

In the **HOUSE** *of the* **LORD**

LESSON #9 – HOMEWORK



The Christian Marriage Ceremony

Couples who wish to be married can do so without being married in a church. However, a Christian couple will desire the opportunity to publicly celebrate the loving relationship that God has created within them. They want to express to their family and guests that the most important guest that has been invited to their wedding is Jesus Christ. The bride and groom are not the center of the wedding ceremony – it is Jesus Christ, their eternal Bridegroom.

A wedding within a Christian church reflects God’s presence and purpose for marriage. The wedding couple is reflecting their desire to be united in Christ’s name and before His altar. The Scripture readings, prayers, hymns, sermon, and blessing indicate the responsibilities and joys of married life. A Christian wedding is as much of a worship service as any other service conducted within the church.

The outline for the Christian Marriage Ceremony usually follows this pattern: Processional; Invocation; Prayer; Scripture readings; Hymn or solo; Sermon; Marriage rite; Marriage vows; Exchange of rings; Declaration; Blessing; Prayer; Lord’s Prayer; Benediction; Recessional.

Digging Deeper

Read Hosea 2:16-20. What other “marriage” does the Christian couple need to maintain?

Read Isaiah 49:18; 61:10; 62:5. How does Isaiah picture what Christ does for His bride, the Christian Church?

Revelation 18:23; 19:7; 21:2; 21:9; 22:17. How does Revelation picture what Christ does for His bride, the Christian Church?

Read Proverbs 13-14. Make a list of what makes a man good, wise, prudent, etc.

Read Proverbs 31:10-31. Make a list of all the wisdom, talents, and abilities displayed by this wife of honorable character who is called “blessed” by her children and who is praised by her husband.

Read Psalms 147 and 148. How do these Psalms describe the blessings that come from a family?

Read James 3. Communication is important in any relationship. What do these verses teach you about the way you use your words?

Song of Songs is a patchwork of events and episodes that reveals some of love's mysterious moods and motifs. It is a divinely inspired love letter between marriage partners. There are two main characters (the lover and the beloved, a man and a woman) with friends acting as a sort of chorus.

Read chapter 1. Why might God devote an entire book of the Bible to the subject of romantic love?

Read chapter 2. The lover asks some others to catch the foxes that are ruining the vineyard. The foxes could be a reference to other men who want the woman for themselves or relatives who want to disrupt the marriage. We see this from verse 15, which expresses an obvious desire to be rid of their potential interference. Such interference takes place today when others try to separate a married couple. What are some things that cause interference within a marriage today?

Read chapter 3. The section is clear in presenting the truth that love often involves an earnest and troubling search to find our loved ones. Recall a time when you felt a separation from your beloved. Describe how you felt when you were together again.

Read chapter 4. This section is an extended description from the man for his beloved's beauty. Why is it so important for spouses to compliment each other regularly?

Read chapter 5. This is the pinnacle of the book. The fragrances of the garden send an irresistible scent that invites the lover to fully enjoy the woman's love. Bible readers can't help but be reminded of the lush Garden of Eden, man's original paradise, where God and humans enjoyed perfect unity and love. The man describes the perfect intimacy of being with his wife. Why is it so important for us to understand, appreciate and express true love apart from the lusts, vulgar language and pornographic images that pervades our modern society?

Read chapters 6 and 7. Love's blissful intimacy can only exist within the godly commitment of marriage that expresses itself possessively: "I am my lover's and my lover is mine." This is part of the love letter between the husband and wife. List times when your spouse/boyfriend/girlfriend made you feel special with words or actions that were out of the ordinary.

Read chapter 8. The beloved says that love is as strong as death. Can you think of examples of this kind of strong love?

The Bible says that we are to “live in harmony with one another.” In order to be able to do this, it is good for you to do your daily Bible reading.

Daily Bible Reading: John 15-21

Memorize the following passage: Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Digging Even Deeper

In his Large Catechism, Martin Luther explains the importance that God places on marriage in his explanation of the 6th Commandment.

The Large Catechism, 6th Commandment

The Sixth Commandment.

199] Thou shalt not commit adultery.

206] But since this commandment is aimed directly at the state of matrimony and gives occasion to speak of the same, you must well understand and mark, first, how gloriously God honors and extols this estate, inasmuch as by His commandment He both sanctions and guards it. He has sanctioned it above in the Fourth Commandment: Honor thy father and thy mother; but here He has (as we said) hedged it about and protected it. 207] Therefore He also wishes us to honor it, and to maintain and conduct it as a divine and blessed estate; because, in the first place, He has instituted it before all others, and therefore created man and woman separately (as is evident), not for lewdness, but that they should [legitimately] live together, be fruitful, beget children, and nourish and train them to the honor of God.

208] Therefore God has also most richly blessed this estate above all others, and, in addition, has bestowed on it and wrapped up in it everything in the world, to the end that this estate might be well and richly provided for. Married life is therefore no jest or presumption; but it is an excellent thing and a matter of divine seriousness. For it is of the highest importance to Him that persons be raised who may serve the world and promote the knowledge of God, godly living, and all virtues, to fight against wickedness and the devil.

209] Therefore I have always taught that this estate should not be despised nor held in disrepute, as is done by the blind world and our false ecclesiastics, but that it be regarded according to God's Word, by which it is adorned and sanctified, so that it is not only placed on an equality with other estates, but that it precedes and surpasses them all, whether they be that of emperor, princes, bishops, or whoever they please. For both ecclesiastical and civil estates must humble themselves and all be found in this estate, as we shall hear. 210] Therefore it is not a peculiar estate, but the most common and noblest estate, which pervades all Christendom, yea which extends through all the world.

211] In the second place, you must know also that it is not only an honorable, but also a necessary state, and it is solemnly commanded by God that, in general, in all conditions, men and women, who were created for it, shall be found in this estate; yet with some exceptions (although few) whom God has especially excepted, so that they are not fit for the married estate, or whom He has released by a high, supernatural gift that they can maintain chastity without this estate. 212] For where nature has its course, as it is implanted by God, it is not possible to remain chaste without marriage. For flesh and blood remain flesh and blood, and the natural inclination and excitement have their course without let or hindrance, as everybody sees and feels. In order, therefore, that it may be the more easy in some degree to avoid in chastity, God has commanded the estate of matrimony, that every one may have his proper portion and be satisfied therewith; although God's grace besides is required in order that the heart also may be pure.

213] From this you see how this popish rabble, priests, monks, and nuns, resist God's order and commandment, inasmuch as they despise and forbid matrimony, and presume and vow to maintain perpetual chastity, and, besides, deceive the simple-minded with lying words and appearances [impostures]. 214] For no one has so little love and inclination to chastity as just those who because of great sanctity avoid marriage, and either indulge in open and shameless prostitution, or secretly do even worse, so that one dare not speak of it, as has, alas! been learned too fully. 215] And, in short, even though they abstain from the act, their hearts are so full of unchaste thoughts and evil lusts that there is a continual burning and secret suffering, which can be avoided in the married life. 216] Therefore all vows of chastity out of the married state are condemned by this commandment, and free permission is granted, yea, even the command is given, to all poor ensnared consciences which have been deceived by their monastic vows to abandon the unchaste state and enter the married life, considering that even if the monastic life were godly, it would nevertheless not be in their power to maintain chastity, and if they remain in it, they must only sin more and more against this commandment.

217] Now, I speak of this in order that the young may be so guided that they conceive a liking for the married estate, and know that it is a blessed estate and pleasing to God. For in this way we might in the course of time bring it about that married life be restored to honor, and that there might be less of the filthy, dissolute, disorderly doings which now run riot the world over in open prostitution and other shameful vices arising from disregard of married life. 218] Therefore it is the duty of parents and the government to see to it that our youth be brought up to discipline and respectability, and when they have come to years of maturity, to provide for them [to have them married] in the fear of God and honorably; He would not fail to add His blessing and grace, so that men would have joy and happiness from the same.

219] Let me now say in conclusion that this commandment demands not only that every one live chastely in thought, word, and deed in his condition, that is, especially in the estate of matrimony, but also that every one love and esteem the spouse given him by God. For where conjugal chastity is to be maintained, man and wife must by all means live together in love and harmony, that one may cherish the other from the heart and with entire fidelity. For that is one of the principal points which enkindle love and desire of chastity, so that, where this is found, chastity will follow as a matter of course without any command. 220] Therefore also St. Paul so diligently exhorts husband and wife to love and honor one another. 221] Here you have again a precious, yea, many and great good works, of which you can joyfully boast, against all ecclesiastical estates, chosen without God's Word and commandment.