

The Wedding Reception

What is the purpose of the wedding reception? The wedding reception is a celebration of the beginning of marriage. It allows relatives and friends to honor and congratulate the new couple. I like how Wikipedia puts it: “A wedding reception is the celebratory party held immediately after the marriage ceremony. It serves as hospitality for the attendees and is the first time the couple officially receives society as a married couple.”

Is the wedding reception really required by law or even tradition? The wedding reception is not a legal mandate. There is no statement in the Matrimonial Causes Act of The Bahamas or any other country that demands or requires that the wedding reception be a part of the marriage ceremony. There is no ecclesiastical order or decree by any religious body that requires a wedding reception. It is simply a tradition, and a wonderful tradition. That’s all.

Wedding receptions began thousands of years ago. In the article “What were common marriage customs in Bible times?” It states: “The wedding receptions in biblical times were vibrant, village-wide celebrations. Rather than a one-night event, the festivities often lasted up to a week. The groom’s family funded the lavish feast, which featured music, dancing, and free-flowing wine, as notably seen when Jesus attended the wedding in Cana.” Most people today cannot afford such celebrations.

My burden about wedding reception is that too many couples spend lavishly on a wedding reception and cannot afford the down payment for their rental unit, new home or car. Truthfully, some receptions are more costly than the down payment for a new home. When their honeymoon is completed, they have to live with their parents or other relatives for a while because they cannot afford the monthly rent.

If a couple can afford a lavish, banquet-style reception with all the trappings, they need to first make sure that it is practical and truly doable. They need to ask the questions: “Would we be struggling to pay bills after all of this is over?” “Are we doing this to boost our own egos?” Sometimes parents insist that their children have lavish receptions to boost their own egos. But the bills remain hanging around for a long time like a painfully tight noose around the neck. This is not wise. Remember, it is not the reception that makes the marriage happy. It is the hearts and minds of the couple that make a successful marriage.

In the twenty-first century, I’ve observed that mature adults with career paths are getting married. Thus, they are funding their own weddings. If parents contribute to the wedding, it is only a bonus.

Here are a few tips when planning for a wedding ceremony and reception.

1. Make a couple’s budget to include everything concerning the wedding—ceremony venue and decorations, clothing, food, transportation, honeymoon, DJ, etc. If the proposed amount is too large, be willing to trim it down to a manageable size.

2. Start planning for the wedding day from the moment you are engaged to be married.
3. Look at all options to ensure you have the best bargain for what you want.
4. Select wisely your guest list. Do not feel compelled to invite all of your friends and all of the hundreds of family members to the reception when you know it is not practical. The giant crowd might work very well if you are only serving lemonade and pound cake.
5. If possible, consult a wedding planner or a wise couple who can give sage advice about wedding reception planning and expenses.

When I got married almost fifty years ago, the wedding reception was simple. It was held at a family member's home. There were fruits, sandwiches, cookies, and lemonade. Yes, there was a beautiful wedding cake donated by a family friend. Hence, we spent zero dollars. The fellowship was most important. My son's wedding reception only cost \$800. This paid for the drinks, hors d'oeuvres, decorations, and the staff to prepare and serve everything.

While nothing is wrong with having a wedding reception with a full meal and lavish decorations, it is imperative to be wise not to overspend and end up with enormous bills or frustration in the end. Make sure your wedding reception, whether lavish or simple, is remembered as a happy celebration and not a pain in the neck.

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