



A MARRIAGE PLANNING GUIDE

Wedding days are marriages in microcosm. Five tips to help your wedding — and marriage — be everything you hope for.

As a pastor, I'm a big fan of marriage. Good marriages create community, stability and a platform from which families and individuals grow into their best selves, and I was delighted to see Washington state say "I do" to same sex marriage.

I wish I was a big a fan of weddings. I've done weddings in locations ranging from fancy churches to underneath a waterfall. I've done weddings that were planned for over a year and those that were put together in half a day, with guest lists in the hundreds and with guest lists in single digits.

Without fail, stress enters the picture. Something goes wrong, someone feels left out, some catastrophe with hair, makeup, food, or photos occurs all threatening to "ruin" the "happiest day of our lives."

Here's the truth about your wedding day. Something is likely to go wrong. And it's okay. Wedding days are marriages in microcosm. There are a lot of expectations. Some are met; others are not. There are a lot of people involved and most of them want to support you. There will be times together and apart. There should be music and dancing and lots of good food. There are likely to be tears at some point, but, with attention, generosity, humility and grace, you'll be all right in the end.

HERE, THEN, ARE A FEW TIPS TO HELP PLAN YOUR WEDDING AND YOUR MARRIAGE.

1. Spend more time planning your marriage than planning your wedding. A wedding day is just a day, but a marriage is a lot longer. I always recommend pre-marital counseling to cover topics including money management, parenting, conflict management, sex, spirituality, personality styles, time management, health, plans for the future, life goals, etc. It's really helpful to have a third person (such as a pastor or therapist) help you have these conversations with each other. Ideally, these conversations will happen over the course of several weeks to allow for follow-up conversations in between.
2. Decide what's essential for the two of you and stick with that. There are a lot of people who will be invested in what your wedding/marriage should look like. Parents, friends, and paid professionals will all offer you a lot of ideas in efforts to be "helpful." You will not be able to please them all, so work on pleasing yourselves first. Figure out what's important to each of you, thank everyone else for their input, and do your own thing.
3. Delegate whenever possible. People like having things to do, so don't be afraid to ask for help. Giving your friends and family tasks to perform before or on your wedding day helps them know that they are trusted and necessary in your life. Wherever you can't delegate, hire people in whom you have confidence and let them do their jobs. That will be a gift to everyone.
4. On the wedding day itself, and on every day thereafter, keep breathing. I know this sounds funny, but under stress, people usually don't breathe well enough to keep their brains operating at their best. Whenever you feel nervous, focus on breathing out fully so that your lungs expand to maximum capacity. Deep breaths clear the mind and settle the heart.
5. Notice the moments you are in. Wedding days are often chaotic but filled with special moments. Try to be in those moments instead of planning for the next twenty things on the list as much as possible. You want to have memories, not just pictures of your wedding day.

The day is coming when same sex marriage will no longer have the prefix "same sex" to distinguish it and marriage will be a choice for all. May all our weddings and marriages be a blessing. §

Just Out's Like a Prayer is written by Rev. Jennifer Yocum, pastor of the Forest Grove United Church of Christ. Reach her at Jennifer@JustOut.com