

Here Comes The Bride...

By: Deborah Hightower

June is the biggest wedding month of the year and a review of the following statistics show the bridal business is alive and well. Here are some fascinating facts: 2.3 million couples wed every year in the U.S.; \$72 billion per year is spent on weddings; \$19 billion per year is spent on wedding gift registries; \$8 billion per year is spent on honeymoons; 80 percent of weddings are performed in churches or synagogues; and 99 percent of newlyweds take a honeymoon.

The wedding day is filled with laughter and tears, beautiful flowers, lovely people and the hope of a commitment that will last a lifetime. There are a variety of ceremonies that cover the basics of being together through sickness and health, richness and poorness and for better or worse. Do all these things a marriage make? Is enough attention paid to what the marriage is really about... love?

The dictionary defines love as "a profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person." What exactly does that mean? What about the mechanics of how it works? Let's take a look at I Corinthians 13: 4-8 and see what God has to say.

(4) Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. (5) It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. (6) Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. (7) It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (8) Love never fails.

Marriage develops us into the Corinthians-like love. Ephesians gives the foundation for how we are to treat our spouses. Married love should mirror Christ's love for His church closer than any other earthly love. He directs us in Ephesians that we are to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (5:21); wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord (5:22); and "husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (5: 25). Marriage should be a portrait of Christ's relationship with His church.

So, if you are a bride- or groom-to-be, I encourage you to take time to ponder the true spiritual meaning of love and marriage. Then, when the day comes filled with laughter and tears, beautiful flowers and lovely people, you will complete the day with a loving commitment that "endures all things, hopes and dreams... I love you and I say I do."

For the husbands and wives already committed in marriage, think back to your beautiful day and remember how much in love you were on that day. Make a point to tell your spouse, I love you and glad I said I do. "I Love You (And Say I Do)" was written by Deborah and Eric Hightower and represents one of the three original songs on Deborah's new album, *Her Name Is Deborah*.



When We Wrote "I Love You (And Say I Do)," it was a revisit of our wedding day.

*As I stand here
Looking in your eyes
I see the worth and beauty
of your love*

*The joining of two hearts
Our spirits become one
Love bears all things hopes
and dreams
Love endures, love endures.*

*We affirm our faith
In our father's name
Abiding love and honor
we will share*

*The joining of two hearts
Our spirits become one
Love bears all things hopes
and dreams
Love endures, love endures.*

*I've waited for the blessing
Of someone like you
You fill my heart with gladness
and love
As we share our life
Forever and a day
I love you and I say I do*

*The joining of two hearts
Our spirits become one
Love bears all things hopes
and dreams
Love endures, love endures*

*The joining of our hearts
Two spirits become one
Love bears all things hopes
and dreams*

*I love you and I say
I love you and I say
I love you and I say, I do*

*I love you and I say, baby
I love you and I say, sugar
I love you and I say.....I do.*