

# Tell the World You Are Getting Married

*By Barrington H. Brennen, April 4, 2005*

Do you remember when couples announced their engagements by placing a photo and a wedding date in the local newspaper? Most Christians also had their engagements announced in their local church bulletin and read from the pulpit. This made the engagement relationship publically official. We must restore that tradition. I believe it is a very important tradition to maintain the sacredness, honor, and respect of romantic relationships and marriage. The practice of announcing an engagement should be as important as obtaining a license to get married. It is my wish that the newspapers would establish a "weekly wedding page" for couples to announce their engagement.

## **WHY MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT?**

A marriage between a man and a woman is a public affair of God's design. It is not to be a secret, known only among a select group of individuals. More so, the pre-marriage relationship—dating and courtship—is also a public affair that involves extended family members, church, neighbors, and community.

The announcement of a couple's engagement to be married is important for these reasons:

1. It lets others know that the relationship is serious and heading somewhere. Thus, it exposes the couple to the benefit and knowledge of married couples who can guide, encourage, and support them. It elevates the integrity of the relationship and gives supporters and friends time to prepare for the actual marriage (whether they attend the marriage ceremony or not).
2. It grants the couple the right to be seen together in public even more intimately than usual (embracing, holding hands, gentle kissing, etc.). Questions are usually raised and gossip starts when we see a couple walking down a street or driving a car late at night or embracing. However, if the pre-marriage relationship is known publically, by proxy, the public gives the couple a licence to be together more often than usual and often beyond the time and scope of regular dating. It makes the couple accountable for their behavior. Especially in Christian relationships, there is an expectation from the public how they should behave.
3. It protects the dignity of the individuals and the relationship. It lets the public know that it is not a flirtatious relationship. Often we hear that someone got married, and it is only at that time that we can put into perspective what we saw and heard all along. We wonder "why is this young lady with that young man?" "Who does that nice Christian young man have in his car so late at night?" "What are they doing out here in the dark kissing?" Sometimes reputations could be saved simply by making the relationship publically known.

## **NATIONAL IMPACT**

Every marriage impacts the society. Couples build houses for their new families. Children are involved in the public or private educational systems. Healthcare facilities are needed for medical and emergency cases. Public utilities are required to meet the daily needs of life. It is ironical for a

couple to think that their relationship would not in anyway impact the infrastructure of the society. If a relationship is truly a secret one, then, the couple should do all it can to keep it secret. To do that, they would have to move to a remote, isolated island, where they would be totally self-sufficient. They would make no contact with the outside world and provide all of their daily needs—from food to toilet tissue. The truth is, no one wants to live this way. Therefore, we must think of our romantic relationships not as an unimportant, lifeless force, without influence or power. Instead, we must think all romantic relationships as a dynamic, life-changing force in the family, church, and the community. If we truly did that, we would have fewer relationships that are heading nowhere, and we would have fewer relationships designed simply to respond to passions, craving, and drives. These are the types of relationship that put an unnecessary burden on the infrastructure of the country.

## **ANNOUNCEMENT PROCEDURES**

When a couple senses that they are romantically interested in each other, it is good to involve the entire immediate family. During the friendship stage of the relationship the first announcement should be made to Mom and Dad, and other family members. It is not a formal announcement, but a casual one that let them know that a relationship is developing. While attending social events, take the time to introduce your friend to the family. “Mom, I would like you to meet my best friend, Sally.” This announcement does not mean they will get married, nor does it give them licence to be intimately involved, but it does allow for support and guidance from family members as the relationship develops.

After the friendship relationship has developed into a serious romantic relationship, and there are plans for marriage, the couples will start making the announcement for engagement. **Tell your parents and families first.** Traditionally the bride's parents are told first, then the groom's immediately afterwards. However, the announcement can be made in a special setting when parents of both individuals are present. While a visit in person is nice, if your parents live far away, over the phone will work just fine. Both of you should be present. **Tell your children.** If you have any children from a previous marriage, they should be the first to know. Hopefully, you've prepared them for this possibility. Consider that this may be hard news for them, and reassure them that your new spouse won't replace them in your heart. **Tell your pastor.** After the family has shared in the joy of your plans to marry, then inform your pastor. Too often the pastor hears for the first time when the wedding invitations are given out. **Tell your close friends.** After informing your family you can make a few phone calls to your close friends to inform them of your plans to marry, unless you want to surprise everyone and tell them all at once. Sending an email to overseas friends would be acceptable. **Tell the world.** Now it is time to tell the world. In addition to publishing in the newspapers, you may want to mail announcements to your friends and extended family, or announce it as a surprise at an engagement party. Remember, it is not an engagement party that makes one engaged to be married. It is simply an agreement by both individuals to get married and having the blessing from parents or guardians. Radio talk show host, Dr. Laura Schlessinger, states that after informing the appropriate individuals, engagement is simply a date to get married and a ring. Although it is my opinion that an engagement ring is not necessary for engagement, I believe sealing the engagement with an exchange of a valuable gift is certainly appropriate. Remember, there is no engagement without a wedding date.

## **THE ANNOUNCEMENT**

Make a call to the local newspaper to find out what the guidelines are: fees, deadline, or requirements for engagement announcements. Etiquette suggests: “Typically, announcements include information on the two of you, including career and education credentials, and your parents' names. If your

parents live on a different island or country, you should also include their hometowns. If it is a senior couple getting married or parents are deceased, it's acceptable to omit parents' names. There's no need to include the wedding date, and some purposefully omit it, as they don't want to be targeted by burglars who will thus know when they'll be out of the house. You might choose to say instead something like "A summer wedding is planned," which helps diffuse the thousands of "So, when's the wedding" questions you inevitably get. What do you say when announcing an engagement to be married? Here are a few examples:

**Sample One:** "Sally George and Sam Roberts announce their engagement and plans to marry on June 20, 2005, at the Community Love Church in Nassau. The bride-to-be is the daughter of Edger and June George of Cat Island, The Bahamas. Sally is a graduate of College of the Bahamas. The groom-to-be is the son of Michael and Roberta Roberts of Nassau. Michael is a graduate of NCU, Jamaica. The couple will honeymoon in Andros."

**Sample Two:** Samuel Sinclair and Robertha Moncur announce their engagement to marry in Spring of 2006. The wedding will be held at the Praise Gospel Chapel, Freeport, Grand Bahama. Samuel, a graduate of C. C. Sweeting High School, is a self-employed plumber. Robertha, a graduate of Canadian University, is a registered nurse.

### **START THE TRADITION**

Dear engaged couples, call your local newspapers and insist that they start a regular feature of engagement announcements. Remember, making your relationship public may save your marriage and preserve your dignity. Avoid secret relationships. They are dangerous, troublesome and not long-lasting. Be proud of your love life. Tell the world you are getting married. **Barrington Brennen is a marriage and family therapist and counseling psychologist. Send your questions or comments to P.O. Box N-896, or call 323 8772, or email [question@soencouragement.org](mailto:question@soencouragement.org). You may also visit the website [www.soencouragement.org/article](http://www.soencouragement.org/article)**