the public should witness the

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exchange of the vows, because the success or failure of a couple to uphold their vows has communal implications, for the good or the bad of the entire community. By opening the ceremony to the public, the couple is inviting the public to bear witness and hold them to account for their vows. Second, most couples do not have the funds to invite all their friends and family to a reception, and a public service allows for a couple to issue an open invitation with no extra cost. Not only will the public share in the joy of the ceremony, but they will also share in the experience of a Christ exalting service which can foster their sanctification and even lead to their salvation. In our days of dark debauchery, more people need to witness the wholesomeness of a Christ exalting wedding service.

My recommendation for the venue is always the church itself. While the church building can facility an open invitation to the ceremony, I see a few other reasons it has proved to be the perfect venue. The pastoral staff has complete control over all aspects of the venue, whether the thermostat, the bathrooms, or the A/V quality. We cannot ensure a high level of quality or cleanliness in any other venue. The church staff will likely play a major part in the ceremony, whether the officiant, the musical worship, or the A/V, and when the staff is reliant on someone else's space and equipment it can often prove more difficult or even frustrating. Because the church is so involved, the church building also provides a central, convenient, and familiar location for all involved. The staff offices are on site, and most of the congregants are within quick driving distance of the facility. The staff have full access to the facility and all that is within it at any time of the day, but offsite venues will require having someone else with a key to provide access. If the wedding is seen as an evangelistic opportunity, which it should be, the site itself is a familiar reference point for visitors who can be invited to visit again on a Sunday.

For all these reasons, I highly recommend using the church building as the wedding facility. This might not satisfy the couple whose only concern or whose chief concern is how the wedding will appear on *Instagram*, but my contention continues to be that such a couple likely needs a change in heart because, while Christians do prize beauty, optics are not primary.

In picking a venue, you should consider which venue will best showcase the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this reason, I am opposed to doing outdoor weddings. Perhaps, if we lived in southern California where the weather is typically dry and comfortable, I would reconsider. Alas, we live in southern Ontario, where the summers can be unbearably humid and the winters frigid. The weather has typically become a distraction at outdoor weddings that I have officiated. Instead of paying attention to the mercy of Christ offered in the Gospel or even the overall beauty of the ceremony, attendees become focused on the heat, or the rain, or the cold. For this reason, I am opposed to officiating outdoor weddings, and I do not plan on ever officiating one again. Climate controlled rooms are readily available, and, as Ontarians, we can thank God for that.

The Day of the Wedding

Traditionally weddings have been on Saturdays. In my thinking Saturday is the best day for a wedding. Sundays are out of the question. Our wedding policy prohibits staff from Sunday weddings because they are too disruptive to the calendar of the church.

There are likely some circumstances in which weekday weddings would be beneficial, but those are rare. Out of consideration for the guests, weekday weddings, including Friday weddings, should be far and few between. The bride and groom are already requesting guests to travel, dress up, find childcare, purchase a wedding gift, and rearrange their schedules. Most guests are very happy to do this because

they see the importance of the wedding. Asking them to forgo a day of work, which means forgoing even more money, while trying to balance their children's schooling and childcare in the process, is a step too far. While the day is extraordinary and special, brides and grooms should be very considerate of what they expect of others. Expecting them to do more than necessary strikes me as inconsiderate.

There are reasons a couple would prefer a weekday wedding, and typically it comes down to cost or to the availability of venues. Costs are less for weekday weddings because most couples prefer a Saturday out of consideration for their guests. Venues are more readily available also, for the same reason. Out of love of neighbour, I recommend weekday weddings be avoided. Saturdays work best.

The Attire at the Wedding

One of the reasons weddings are so fun is they are among the rare occasions when people get dressed up. This is especially true for ladies, who enjoy purchasing and wearing new dresses and shoes, etc. Weddings, while appropriately formal, should be appropriately solemn. It is a holy event, designed by God, in which a husband and wife are united under the terms of a sacred covenant.

There is an appropriate way for a bride to be "adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2) on her wedding day. That adorning should complement her femininity like a crown complements a queen's office, but her adornment should not be gaudy or salacious. A bride should be beautiful and modest, and she should not be "dressed as a prostitute" (Proverbs 7:10). While our contemporary society seems unable to define the deference between modest beauty and wanton lewdness, Christians should know better. Traditionally, brides have worn white to symbolize their chasteness and purity. While most contemporary brides have kept the white dress, many have abandoned the traditional classiness of the wedding dress for the attire of a prostitute. I recommend that brides avoid spaghetti straps or strapless dresses, have closed backs, and have covered cleavage. The wedding dress should symbolize purity, and it should be classy. The same should be the case with bridesmaids. The bride and groom have the divine stewardship of ensuring that they set the standard in attire. They should strive for beauty and handsomeness while fleeing suggestiveness and peacockiness.

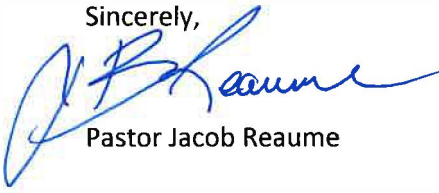
I also recommend that in the wedding invitation you explain to guests what you expect them to wear. Some men do not understand that weddings are formal events, and you can help them demonstrate respect to your families and the ceremony by wearing a tie and nice pair of shoes. Ladies should be instructed to dress in a way that is dignified, as opposed to the undignified way that many display themselves at nightclubs and raves. Jesus assumed that there is an appropriate attire for a wedding (Matthew 22:1-14), and as the couple being married it is wholly acceptable for you to require a dress code in the invitation.

Drunkness and the Reception

Because wedding receptions are celebrations, I am not opposed to wine and beer being served, and, in fact, I am in favour of it. One of the ways we celebrate is by consuming some of God's choicest beverages. What I am opposed to is drunkenness. Drunkenness is a sin and a disgrace, and it is a good way to ruin an otherwise beautiful day. Instead of having your MC at the reception advise against driving drunk, as they often do, have your MC advise the people to enjoy God's gift of wine and beer while staying sober. As the host, you can ask them to honour you and your Lord by not getting drunk.

I look forward to hopefully working with you to plan your wedding and prepare you for God's ordinance of marriage. While I desire for your wedding day to be memorable and enjoyable, my greatest concern is that Christ is central to all that we do. As your officiant and your pastor that will be my objective. So, please consider all I have written with utmost humility before our Saviour. All that we do and all that we have belongs to Him. If people remember your wedding day for anything, may they remember that all its beauty and joy showcased the One Who purchased us by His own blood.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Reaume", written in a cursive style.

Pastor Jacob Reaume