



Wedding Ceremony

Lesson Overview

1. Wedding IQ

Talk about weddings you've been to or watch a New Church wedding online.

2. Read

Discover what the New Church teaches about weddings and wedding celebrations.

3. Activity

Explore your perfect wedding day and decide which of the elements you include will add to married happiness.

New Church Concept Delights of Marriage

All the delights of marriage were provided from the beginning for people who are in true married love, because in the Lord there is an infinity of all blessings. He Himself is Divine Love, and the essence of love is to will to communicate all its goods to another whom it loves. *Conjugal Love* 335.2

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Wedding IQ

1. Have you attended a wedding? If so, what was it like? What was your favorite part of the ceremony or reception?
2. Have you imagined your own wedding? What will it be like?

Optional: If students have not attended a New Church wedding, watch one online. The Bryn Athyn Cathedral archive includes wedding services. Go to <https://boxcast.tv/channel/cwfgymxl2piwxkdz80aj>. Wedding services are 15-20min (without prelude music). Start watching when the couple is standing before the minister.

Wedding Ceremony

A wedding ceremony sets couple on a shared journey of life as husband and wife. It is often among the happiest days of a person's life. The Writings lay out the essential elements of a wedding ceremony. Since weddings are sacred commitments they should be made in the presence of the Lord. This is because:

Marriage is spiritual and holy. It descends from the heavenly marriage of good loves and true ideas. The details of marriage correspond to the Divine marriage of the Lord and the church. And so marriages come from the Lord Himself and depend on the state of the church with the each of the partners. See *Conjugal Love* 308

An officiating minister represents the Lord's presence with the couple. Family and friends (witnesses) help a couple share the joy of their wedding day and support the couple as they begin married life. Witnesses are important during the wedding and signing of the marriage certificate. The certificate is a legal contract that establishes the rights, responsibilities and protections of married partners under civil law. The time and place this certificate is signed varies and depends on local laws.

New Church Wedding Customs

A New Church wedding service begins with a minister opening the Word, which symbolizes inviting the Lord's presence. The couple then walk together towards the altar. After hearing readings from the Word each partner answers questions that express his or her consent to be married and vows or promises to love, honor, comfort, and cherish their partner exclusively. The minister then dedicates the wedding rings, and says—"May these rings be a sign and token of love truly conjugal," or something similar. The bridegroom places a ring on the bride's finger, and the bride places a ring on the bridegroom's finger. These rings can be life-long reminders of the marriage covenant. The couple joins right hands and the minister lays his right hand on their hands and says: "In the name of the Lord

Jesus Christ, I pronounce you husband and wife. What God has joined together, let no one put asunder (separate).” After a kiss, the couple and the wedding guests kneel and say the Lord’s Prayer. The minister then blesses the couple and shares thoughts about marriage and the path ahead. This is called a “charge.” Shortly afterwards the couple returns down the aisle to sound of joyful music and the smiles of family and friends.

Celebration

The Writings say there should be a celebration after a wedding.

The reason is that the love which the bride and bridegroom felt before the wedding descends into their hearts and radiates from there throughout their bodies, so that they begin to feel the delights of being married.... Their minds are filled with festive thoughts and it is useful for the festive feelings of their minds to be shared by others. See *Conjugal Love* 309

The reception or party can help introduce the couple into the joys of married love! For many couples the reception is followed by a honeymoon. And so the marriage of the spirit that takes place during the betrothal period becomes a full marriage of mind and body after the wedding.

Discussion

1. In what ways might the type of wedding ceremony you choose (civil or religious) affect your commitment as a couple?
2. What role do witnesses have at a wedding?
3. In what ways can a legal marriage certificate help protect a marriage? (Think of the implications for children, inheritance, times that may be difficult in a relationship.)
4. In what situations might a person feel a marriage certificate to be limiting or restrictive? Is a sense of feeling restricted a bad thing?
5. How might wearing a wedding ring help a person’s marriage?
6. Why are wedding celebrations or receptions important?

Weddings Are Important

After the period of betrothal...a wedding should take place. Some ceremonies are formalities, and some are essential. Weddings are essential. They should be witnessed and celebrated for the following reasons:

1. A wedding marks the end of the betrothal state, which was mainly a state of the spirit, and the beginning of a new state about to be inaugurated by marriage, which is a state of the spirit and body; for the spirit then descends into the body and expresses itself there. Therefore on that day they put off the state an engaged couple and take on the state of married partners and a couple united in the flesh.
2. A wedding introduces them into the new state, and encourages the woman to become a wife and the man a husband, that the two may become one flesh. These goals are achieved when they are united by love through its ultimate expressions. Marriage actually transforms a maiden into a wife and a youth into a husband and unites a couple into a single human form so that they are no longer two but one flesh....
4. It seems as though weddings...are a formality which may be omitted. But there is in them an essential element, and that is that the new state referred to must then be entered into by covenant, with the consent of the couple declared in the presence of witnesses, and solemnized by a priest, among other things, which serve to firmly establish it. See *Conjugal Love* 306

New Church Concepts Marriage

The principle that marriages once contracted are to continue on to the end of life in the world is based on Divine law...which says that it is not lawful to divorce a wife and marry another excepting on the grounds of promiscuity. *Conjugal Love* 276

Before the celebration of the wedding, a marriage covenant should be established in the presence of witnesses. A marriage covenant ought to be established before the wedding is celebrated in order that the requirements and ordinances of truly conjugal love may be acknowledged and a remembrance of them be retained after the wedding. Such a covenant also serves as a bond, obligating the couple's minds to an honorable marriage. *Conjugal Love* 307

States of mind progress in a sequential development, and in each partner these progressive states flow into the state of their marriage—though with one progression in the case of spiritual people and another in the case of people who are natural. The concluding state in any progression has the character of the sequential development by which it is formed and brought into existence. This is a principle which ought to be acknowledged in the educated world on account of its truth; for it enables us to discover what influx is and how it operates.... We may cite as an example everything that progressively develops in succession from the seed and sapling and makes the tree, and which afterwards progressively develops from the flower and makes its fruit. *Conjugal Love* 313

Commitment: More than a Beautiful Day

Based on ideas by Donnette Alfelt

Weddings are one of life's most special days. Couples plan intensively and save money for years to enjoy the wedding of their dreams. Many people use online services to track their wedding progress for everything from finding a location for the event to purchasing wedding favors for guests. At the touch of a button sites connect couples with companies servicing all aspects of weddings.

In 2014, the *average* cost of a wedding in the United States was approximately US\$27,000. This is higher than the cost of many cars. It is as much as many young adults earn in six months to a year, and it is more than most people will spend on any single event for their entire lives.

Most wedding plans involve making choices—deciding what is most important and using this to prioritize spending. The table below lists the kinds of things a couple may consider when planning a traditional wedding. Rank the following list in order of importance *to you* as if you were planning your wedding.

Planning My Wedding

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Wedding dress | | Vows | | Flowers |
| Music | | Budgeting | | Family |
| Including friends | | Invitations | | A fantastic party |
| Wedding cake | | Hairstyling | | Great photos |
| Making plans for life afterwards | | The setting | | Honeymoon |
| Bridesmaids dresses | | Planning with your partner | | Your choice: |

Discuss your choices. Remember there are no right and wrong answers!

1. Which items in the chart above can potentially contribute to happy married life as well the dreams for your wedding day?
2. Which items will make a difference to your wedding day, but will probably not affect your future married happiness?
3. When the ceremony and party are the main focus, the relationship and marriage itself risk being neglected or ignored. When this happens, there may be a big let down as life gets back to "normal." What might you do to prevent this?

"Having a husband doesn't mean you are married any more than having a piano means you are a musician." To become a musician requires learning, sacrifice and practice. So does marriage. A happy fulfilling marriage requires day by day commitment and effort long after the ceremony. The happiness of a good marriage with a faithful loving life partner far exceeds the joy of the wedding day." Donnette Alfelt