

Wedding Moments — Part Two

A SIMPLE WEDDING

They had six restless kids in the car. They came to the door and asked for the simplest wedding I could do. I told them that as far as I knew all that was needed was couple that wanted to be married, two witnesses and a license. There are no required words. So they went back to their car, brought in the license and another adult. I offered my wife as the second witness. I did a short form wedding. “Do you each agree to be married?” They did. So we signed the certificate. And they returned to the car where the six kids were waiting impatiently. Not my idea of a wedding, but it was the simplest I’ve ever done. They seemed overjoyed at the result. I figured that if they had six kids and wanted to just make it legal even God would approve.

COUNSELING

There was a time when I made counseling a pre-requisite for doing a wedding. It took a lot of time for all involved. I got the feeling that the couples were doing it because it was required. I also came to believe that couples were not as helped by pre-marriage counseling as they might be by post-marriage counseling. The couples were usually going to be married anyway. As years went by most couples had been coupling and living as married people long before they decided to be married. As couples age I find myself talking about pre-nuptial agreements regarding property and other assets. The State grants licenses to enter a contract with all sorts of legal ramifications. I doubt that they even have a book that spells these out. Yet couples sign the license without ever reading the small print. They only find out when they see a divorce lawyer.

At any rate I have never found a couple married 50 years who had ever had one minute of pre-marriage counseling. Whatever works, I guess.

MONEY

It amazes me how much people are spending on weddings. Couples are setting marriage dates on when and whether they can afford the wedding they want. Google up “weddings” on internet and you’ll see what’s out there. A desirable wedding venue may be booked up two years ahead. Most of the cost has little to do with the actual ceremony. After payment for a wedding venue (most do not have churches), the big money goes into flowers and photos. And, of course, the honeymoon. It’s good for the economy. Money can buy a wedding but it has little to do with a marriage, where the success rate is said to be about 50%. An expensive wedding is a bet that it will result in a lasting marriage.

WEDDINGS AND MARRIAGES

I tell couples, ***“I do weddings, not marriages. The marriage is up to you.”***

A DRAMA

A wedding could be conducted without words or music. It is a drama. Here comes the groom, usually in one door. Then comes the bride in another. The bride is usually escorted by the father. The father hands the bride off to the groom. They join hands. They exchange rings. They kiss. They leave together. They sign a certificate. Does anyone have any doubt what has happened?

Weddings seem to have started as property exchange events and ceremonies. The bride was the property. Bride and groom may not have ever met. The groom became the owner of the bride. An old Eastern Orthodox rite has the priest saying to such a couple, “Now, go make love.” He wasn’t talking about sex, but of turning a property deal into a loving relationship. Yes, couples do need to “make love.” Don’t we all?

There is a cultural gap that the modern wedding drama needs to transcend. The gap is between the culture in which women are owned, controlled, dominated by men, and a culture in which women and men are fully equal partners.

MY WEDDING TEXT AND SERMON

The recent page on weddings brought a friend’s e-mail reminding me of my words at her wedding thirty years ago. In fact I used those words at the last wedding I did. It was after the ring ceremony. People were ready for the blessing and kiss. I announced a scripture reading. People really are not waiting for scripture readings. I paused, then said: **“The reading is five words: ‘Be kind to one another’.”** Then I announced my wedding sermon. I paused and thought I saw eyes roll. **“Just two words,”** I said.... **“Be kind.”** Few sermons are remembered past the church door. A sermon that is remembered for thirty years must be special.

Art Morgan – August 30, 2012