

Preparing for Marriage 7 of 8

The Wedding Ceremony

#0056

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—January 17, 1970

I invite you to turn to Isaiah 62:4–5. Notice how God compares, illustrates, His love for His people, His church, by referring to this institution and experience of marriage:

“Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah” Isaiah 62:4.

The margin tells you that that name means “my delight is in her.”

“And thy land Beulah” Isaiah 62:4.

The margin tells you that that word means “married.”

“For the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee” Isaiah 62:4–5.

What a picture! And God intends (don’t miss this!) that the joy of every bridegroom shall be a reflection, an echo, of the great joy that He looks forward to, in bringing His bride home to the Father’s house in the New Jerusalem.

Now you can readily see, dear friends, that if human beings are to experience a joy like that and a love like that, it must be sacred all the way through. There can be in it not the fun and frolic and froth and foolishness of this world. No, no. But a holy joy—a divine, heavenly joy.

“As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee” Isaiah 62:5.

I wish you’d take the hymnbook that you have there, and turn to number 433 [“The Church Has One Foundation”]. I want you to see something there. Now, look at this hymn. Scan down through that first stanza and see what you find bearing on our subject this evening. Let’s read it through:

The church has one foundation,
’Tis Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation,
By water and the word;

From heaven, He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood, He bought her,
And for Her life, He died.

Now look at that third line:

From heaven, He came and sought her,
To be His holy bride.

Is that true? Is that what Jesus did? He left His Father's house and came to this world to seek the church as what? As His holy bride. And oh, my friends, I pray that any young person who takes this class, either listening to it tonight or as it shall be listened to by many others through these tape recordings, I pray that every young man who engages in courtship following out Heaven's plan, shall think of himself as on an errand like Jesus came to this world for.

From heaven, He came and sought her,
To be His holy bride.

That concept will effectually exclude a thousand things that are current in the world today. It'll take away every bit of deception, every bit of hypocrisy, every bit of this fun, frolic, foolishness idea, every bit of that.

"Ah," somebody says, "How could anything be happy, then?"

Why friends, Jesus' presence makes happy those who work with Him and join with Him. Doesn't it? Yes.

Turn now to the second chapter of John. I want you to see something interesting here in John, the second chapter. Let's see whether the presence of Jesus is a kill-joy at a wedding or not. The second chapter of John, beginning with the first verse. You remember this is the story of Christ's first miracle. He'd been baptized, and out experiencing that severe struggle of temptation; had come back to Jordan; had been acknowledged by John and His disciples; had gathered a small band of followers Himself; now He'd come up to Galilee:

"And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage" John 2:1-2.

As you look at that, friend, I want to ask you something? Would you like to have Jesus as a guest at your wedding? Would you now? Really, would you? Would it be well to think of that in arranging the marriage plans? The choice of the companion? In every step toward a marriage alliance? I'll tell you this, friends, if we want Him at the wedding, we need to take Him with us every step that leads toward the wedding. What do you say?

Jesus was *called* to the marriage, it says. Do you think He would have come if He had not been invited? No. He's very courteous. He will not intrude Himself where He is not wanted. If you want Him at the wedding, you should invite Him. If He's going to be invited at all, He ought to be the guest of honor. What do you say? He ought to be consulted in all the arrangements.

But, ah, friends, if we're going to invite Him to the wedding, don't you think we ought to invite Him in the courtship? In the period of engagement? And before that, shouldn't He be with us in every step of counsel leading toward the choice of a life companion? Ah, yes! Remember, the great purpose of all this is that human beings may understand the love of the divine heart:

"As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy
God rejoice over thee" Isaiah 62:5.

When I think of the blundering- awkward way, the selfish way, that so many of us engage in these things, oh, I long, dear friends, that the scales shall fall from our eyes, that we shall be anointed with the heavenly eye salve and discern something of the beauty, the glory, the joy of the divine way of doing things.

Yes, Jesus was called to this wedding. And did it bring a blessing? What did Jesus do before that wedding was over? Ah, you know. He took a problem and made a providence out of it. He took a need and wrought a miracle.

Turn, please, to *Adventist Home*, page 28. Jesus at the wedding, a kill-joy? Oh, no. Just the opposite. What does it say here?

"The presence of Christ alone can make men and women happy. All the common waters of life Christ can turn into the wine of heaven. The home then becomes as an Eden of bliss; the family, a beautiful symbol of the family in heaven" *Adventist Home*, page 28.

You know, a few weeks ago, I was in a distant state, and some friends of mine and I were walking, and we chanced to go by a church, and a wedding was going on inside the church. And outside, what do you suppose was going on? Well, some fellows were tinkering with the hubcaps, putting some gravel in the hubcaps, and other things were being tied on, cans and all this sort of thing. Where, do you suppose people get those ideas? Do you suppose they get them in consulting with Jesus? All this rice throwing, and foolishness and froth: where does it all come from? Well friends, it comes from the world. Jesus says to you and me:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the
world..." 1 John 2:15.

And don't misunderstand me. I didn't stop and interfere with what was going on in front of that church. I went on with my walk. There are a lot of things that the people of this world are doing that I have no disposition to interfere with at all; neither do I have any disposition to follow them, my friends. Poor folks, they're having their fun. And life is drab enough in this poor, old world. I wouldn't stop their fun if that's

what they call fun. But I wouldn't call it heavenly, would you? And I wouldn't call it a representation of Jesus.

From heaven, He came and sought her,
To be His holy bride.

Remember, as I told you in my last class, there's swine's flesh, and there's quail, and there's manna. And so it is today. There are things going on in this world that are wicked, lewd, vile. God help everybody to keep out of those. The conventional way of carrying on courtship and marriage, I'd call 'the quail.' If you are careful about it, you can have clean meat.

But if you want something higher, something heavenly, something exalted, something ideal, something unique, something that will give you an experience like nothing else in this world, then I bring you manna, friends. My business is to bring manna. There are plenty of books and courses that you can read and take that'll teach you about the conventional way, how to keep out of the gutter. But friends, they'll never bring you to the mountaintop.

Oh, I'm thankful for these wonderful books of the Spirit of Prophecy, along with the Bible, which help us to learn Heaven's highest way. What do you say?

Now, I wish you'd take your *Adventist Home*, and we want to look at something here on page 55. I want you to look at that first sentence:

"The ideas of courtship have their foundation in erroneous ideas concerning marriage" *Adventist Home*, page 55.

This is a sentence that will bear a lot of study. The reason, it says, that people go at courtship in the wrong way, is that they have what kind of ideas concerning marriage? Erroneous ideas. What does "erroneous" mean? Full of error. That's right.

"Well," somebody says, "Don't people know what marriage is for?"

No. People don't know what marriage is for. They don't know. That's what this says—"Erroneous ideas concerning marriage." As the world looks at marriage, it's a matter of carrying out merely selfish, human ideas.

Those of you who took my class for husbands and wives will remember that we spent some time studying God's glorious ideal in the marriage relation, in which husband and wife reveal and reflect, manifest and understand the divine love, as no other institution can reveal it. But the ideas of this world concerning marriage are such that courtship is carried on in a spirit that is far from divine and heavenly.

So, my dear young friends, you who prepare for marriage, remember, if your ideas of courtship are to be correct, your ideas of marriage must be correct.

In an earlier class, I read you that wonderful statement in which the servant of the Lord sets before us the glorious ideal of being married for the sake of the work of God: Do not enter into a marriage engagement unless the work of God can be better advanced thereby. This is the highest ideal. And those who have *that reason* for entering into marriage will have a relationship to courtship, an engagement and to the wedding, that is far different from this world.

Notice as we read on in this paragraph, what happens in the world because people don't have the highest ideals of marriage:

“The ideas of courtship have their foundation in erroneous ideas concerning marriage. They follow impulse and blind passion. The courtship is carried on in a spirit of flirtation. The parties frequently violate the rules of modesty and reserve and are guilty of indiscretion, if they do not break the law of God. The high, noble, lofty design of God in the institution of marriage is not discerned; therefore the purest affections of the heart, the noblest traits of character are not developed” *Ibid.*

In conventional courtship, a young man is out to win the affections of a young woman. In Christian courtship, the basic thought is not trying to entrap someone, or ensnare someone, or beguile someone, or persuade someone. In Christian courtship, the desire of both parties is to find out what the will of God is. And when, after proper counsel with the advisors of both parties, two young people engage in Christian courtship, they do not (mark this point) fall into each other's arms, literally or symbolically, to start with—not at all. That isn't the purpose of Christian courtship.

May I put it very simply and very plainly, my friends? Both the young man and the young woman should guard their hearts, and should not give away their affections until everything that needs to be counseled over has been counseled over. The time for the giving of the heart's affections is when each party is sure, and the counselors of each party are sure that these two are meant for each other in the plan of God.

You see, friends, love is something that is pure and sacred. Not only the physical relation of union is to be reserved for marriage, but the approaches to it—the preparatory experiences of love-making, the kiss, the caress, the tender words of affection—these are not meant, my friends, to be just thrown around here and there to this one and that one. And even in courtship, those expressions of affection, either by word or by action, belong to the time when everything has been settled that these two are meant for each other.

Otherwise, you may find yourself in the position of having given something away to somebody and, in effect, wanting it back. And that's not so easy to do, friends. That's not so easy to do.

Notice the next paragraph:

“Not one word should be spoken, not one action performed, that you would not be willing the holy angels should look upon and register in the books above” *Ibid.*

Think of it, friends. If two young people are together, whether they are sitting in the home of the parents of one or the other, or in church, or Sabbath school, or young people’s meetings, or out on missionary work together, or driving along in the car to some destination for missionary work, or for divine service, whatever the occasion of their being together, are there unseen ones with them? Who are they? The angels. And notice:

“Not one word should be spoken, not one action performed, that you would not be willing the holy angels should look upon and register in the books above” *Ibid.*

Isn’t it a wonderful thing, friends, to think of two young people carrying on courtship in such a way that they are conscious of and happy for the presence of the angels with them every minute? Isn’t this wonderful? Ah, yes. It can be that way. God intends it shall be that way.

The only kind of restraint that it will bring is a holy restraint, a happy restraint. Anything that puts a restraint on, *needs* a restraint. The best car in the world needs brakes as well as a motor. Am I correct? That’s right. And as two young people engage in courtship, each of them needs to have their affections as well as their passions under full control. They need to be able to visit together in the proper places at proper times, in a happy way, a sober way, a sensible way, and not start love-making just because they’re going together. It isn’t time for love-making, friends. It’s a time for getting acquainted, to see whether they are meant for each other and whether God is leading them together.

And as I told you in an earlier class, don’t worry about whether there will be love or not. If God is leading people together, there’ll be love and plenty of it. But the truth of the matter is, in human association, when love is thrown out, when love-making is engaged in prematurely, it tends to bring about just the opposite result after marriage. The more love-making there is before marriage, the less likely there is to be the happiest love-making after marriage.

And on the other hand, those young people who keep themselves under control, both with their affections and with their passions, who engage in courtship in a spiritual way with an emphasis on finding out what God’s will is in the matter, praying together, studying together—studying some of these very things we’re reading in this class together and then alone with God—when they’re finally joined in marriage, friends, they’ll have some of the happiest experiences of love that this world knows.

I know that this is so. For over 40 years now, I’ve had the privilege of seeing young people study these principles and enter into marriages based upon a study of these principles. And I know, friends, I could cite you one experience after the other, where young people who have followed these principles have happy homes.

I think of a dear young man and his wife and their two little children who are down in Central America giving this message. He has seven churches to look after. He and his wife are doing a wonderful work down there. Young people, who listened to these principles, followed these principles in their courtship and marriage. God has blessed them with two lovely children, and He has blessed them with united lives. Their example in the churches over which they're in charge is a tremendous influence in helping other young people learn these ways.

Dear parents, I challenge you. If you didn't follow these principles in your courtship, learn these principles now. Learn how you would have done it if you'd known then what you know now. Do you see what I mean? Train your children in these principles. When light comes to us, then we are responsible. And you young people that are not yet married make up your minds that you'll have nothing less than the ideal.

I've spoken of the precious results when these things are followed. Let me mention an example or two of why it is so important that counseling and thorough evaluating be done before courtship is entered into.

Several years ago, a young woman in another state entered into a courtship with a young man. This young man had recently come to that community. He had accepted this message, been baptized. This young woman and the young man were married. I knew, personally, the sister of this young woman. That's how I know about it; in fact, I baptized the sister of this young woman.

So these young people were married. They had a child or two. And one day there was a knock at the door. It was the FBI. This man was an escaped convict. Several years before, he had escaped from a penitentiary and had come into this community where he wasn't known. He had accepted this message, been baptized, but nobody knew of his criminal record. He courted this girl, married her, and now when the FBI caught up with him and his criminal record, he was taken back to the penitentiary to serve his sentence, and she was left there with the two children.

Do you see what I mean, dear friends? What did that young woman need before she ever had the first *date* with that young man? She needed a father or a brother or someone acting in that capacity, to investigate the past record of that man, and find out whether or not he was a worthy character or not. Do you see?

"Ah," somebody says, "Everybody isn't an escaped convict." True, friends, but the better a man is, the more he'll appreciate having his record examined. Do you see what I mean? Why shouldn't a young man who is worthy, appreciate the care of the father of the girl, or her brother, or the pastor, or whoever is acting for her, in examining his record? Why shouldn't he be willing to have his credentials examined, his record? All these things are so important, dear friends. And remember, the time to look into these things is before courtship ever starts.

Let me give you another experience that I was personally acquainted with. This woman became acquainted with this man and married him. It turned out he was an alcoholic. I had the privilege (if you were to call it that) of trying to help place some of the children of this union. It happens all the time; girls getting infatuated

with some man who is an alcoholic, or a slave to tobacco, or has some other record of a habit that is going to bring sorrow to the marriage relation.

When is the time to look into all that? After they fall in love? Why, no, friends, before that ever starts. This illustrates the great importance of thorough counsel, careful examination before courtship is entered into.

I want you to read a few thoughts here on the matter of engagement. Sometimes people, having become engaged, recognize that they've made a mistake and they wonder what to do about it. Well, we've been given counsel on this, and we'll just read this here. *Adventist Home*, page 48. There are two quotations in this little section, one is from *Volume 5*, and the other from *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, but they're both included here in *Adventist Home*, pages 48 and 49.

What's the counsel here? Are there times when an engagement should be broken? Yes.

"If you have made a promise contrary to the Scriptures, by all means retract it without delay" *Ibid.*, page 48.

You see, here we pass over the great divide. We've already read statements that even when a mistake has been made in choosing the life partner, people who are married should do what? Make the best of it. But this is not true in the matter of engagement. Until the marriage has been entered into, there is still the opportunity to reconsider. But of course, it's better that all those reconsiderations should be done before the engagement.

Now page 49, the top of the page:

"Let every step toward a marriage alliance be characterized by..."

What?

"...modesty,"

The next is what?

"...simplicity, sincerity, and an earnest purpose to please and honor God" *Ibid.*, page 49.

I want you to notice that expression "simplicity." Every step is to be characterized by simplicity and a sincere purpose to honor God. This applies to the period of courtship, the engagement, and now I want to look for a few minutes at the matter of the wedding itself, because we're in an age, my dear friends, when thousands upon thousands of dollars are being worse than squandered in extravagant, lavish displays at weddings.

In *Volume 5*, page 189, I read:

“Puritan plainness and simplicity should mark the dwellings and apparel of all who believe the solemn truths for this time. All means needlessly expended in dress or in the adorning of our houses is a waste of our Lord’s money” *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5*, page 189.

“Well,” somebody says, “This is talking about just ordinary living and ordinary dressing. What about the wedding?”

All right, what about the wedding?

I have a little book here. I’m going to read you something interesting from it, and then I am going to let you read something from the volumes. This is a little book called *Testimonies for the Physicians and Helpers of the Sanitarium*. It was printed before any of us here tonight were born, on the press at Battle Creek. It contains some special testimonies for the workers in the Battle Creek Sanitarium.

On page 77 of this little book, I’m going to read you something about Dr. Kellogg’s wedding. You know, as I read this, I thought, “Wasn’t it something to have a prophet in Israel that dared to reprove the greatest leaders in the denomination?” Here it is, in print:

“Sr. Lamson’s...”

She was the matron of the sanitarium.

“Sr. Lamson’s advice and influence has had a tendency to weaken the barriers which separate the people of God from the world. The display of fashionable dress on the occasion of Dr. Kellogg’s marriage was a telling discourse in favor of departing from principle. Many lectures upon reform could not counteract the evil influence which was thus exerted. We have had to meet it everywhere. This display was made by Sr. Lamson’s advice. Such an exhibition at a health reform institute was in keeping with many digressions afterward” *Testimony for the Physicians and Helpers of the Sanitarium*, page 77.

Here the prophet of God, based upon the visions the Lord had given her, rebuked the medical director of our large sanitarium for the display at his wedding, and rebuked the matron of that institution for instigating this display at the wedding.

If you’d like to find in the current volumes of the Spirit of Prophecy similar instruction, it was written at the same time about the same matter, but without Dr. Kellogg’s or Sister Lamson’s name in it, you’ll find it in *Volume 4*, pages 503, 515, and 572. Now I’m going to read some of this. Remember, this was written soon after Dr. Kellogg’s wedding, in which there were this worldly display and extravagance:

“We are living in the last days, when the mania upon the subject of marriage constitutes one of the signs of the near coming of Christ. God is not consulted in these matters. Religion, duty, and principle are sacrificed to carry out the promptings of the unconsecrated heart. There should be no great display and rejoicing over the union of the parties. There is not one marriage in one hundred that results happily, that bears the sanction of God, and places the parties in a position better to glorify Him” *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 4*, pages 503–504.

Then on page 515:

“There have been marriage relations formed in Battle Creek with which God has had nothing to do... Christ has warned us that this state of things would exist prior to His second appearing... The minds of the people were bewitched upon the subject of marriage. When there is so much uncertainty, so great danger, there is no reason why we should make great parade or display, even if the parties were perfectly suited to each other; but that remains to be tested.

“When those who profess to be reformers, those in humble life, ape the customs and fashions of the worldly wealthy, it is a reproach to our faith” *Ibid.*, page 515.

What does “ape” mean (here used as a verb)? Imitate. Yes. Ah friends, how many people, especially in this matter of having a wedding, try to keep up with the Joneses.

I know a man, a professional photographer, whose business is to *sell* the beautiful photographs which he produces at weddings to brides and their parents, whoever is putting up the money, and his goal is to sell at least a \$1,000 worth of photographs at each wedding that he takes care of.

“Well,” somebody says, “my, I’m so glad ours didn’t cost that much.” I want to tell you something, friends: no matter how much you spend, you can find somebody that has spent more. And that makes you simple and economical by comparison. Do you see what I mean? That’s right.

“When those who profess to be reformers, those in humble life, ape the customs and fashions of the worldly wealthy, it is a reproach to our faith. There are some to whom God gave the word of warning, but did that stop them? No, they did not fear God, for the bewitching power of Satan was upon them. And some in Battle Creek have influenced these poor infatuated ones to follow their own judgment, and by doing this, they have

crippled their usefulness and incurred the displeasure of God" *Ibid*.

So the fact that in our great centers some of these things are done shouldn't have any influence upon us at all. These references should have more influence on us than the example of worldlings.

Do you remember in the ancient sanctuary, when Moses had built the tabernacle, there was an anointing service, an inaugural ceremony? All the vessels of the sanctuary were anointed, the rooms were anointed, and Aaron was anointed, the high priest. Every Christian home, dear friends, is to be a sanctuary. Every Christian home is to be a place where God meets with and lives with His people. When we look at it that way, we shall look upon the wedding as an anointing service—a time when together we seek the Lord that He will anoint the bridegroom and the bride for their mission in setting up a Christian home.

You remember in that ancient sanctuary, when Moses had carried out, with Aaron and his sons, every detail of the service. The presence of God was manifested in that building, which had been built with human hands, and God took up His residence with humanity. Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing, my dear young friends, if at your wedding, the service could be such in simplicity, in dignity, in spiritual influence that the presence of God could come into your hearts and into the new home established from the moment of its inception? Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing, dear friends?

When we get that concept, all this worldly dress that goes on at weddings will be clear out. It won't even be thought of: all the worldly music, the worldly display, the extravagance, the spending of money.

Now friends, don't misunderstand me. I'm not foolish enough to think that I'm going to change the customs of this world. Oh, no. I'm not foolish enough to think that I'm going to change what thousands of people are doing and will do. No, no. I realize what we're studying tonight is a voice crying in the wilderness, but it says:

“...Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God” Isaiah 40:3.

And I tell you this: If Hollywood has inspired the courtship and the marriage, Hollywood may well set the pattern for the wedding. If the place young people learn to do their love-making is from the TV screen, they may well go right on and have the kind of clothes that goes with the TV-inspired wedding.

But if we have gotten our inspiration from the Heavenly Sanctuary, if the marriage that we are entering into has its pattern in Jesus coming from Heaven to seek the church as His holy bride, then my dear friends, the wedding itself will breathe that spirit of holy love, of simplicity, economy, unselfishness. And instead of the audience having their eyes on the bride and the bridesmaids with all their finery, in the wedding we're describing tonight, the audience will have their eyes on *Jesus*, and be uniting in prayer that God will anoint both the bridegroom and the bride with His Holy Spirit.

Ah, yes, how different it all can be. And so I suggest that in connection with our lesson tonight, you study particularly this chapter in *Adventist Home* entitled “Solemn Promises.” It’s in the section “From the Marriage Altar,” and begins on page 99. On page 101, you will find described a wedding held in Sister White’s home in Australia. She says:

“On this occasion there were no light jests or foolish sayings: everything was solemn and sacred in connection with this marriage. Everything was of an elevating character and deeply impressive” *Adventist Home*, page 101.

And then at the bottom of page 101 and 102, you will find the remarks that Sister White made at the wedding of her granddaughter back in 1905. I was personally acquainted with these two dear people years later. God used them in a wonderful way through the years, both in North America and in the mission field. Here are the words that Sister White spoke at their wedding. You’ll enjoy this wonderful chapter, “Solemn Promises,” beginning on page 99.

Now friends, does that mean a wedding is not a happy occasion? Far from it, friends. I don’t know of anything happier in human experience than these two ceremonies: the baptismal ceremony and the wedding ceremony. Isn’t it a thrilling moment when souls are buried with their Lord in baptism? That’s the marriage of the soul with Christ. And it’s a beautiful moment when the bridegroom and the bride stand and are joined together in holy matrimony.

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