

Pastor How To Guide: Weddings

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Every Pastor at some point in time will get asked to do a wedding. In the world of Youth Ministry this is actually fairly commonplace. Either because your young 20's leaders start to get married or the relationship you develop with some of your students extends beyond High School. Either way you will be asked to do a wedding because on this very special day no one wants it to be done by a stranger. Most people's preference is to have someone they know lead this in this most important moment.

This opportunity gives you the ability to do a few things.

1. **Speak into their lives:** Often being asked to do a wedding is also an invitation to speak into their lives. It's a chance for you to ask critical questions about their love, life and faith. You may get asked to do their pre-marital even and though that is outside the scope of this guide I would recommend checking out Prepare and Enrich (check out www.enrichcanada.ca)
2. **Help them understand what marriage is:** Our world has a messed-up view of marriage. They see it as a "thing" that can be switched out or cancelled at any time. The reality is much different right? Marriage is the union of two becoming one. Genesis 2:24 clearly communicates this principle and is often used in weddings, "*For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh*". Your role is to help them understand this reality as they take this next step in their relationship.
3. **Bring a word of encouragement:** Every wedding ceremony should have a "Word of Encouragement" but not a sermon. This is short note crafted for the bride and groom to encourage them going forward. This is not time for a full-blown sermon on marriage. Frankly no one is there to hear you preach. But the bride and groom do want to hear from you. Champion them, encourage them even challenge them but keep it uplifting and SHORT.
4. **Prayer of Blessing:** My favourite part of performing a wedding sermon is the final prayer of blessing and dedication. It's an opportunity to intercede for the couple and pray over them in what can be a very powerful way.

The very first time I was asked to do a wedding was for close friends of mine it was terrifying. I was so worried that I would make a mistake, slip up, say the wrong names or just wreck their most important day. But in all honesty, it was FANTASTIC. I still messed up a bit, but no one really cared because they were all there for the couple, not for me. However, for that couple my presence meant the world to them.

I think that is why as pastors we need to say yes to officiating weddings. The couple is choosing to invite you into their story, and not just any part of their story... the beginning of this new journey. You get to partner with them and set a path forward for them to travel. It's exciting, powerful, emotional and a ton of fun.

Now there is no simple way to tell you what a wedding should look like because every wedding is a bit different but here are the **COMMON ELEMENTS** all weddings need to have.

- **ENTRANCE:** This is the order, process or method that the wedding party will be coming down to. Depending on the size and scope of the wedding party this can be a very easy step or the most complicated part of the whole process. It always ends with the coming of the bride.

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- **WELCOME:** Typically there is a welcome on behalf of the Bride and Groom.
- **WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT:** This is your spot to encourage the couple and those in attendance. This is NOT the spot for a 45min sermon on what the bible says about marriage, infidelity and divorce (trust me it happens).
- **EXCHANGING VOWS:** Vows are meant to be a declaration of the couples commitment to each other. Its good to have a few samples but encourage them to be creative and write something that fits them and who they want to be as a couple.
- **EXCHANGING RINGS:** This is an opportunity to talk about the unending love of God and the model of marriage we see in scripture.
- **PRONOUNCEMENT:** This is your "kiss the bride" moment
- **SIGNING THE LICENCE:** Most places need a legal documentation with witnesses to make a marriage legitimate under the law. This usually take about 5 minutes and is extremely important that it is done correctly.
- **BENEDICTION/PRAYER:** Final moment to pray and bless the couple
- **INTRODUCTION:** The first formal introduction of the newlywed couple.

Regardless of what **COMMON ELEMENTS** you use to create the wedding. I have always believed it's extremely important that the couple be okay with things like word choice and how things sound. This is after all **THEIR DAY** and often they need to repeat after you. What you say matters a lot to them and should be of high priority to you. I always tell my couples that we need all these things but how they look, sound and feel is completely up to them.

WEDDING TIPS

- Always look over the wedding license before you leave the wedding or mail the form. Make sure you have everything where it belongs.
- Know how big of a wedding party you're willing to work with. When each person has 6 attendants, parents, grandparents and long lost relative all part of the **ENTRANCE** it can be a lot of work to organize.
- Send a prayer to God thanking Him if they have a wedding planner.
- Be careful of all the extras, they take time and sometimes can be confusing. Things like sand pours, parent candles, breaking dishes, communion, worship are not issues in themselves but they can distract and take up a lot of time.
- Stand to the side before you make the **PRONOUNCEMENT**. When they have their first kiss don't be in the shot.

At the end of the day I have **ONE RULE** that guides it all....

RULE: *You have been invited into one of this couples most important days. It's a high honour and we must never forget **WE ARE NOT** the focus... they are. It's their special day and our job is to highlight the commitment they are making to each other and to God.*

The following are two **Sample Weddings**, my **Wedding Info Sheet** and a **Sample Program**. You are welcome to adapt and use anything and if you have any questions feel free to contact me here at Fresh Ministry Consulting.