

## From one family to another

### Why do it?

The occasion of a wedding is a festive celebration. Most engaged couples will be honored in various ways - showers, parties, newspaper announcements, etc. Sometimes the church family is involved in these; sometimes not. But in either case, it is important to any couple wanting to establish a Christian marriage to know that people in the family of God, their church, care about them and are happy for them at this time in their lives. Many wedding festivities are not intended to convey spiritual blessings. But some are. A Bible presentation service is a way that Christian friends can let a couple know that the family of God is interested in their spiritual well-being in this important step they are about to take. Many couples need the affirmation of Christian friends at this time in their lives when the pressures are great and things often get out of perspective.

### What's involved?

A Bible presentation service need not be elaborate; in fact, it should not be. To quote a cliché, "It's the thought that counts." It would be inappropriate to make a Bible presentation service into an event with almost as many details as the wedding. Keep it simple; it will be nice. To plan a Bible presentation, do these things.

1. Decide on a date, time, place, etc. By all means, consult the bride-to-be. Her schedule just prior to her wedding may not be flexible. It would be courteous to schedule it three or four weeks before the wedding, if possible. When you get closer to the date of the wedding, it puts more pressure on her.
2. It would be appropriate to include special guests if you have room to accommodate them. You may want to include the groom-to-be, any close friends or family who are being invited to other wedding festivities.
3. There are enough speaking parts so five women can participate. However, you can use less than that number by women having more than one thing to say.
4. Don't forget to buy a Bible. Choose a translation that would be clear to a non-Christian since you will be encouraging the couple to give this Bible away.
5. Decide if you will have music. If so, make sure you have the appropriate musical instruments available. For group singing,

- find someone to lead it. For special music, you will need to find a musician(s). Choose music that applies to the theme. Appropriate selections might be: "We are One in the Spirit"; "We Are One in the Bond of Love"; "There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit." After you read over the speaking parts, you may think of other songs that would work.
6. Since the theme of this is From One Family to Another, make a family album as a prop. Use construction paper. Make a separate page for each speaking part, writing out the text so the couple may have it as a keepsake. Decorate these pages with pictures you find in magazines, etc. Leave some blank pages on which those present can write personal messages to the couple. (*Don't forget a pen.*) Tie the book together with ribbon or extra heavy yarn.
  7. If you plan to serve refreshments, keep them simple. This should not be like another shower or tea. The bride may appreciate refreshments or fresh vegetable sticks if she has been attending a lot of parties where sweets have been served. However, refreshments are not necessary.

### What do we say?

**Speaker 1:** Just about anyone you talk to today has an opinion on *the family*. Some say it's dying. Others say it's stronger than ever. Many magazines have cover stories on families. Listen in on any conversation and you will probably hear someone say something about the family. When we hear the word *family*, we probably think first of either the family we grew up in or the family we've established with someone else. However, there are many kinds of families. Some people set up a family living situation without marriage. Others consider a close group of friends as family. One's family, in a technical sense, can include hundreds, even thousands, of people if you think of it in terms of your family tree. Most of the time, though, when we hear the word *family* in general conversation, people are not referring to the family of God. However, Christians know just how precious that relationship is—to be with other family members who acknowledge Christ Jesus as Lord and Saviour. We are the family of God to each other. And we come today (tonight) to affirm one of our family members who is about to enter into another kind of family arrangement—marriage. Now, that doesn't mean she still won't be part of our family. We are just acknowledging the different uses of the word *family*.

**Speaker 2:** One of the most beautiful passages in the Bible referring to a human family relationship is Ruth 1:16-17. (*Read this passage.*)

Ruth had been married, but she was now a widow. Her mother-in-law, Naomi, was also a widow. Naomi was about to return to her homeland, having moved from there because of a famine. Naomi urged her daughter-in-law to return to Ruth's parent's home. But Ruth instead decided to go with Naomi. The Scripture passage describes the feeling for Naomi. As you enter into marriage, you will be establishing a family with your husband. Now, I don't mean family in the same sense as other people do when they might ask you, "When do you plan to start a family?" Children may or may not come later. But the day you exchange marriage vows, with (groom), you will be a family with him. The kind of family you establish will greatly influence your Christian witness in this community or anywhere else you might live. To be a Christian family is a high calling. It's a responsibility. You, (bride), will be one part of a unit. The unit can't function without you. What your family becomes rests very much on your shoulders, as well as the shoulders of your husband. What you bring to this new family relationship, what you put into it, will directly affect the kind of family relationship you have.

**Speaker 3:** We said already that entering into a new family relationship won't affect your membership in the family of God. That's true, as long as you won't let it affect it. We've all heard the saying, "The family that prays together, stays together." I don't have any statistics on that. But I do know that active participation in the family relationship of marriage will give you a better perspective in your marriage. Wherever you live, whatever your responsibilities or jobs are, whatever circumstances come into your life, God wants you in the fellowship of a church. There is no better family place to be. Your relationship to a church can very much affect your relationship to each other. We encourage you to commit to each other that you will always be an active family member in God's family, that you will be willing to fulfill the responsibilities that that brings, just as you will want to do that in your immediate family.

**Speaker 4:** (*read Eph. 3:14-21*): This is our prayer for you, from one family to another. We pray Christ will be at home in your hearts. A family with Christ as the leader will be a different kind of family than your community is used to observing. That's a big responsibility. How you treat each other, the love you show to each other and each other's families, reflects on Christ. Decide now before you start your first day as husband and wife that you will help each other grow spiritually. Decide now to establish prayer and Bible study as a family routine. Decide now that the material resources of your family will be shared with others. Decide now what your priorities will be. Decide now what

your witness will be. You have choices. And you have the freedom to make the right choices. We affirm the choices you have made in your life up to this point, and we rejoice in the choice that is being expressed in your upcoming marriage.

**Speaker 5:** (*read Matt. 28:18-20*): This is probably a familiar Scripture passage. As the family of God, we have a responsibility together to go into all the world with the gospel. You have the responsibility with the family you are about to establish. At this point, no one knows for sure, except God, what His will is for you for the remainder of your life. But we do know one thing about God's will. It is His will that you do what you can to further the cause of Christ. We urge you to be open to God's direct role in missions, it's His will that you have a supportive role. Look for those opportunities.

**Speaker 1:** One opportunity you will have on an ongoing basis is to share your faith with other people. WE are giving you this Bible (*hand Bible to bride*) to express our love and affirmation for you and also to encourage you to make sharing your faith a natural part of your marriage. We urge you to give this Bible to some non-Christian person or family who enters your home. It may be someone you are acquainted with; it may be a stranger who comes to your door. You can decide who should have it. But we give it to you-one family to another. We encourage you to share your faith with people-one family with another. We will be praying for you especially on (wedding date).