

# June means wedding season here

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2005

Our annual festivity is about to begin. The sun shines hot overhead, there is anticipation all around us, and the thrill of a new adventure is on the minds of many. As one season transitions into the next, we now re-focus our attention into a glorious new direction. No, I am not talking about hunting season, surfing season, Dodger baseball season (which is already well under way), or even our infamous Southern California summer season. I, of course, and no doubt most obvious to all of you romantics, am talking about "wedding season."

It's true. It seems as though love is in the air as myriads of couples take the necessary steps to plan and coordinate the many specifics that must come together to experience "the perfect wedding." From flowers to photographers, tuxedos to tablecloths, pastries to preacher, the details seem to be endless. As the big date draws closer, the intensity of the planning pressures mounts. Usually brides feel this weight most acutely, but grooms are not immune to the taunting of irritability mixed with the strange facial expressions that result from hours of staring blank into an album of photos of thousands of variations of the multi-layered wedding cake. Yet, when that special day finally arrives, and thank God that it eventually does, the radiance of the bride in all of her natural beauty, and the joyous (albeit some might say silly) grin that is semi-permanently plastered onto the face of the groom gives little hint of the pressures that nearly consumed them merely hours before.

Yes, welcome to the American wedding. Chances are, this hits really close to home. More than likely, I have described your wedding experience or the one that you will soon be attending. If you know what I am saying is true, then whenever you sit in a pew waiting for a wedding march to begin, you take a moment to thank God that the "happy couple" made it this far. But the irony is that most of the strain associated with pulling together a wonderful wedding has little to do with the "marital bliss" of the rest of their lives together. In most cases, a shockingly disproportionate amount of time, energy and resources go into the particulars of the wedding with almost nothing budgeted for the preparation toward the marriage.

Marriage is meant to be for life. Most people recognize this when they are up in front saying their vows. As they pledge to one another, before God and all of the witnesses sharing the important moment, that their love will stand the test of every challenge and difficulty, barring death alone, that they will forge together into the unknown future, it is usually with a deep sense that there are really only good times ahead. You remember how it goes — "I promise to love, honor and cherish, in richer or poorer, in sickness or in health, as long as we both shall live" or some close variation thereof. But how do you keep such a pact? Those who have been married for a long time tell us marriages that last don't happen by accident, they require tremendous amounts of

effort. Just as a dream wedding doesn't happen without planning, follow-up and immense labor, great marriages require nothing less.

So what are you doing to enhance your marriage? What steps are you taking to ensure a lifetime of fulfillment?

Please allow me to make a spiritual application here also. The Bible describes the followers of Jesus as "the bride of Christ." A wedding and marriage illustration is given to explain the type of bonding, intimacy and permanence that God desires in his relationship with us. The problem is that many of us are solely focused on "the wedding," or in this case, coming into the relationship with him, to the exclusion of any thought our preparation for the ongoing relationship, "the marriage." If you agree with my position that our own marriages require thoughtful diligence, shouldn't our discipleship as followers of Christ demand the same? In 2 Timothy 2:15, the Bible says "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed." Let's do both. Let's apply careful attention to our marriages to our spouses, and let's focus diligent effort in our relationship with God. After all, Jesus did say, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of the rest will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. This article was published in 2005. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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## **Mid-Week Study:**

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