

Biblical Benefits of a Wedding Ceremony

1. Takes the time to acknowledge the One Who created marriage (Gen 1:26-27; 2:18ff)

- Recognizes that the authority of marrying rests with God
- Recognizes that the idea of marrying began with God

Gen 2:18 And the LORD God said, "*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.*"

2. Emphasizes the importance of the marriage union (it is not entered into lightly)

- It is the biggest step in all of one's life
 - Determines your companion for the rest of your life (often the vast majority of it)
 - Determines other parent of your children
 - Affects your direction, spiritual walk, etc. for the good or bad (Prov 31 suggests finding the right one!)
- First marriage: God made a very big deal of it, and it is pointed back to often. It was the first inter-human event in all of history.
- Tradition: Weddings are made a big event in some way

3. Gives an opportunity to emphasize the design and purpose of marriage (Gen 1:26-27)

Gen 1:26-28 ²⁶ Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

- One man (male) and one woman (female)
- United as long as they both shall live as one flesh
- The man "keeping his garden" life pursuit, accepting spiritual responsibility
- The woman being a help to the man as her primary life focus.
- The couple bearing children as God chooses to give them (God's purpose for 1 male and 1 female), which, in keeping with Scripture, highlights her other life focus as motherhood, the bearing and raising of children.

4. Requires a time of preparation (betrothal included this idea)

- First marriage: Life purpose, spiritual responsibility, and provision first, then marriage. God gives Adam a life purpose, spiritual responsibility and job first, then a wife

Gen 2:15-17 ¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Prov 24:27 Prepare your outside work, Make it fit for yourself in the field; And afterward build your house.

- Tradition: Engagement period leading up to wedding

5. Signals the time when couples have the right to each other's bodies (1 Cor 7:1-9 [4]; Prov 5...)

- First marriage: No intimacy before marriage (obviously)
- Following marriages: Sexual sin of all types was forbidden and faced varying levels of punishment, from forced marriage without possibility of divorce (Deut 22:28-29) to the death penalty. Sexual impropriety (intimacy of any kind outside of marriage) was a permanent mark. Intimacy is a gift from God designed for and restricted to those that are married:

1 Cor 7:1-9 [1-4] ¹ Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: [It is] good for a man not to touch a woman. ² Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. ³ Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. ⁴ The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband [does.] And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife [does.]

1Th 4:3-8 ³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. ⁷ For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. ⁸ Therefore he who rejects *this* does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

- Tradition: "You may kiss the bride."

6. Identifies a point in time when the union is made and the relationship changes

Gen 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

- Two become one
- Two become distinct from their parents as a new entity

7. Fixes a pattern to which both a man and a woman can seek to mature towards

- Preparations for manhood, and for being a husband and a father
- Preparations for womanhood, and for being a wife and mother
- We are not automatically ready for marriage! Age itself is not sufficient preparation.

8. Allows the families to be engaged in the preparation process and the ceremony

9. Proclaims intentions formally and publicly

10. Highlights the transfer of provision, protection and care from father to husband

- First marriage: God brought woman to the man.
- Following marriages: Arranged or approved by the parents. They are directly involved.

Ezra 9:11-12 "which You commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land, with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from one end to another with their impurity. ¹² Now therefore, do not give your daughters as wives for their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons; and never seek their peace or prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good of the land, and leave it as an inheritance to your children forever.

Neh 10:30 We would not give our daughters as wives to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons;

Num 30:1-15 Then Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, "This [is] the thing which the LORD has commanded: ² "If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth. ³ "Or if a woman makes a vow to the LORD, and binds [herself] by some agreement while in her father's house in her youth, [youth - the time when a na±-râ is single & not engaged: kin±ûrêh¹ as in her days before engagement] ⁴ "and her father hears her vow and the agreement by which she has bound herself, and her father holds his peace, then all her vows shall stand, and every agreement with which she has bound herself shall stand. ⁵ "But if her father overrules her on the day that he hears, then none of her vows nor her agreements by which she has bound herself shall stand; and the LORD will release her, because her father overruled her. ⁶ "If indeed she takes a husband, while bound by her vows or by a rash utterance from her lips by which she bound herself, ⁷ "and her husband hears [it,] and makes no response to her on the day that he hears, then her vows shall stand, and her agreements by which she bound herself shall stand. ⁸ "But if her husband overrules her on the day that he hears [it,] he shall make void her vow which she took and what she uttered with her lips, by which she bound herself, and the LORD will release her. ⁹ "Also any vow of a widow or a divorced woman, by which she has bound herself, shall stand against her. ¹⁰ "If she vowed in her husband's house, or bound herself by an agreement with an oath, ¹¹ "and her husband heard [it,] and made no response to her [and] did not overrule her, then all her vows shall stand, and every agreement by which she bound herself shall stand. ¹² "But if her husband truly made them void on the day he heard [them,] then whatever proceeded from her lips concerning her vows or concerning the agreement binding her, it shall not stand; her husband has made them void, and the LORD will release her. ¹³ "Every vow and every binding oath to afflict her soul, her husband may confirm it, or her husband may make it void. ¹⁴ "Now if her husband makes no response whatever to her from day to day, then he confirms all her vows or all the agreements that bind her; he confirms them, because he made no response to her on the day that he heard [them.] ¹⁵ "But if he does make them void after he has heard [them,] then he shall bear her guilt." ¹⁶ These [are] the statutes which the LORD commanded Moses, between a man and his wife, and between a father and his daughter in her youth in her father's house.

- Tradition: "Who gives this woman to be this man's husband?"
- Tradition: The woman takes the man's name, signifying the official transfer of responsibility.

11. Repeats, reminds and reviews the marriage covenant to all who witness

12. Provides a rare opportunity of group instruction

- Purpose – Reason(s)
- Places – Roles
- Prerequisites – Requirements
- Problems – Rough Times
- Picture (Eph 5) – Representation