

ENCOURAGEMENT TO HONOR GOD'S TEMPLE

October 12, 2014

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

18th Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 32:1-14

Psalms 106:1-6, 19-23

Philippians 4:1-9

Matthew 22:1-14

4TH IN SERIES

Encouragement to Honor God's Temple

Romans 13:11-14

John 1:5

Ephesians 5:1-20

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

1 Corinthians 3:11-23



1 Corinthians 6:9-20

⁹ Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, ¹⁰thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

¹² 'All things are lawful for me', but not all things are beneficial. 'All things are lawful for me', but I will not be dominated by anything. ¹³'Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food', ¹⁴and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁵And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. ¹⁶Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! ¹⁷Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, 'The two shall be one flesh.' ¹⁸But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁹Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Many of us wish that the Bible would be a little clearer about how to love yourself or others and how to be comfortable with our bodies. We wish he had been particular about marriage and how to have ours go well. We would love it if Paul included *Ten Secrets to a Happy Marriage* in his first letter to the Corinthians. But he didn't. According to Greg Carey, a professor of New Testament at Lancaster Theological Seminary, Paul wasn't even talking about marriage in 1 Corinthians 13, his famous "love chapter" that's so often read at weddings ... love is patient, love is kind, love never insists on its own way and so forth.

The Bible wasn't written to tell us how to have great marriages; it was written to show us how to have great love, and God's love for us is the starting point. It's not a marriage manual, but a love letter. There's nothing in there about "Thou shalt not leave your dirty, stinking socks lying on the floor," or "Thou shalt not leave your feminine products strewn about the bathroom." Nothing in there about that stuff! Rather, it's a great resource on self-giving love, which is critical not only for the marriage relationship, but for our walk in the world. When a husband sacrifices his own desires to help his wife, the two become one. When a wife puts her husband's happiness ahead of her own, the two become one.

And when *anyone* considers service to God to be more important than service to self, God is glorified and humanity uplifted.

Jesus was the greatest example of self-giving love, and he invites married couples everywhere to walk in his way. Better yet, he joins them to himself -- Paul says that "anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (6:17).

Husbands and wives who do this will be examples of love and faithfulness -- models for all of us. And we applaud them.

In today's lesson from 1st Corinthians Paul is addressing, among other things, the subject of sexual immorality. He writes: "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

There will be some of you who will feel these verses of scripture, tucked in at the end of the section that begins with verse 1 in chapter 6 of 1 Corinthians are hopelessly old-fashioned. "Flee from sexual immorality . . ."

"It's only sex," say many people today. No big deal. It's a physical need like hunger and thirst. It's not important spiritually. Meanwhile unplanned pregnancies yield a staggering harvest of unwanted children and guilt-inducing abortions. Sexually-transmitted diseases running rampant continue to alter people's lives. Young marriages founder when couples confront the truth that all they had in common in their courting years was a sexual relationship. Adult singles dread the dating scene because of the degrading sexual demands it often brings. Mature marriages come apart when one partner or the other is unable or unwilling to keep his or her wedding vows. And many good people suffer with guilt from promises broken and weaknesses succumbed to. Only sex, you say! Don't be absurd. There is no such thing.

Sex is a gift from God. From the beginning it seems that way. And we have done a pretty good job of eliminating some of the old stereotypes of pink or blue, dolls or trucks.

Some of women here are old enough to remember when girls weren't allowed to play full-court basketball. Some players on an all-girl team were not allowed to advance beyond mid-court. That was how the game was structured. Some played for years without ever getting an opportunity to shoot the ball because they were assigned to the defensive end of the

court. Everyone knew females just didn't have the stamina. Baloney! Tell that women today. Stereotypes have done much to hold people back. Sexual stereotypes are being slowly erased in sports, in business and in the home, but there are still differences between males and females, some of which are truly worthy of celebration.

Jerry Hayner in his book, *Yes, God Can* tells a story about New Year's Day at Pete's house. His grandfather, a man ninety-four years of age was there with a great crowd of extended family. Bowl games were on television. Children were playing with Christmas toys. Because this happened almost fifty years ago, a different era, most of the women were trying to rest from the meal preparation and housecleaning, and the men were wandering from the television to the scraps of turkey. It was just a typical Christmas-New Year's family reunion 1960s style.

Grandpa's heart was weak, but he had been given a pacemaker, one of the 1st to receive one in his community. Halftime had come to the football game, and the old gentleman was left alone in front of the television. That's where the real story begins. The band was performing on the football field and the cameraman had focused his lens on some lovely majorettes who were tossing their batons into the air. Pete happened to be standing behind his grandfather, his presence undetected. When the cameraman provided a close-up shot of one of the beautiful girls, Pete said his Granddad was sitting on the edge of his chair tapping his pacemaker and saying, "Don't go out now! Don't go out now!"¹

Whether he knew it or now, Pete's granddad was unconsciously embracing some of God's gift of sexuality that triggers reactions in people. How poor our lives would be without the gift of our sexuality. Having said that, however, it is important for us to see that, as a gift from God, sex is one way that God intended our bodies to be used in a helpful way. It would be impossible

to catalogue the harm that has been done to human beings by the misuse of this one gift.

There are people in this room who bear serious emotional scars from early episodes of sexual abuse. But beyond sexual abuse is the more widespread practice of using one another for sexual gratification with no real commitment to the other person's best interest. I don't need to tell you how God intended sex to be used. Sex is God's way of bonding couples together in holy wedlock. Sex is intended not only to bring children into the world, but to build intimacy, playfulness and joy and it achieves this purpose most effectively when it is kept exclusively within the marriage relationship.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Yes, when we read what precedes these short verses, we might assume that this passage refers only to sexual things, but I think that it is about much more. It is a passage that gives us a direction about taking care of our own health and it suggests that contrary to popular opinion in so many magazines, we are not our own.

Honor God with your body. What a significant spiritual principle that we so often disregard. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Do we desecrate a temple? Do we throw garbage in it? The implications for how we live our lives are staggering. Our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Think about that the next time you attend a movie. The next time you're on a date. The next time you are tempted to engage in risky or degrading behavior of any kind. Your body is a temple.

In all of the animal kingdom, human bodies stand unique. It would seem that our bodies are poorly adapted for survival. We have very little hair compared to most animals, so our bodies are unprotected from cold weather. We are not particularly well-adapted for swimming, or

¹Jerry Hayner, *Yes, God Can*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press).

climbing trees, or fighting. We have no natural weapons, like claws or sharp teeth. According to Dr. Mark Cosgrove, humans are the only creatures who cannot drink and breathe at the same time. This would seem to be a poor way to adapt to our environment. But our airways and throats are constructed for a very special function: speech. No other creature can speak, sing, or make the wide variety of noises that the human being can. We are the only creatures with the specialized airways and other apparatus that allow for speech.²

Human beings are uniquely created for prayer and praise. We are made to communicate with one another and with our Maker. Our bodies, minds and souls are God's crowning glory. Shall we abuse them or cheapen them or degrade them? Sex is a gift from God. It is to be used as God intended--within the marriage relationship. Our bodies are not our own. They belong to God and we are to use them to bring honor to God.

Here are some ideas that Christians don't unanimously affirm:

❖ "It's my body and I can do with it as I please." No. It's God's temple; he lives in it, and we cannot do with it as we wish.

❖ "We can separate our soul from our bodies, one being godly or divine and the other being worldly or human." No, the word for soul in the New Testament means life and is used interchangeably with that term.

❖ "Drinking is always wrong." Not so - but it may be for some even in moderation.

❖ "Illness is God punishing us for our sins." Not at all. We become ill because we are finite and mortal and imperfect.

² Dr. Mark P. Cosgrove, *The Amazing Body Human, God's Design for Personhood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987), 16, 17, 20. Found in Jack Lannom, *Untapped Potential* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), pp. 140-141.

If we believe that our bodies are a gift from God where God's spirit lives, then to abuse our bodies is a matter of being a lousy caretaker of God's gift. It is being irresponsible as a steward. So, one of my jobs as a pastor is to encourage us to honor God's temple, these bodies of ours. I confess that I have not been the best example of doing that.

It wouldn't have been said too many years ago, but now there is abundant evidence regarding the dangers of smoking to make it a theological issue. If you smoke, be assured our God does not select one particular abuse of our body and refuse forgiveness for it. Of course I do have the position that it is better to smoke in this world than in the next. But in regards to this passage it can become a theological issue. Frying our lungs and choking the spirit in smoke cannot be something God is intent on having us do.

Overeating is equally poor stewardship of our God-given bodies. Ignoring good health information and failing to practice good diet and exercise is probably not an approach that impresses and pleases God.

Here is a place where I can lock-in a bit more. I have this small device that hides out in my pocket most of the time. It is a Fit-Bit. It calculates how far I walk each day, how many stairs I climb and how many minutes I give to vigorous exercise and then sends a report to my computer. Software also links a scale to this report, sending a record of my weight up to a cloud and then down to this digital device. When setting all of this technology in place, the scale asked whether or not I wanted my weight to be posted daily on FaceBook. I hit the button that says, "No." This is not information that the world needs.

As you are aware, I eat regularly from the four basic food groups: sugar, fat, cholesterol, and preservatives. It would be helpful if I was more selective and could moderate my body better.

I really don't want to do more damage than I am doing, and so for the remainder of this

Stewardship Season, until our Celebration of Light Sunday on the 1st Sunday of November when we receive our Commitment Cards and light buttons, I will see that my weight is posted over by the kitchen here at the church. No, I will not put it out on FaceBook, but in order to be accountable to you and to God and to encourage us all in honoring the temple in which God dwells in me, I'll provide a report. Surely, most all of us can do better.

Overworking and overstressing our physical bodies and our mental faculties are also ever-present dangers as is the wrongful use of medication. For many who can easily practice moderation, we can have learned that a little red wine each week can actually be beneficial. But for some (an alarming number in this country), moderation is impossible and sobriety is only possible with complete abstinence. We must never be the influence that hastens the addiction of others which eventually pickles their livers and wrecks their lives and the lives of their families.

With new and better scientific information, the body of Christ (his church), must be careful about what we do with alcoholic beverages at congregational events, what kind of menus we provide at congregational meals, and whether or not smoking is to be permitted.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian stewards: "Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?" (v. 6:19).

Wellness is a Christian responsibility. We ought to provide exercise classes, instruction on diet and health practices, and see that good mental health is practiced in our homes. That is one of the reason that I am grateful that there are small groups from within our church who do go on walks and hike together. There is a small group who gathers here in the chapel upstairs each Thursday for mutual exercise and encouragement. This is good and I am glad that our building can be used to help people take care of the temples in which God dwells.

We Christians have a lot to offer in the area of good health

- The relieving of guilt
- the reduction of stress
- tolerance in relating to enemies
- a strong support for the ill of any age.

Illness is a result of our humanity. We get sick and die because we are imperfect and finite. There is a ministry of healing which is continually needed. The Psalmists wrote a song to be sung at temple, "He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He fills my life with good things, so I stay young and strong like an eagle" (Psalm 103).

If there's any person who has a divine commission to practice a vocation as a ministry, it's one in the health professions. In Jesus' ministry, he demonstrated God's desire for healing to take place for those who were mentally and physically ill. The gospel illustrates that. To be this special instrument of healing is a divine commission and ought to always be approached in awe, reverence, and humility. Never should the medical doctor or the church-related hospital let their ministries of healing be directed by greed, selfishness, or solely by profit. It is a divine ministry and the Creator would want all his people to have the benefit of its compassion.

We, who are caretakers of all creation, must also be good stewards of our own bodies.

- ◆Wellness and good health are Christian responsibilities.
- ◆Neglect and abuse of our bodies in any fashion are sins against God.

In an Ann Landers column some time ago – a letter appeared from a grief stricken mother. Her son had died at the age of 33, weighing 560 pounds. His parents had warned him about the dangers of obesity. But he always replied, "It's my life. I'll do what I want with it."

As I read that, I remembered reading about a wife and mother who became bored with her life. One day she left her husband and family to go to Las Vegas with a man who had left his wife. Her only words were, "It's my life. It's the only one I've got, and I'm going to live it as I please."

A teenager went out every weekend, bought a couple of six packs of beer and drank until he lost consciousness. His friends became concerned about him and told him so. He told them to mind their own business, adding, "I'm not hurting anyone but myself. And, it's my life, isn't it?"

Well, what do you think? How do you respond to such statements? Is my life mine to do with whatever I please? Is your life yours to do with whatever you please? Is it no-one's business but your own?

Well, in one sense that is an accurate statement. Your life has been entrusted to you. My life has been entrusted to me. And we can do with our lives whatever we please. We can mess them up. We can waste them. Or we can make of them something useful and noble. We can do with our lives whatever we please. And no one has any power to stop us. We are free!

Do you know what a gift that is? And what a responsibility? God has created you to be a special, unique individual. In the entire world, there is no one else exactly like you. You have been created to become a person that no one else can be. God has something in mind for you, and only you can be the person God intends. God gave us certain talents, inclinations, temperaments, gifts, to enable us to become that one of a kind special person.

But, because God wants us to be persons and not puppets, God has set us free. God wants the relationships of life to be real – relationships between us and others, relationships between us and God. And the only way for relationships to be genuine is for them to be entered into freely. Coerced or manipulated love is not genuine, is it? That's one of the things that really impresses

me about God – God takes us so seriously that God has given us freedom.

God allows us to do with our lives whatever we please. We can mess them up, or we can fulfill God's dream for us. It is our choice. Other people may care what we do with our lives and God cares. God can call to us and reach out to us and plead with us. But no one has the power to compel us. God has given us freedom so that we can make choices, even if there are unpleasant and unwanted consequences, to do pretty much as we please.

But, having said that, I must also say: we are free to do whatever we please with our lives, but we are not free to make them turn out the way we want. Whenever we use our freedom to make a decision and to take an action, there are always consequences. If we do it right, there are usually positive consequences. If we do it wrong, there are usually negative consequences. But, for every action, there are consequences.

From the beginning to the end, the Bible insists that we are living in a morally dependable world. Our choices are not a matter of indifference because something important is at stake when we are deciding how to live our lives. That's the way it is because that's the way God has created the world to be. Our decisions are important because we are important.

Our lives are ours. We can do with them as we please, experiencing the consequences of that, both positive and negative. But, if we are at all sensitive and responsible, we will know that there is a claim placed upon our lives by everyone who has ever loved us. And our best chance in life is to respond to that love as it calls forth the best from within us.

"You are not your own. You were bought with a price." Teachers, coaches, friends, family members pay the price with their love. And, supremely, Christ pays for it with His ultimate love given to us at the cross.

Think back over your life and I know you will agree that everything good in life is the result of someone's love. If I know that, if I care at all about that, I might conclude that every person who has ever loved me has placed a claim upon me. And, the more I know this, and the more I live my life under the influence of this, the more I am better as a result.

At the outset this feels restrictive and limiting. But, it is the source of our greatest freedom. Not that false freedom to do as we please, but that greatest freedom, the freedom to do what we ought, to be what we ought. Love sets us free to be the best we can be!

Just think about it. God - the designer and creator of everything - the one who sustains all life and the one who provides for all our needs - that infinite, inexpressible, all-powerful God loves

you so much that God had to find a way to get through to you. For years God sent prophets and priests and holy people to spread word of divine affection. But it wasn't enough. Finally, God sent Jesus. Jesus took upon himself our weakness and our vulnerability. He was rejected, betrayed, falsely accused, unjustly condemned, tortured, ridiculed, and finally nailed to a cross and left there to die. All of that to get through to us, to let us know of the depth of His love. If that doesn't do it, I don't know what more God can do! What more can one give than his very life?

"You are not your own" – not if you're sensitive, not if you're responsive – "You are not your own. You were bought with a price." Christ's great love has placed a claim upon us! Therefore let us honor God with our bodies. I encourage us to be light and in so doing some of us may also be find our bodies to be more lite, too!

SOME COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-20

At the outset, here, let's recognize that not only did Jesus choose not to marry, he encouraged his disciples to abandon household and domestic concerns in order to follow him (Matthew 19:29; Mark 10:28-30;

Luke 9:57-62). He even refers to those "who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:10-13). Whatever that means, it's certainly not an endorsement of marriage. Paul likewise encourages male believers: "Do not seek a wife" (1 Corinthians 7:27, my translation) -- advice Paul took for himself. If neither Jesus nor Paul preferred marriage for their followers, why do some Christians maintain that the Bible enshrines 19th-century Victorian family values?³

We have looked at how this passage ends with suggestions about our bodies as a Temple where God dwells and the implications of what that might mean. However, there is much in this entire passage that has more particular suggestions about relationships, sexuality and marriage. We won't even be heading into some of the Bible's most chilling readings, most of which are in the Old Testament regarding marriage, such as a man's obligation to keep a new wife who displeases him on the wedding night (Deuteronomy 22:13-21), his obligation to marry a woman he has raped (Deuteronomy 22:28-30) or the unquestioned right of heroes like Abraham to exploit their slaves sexually. I wonder: Have "biblical family values advocates" actually read only portions of their Bibles?

First Corinthians 6:12-20 addresses the issue of sexual immorality which appears to have been a salient one in Corinth. The ancient grammarian Hesychius of Alexandria points out, the verb in Greek suggesting Corinthian origin (κορνυθιαζομαι) literally indicated the committing of fornication and thus alluded to the infamy of Corinth's courtesans. Given this etymology, we find it comes as no surprise that Paul identifies sexual immorality as an important issue to address in his epistle to the Corinthians.

Having already begun a discussion concerning the presence of sexual immorality at Corinth in 5:1ff, Paul returns to this issue again in 6:12-20. This section of the epistle is striking for its incorporation of some verbal sparring on Paul's part. In verses 12 and 13, Paul seems to be quoting slogans known to his Corinthian audience for the purpose of refuting them. However, because the quotation marks that now appear in English translations were not present in the earliest manuscripts, it is possible that the slogans which Paul seems to be quoting could be longer or shorter than what the current placement of quotation marks indicates. Nonetheless, it is likely that the first words of verse 12, "all things are lawful for me," were a part of the slogan. This slogan's repetition in the second part of the verse as well as later in 10:23 suggests that it might have been a prevalent one in the Corinthian community. Despite (or, perhaps, because of) its prevalence, Paul is eager to demonstrate the fallacy of this slogan. Making use of a word play in the Greek that cannot be easily carried over by English translations, Paul refutes the claim of the slogan that everything is permissible (εξεστιν) by pointing out that he will not be mastered by just anything (εξουσιασθησομαι).

Having stated that he will not allow himself to be controlled, Paul provides an example of an unfit master. Drawing from a readily recognizable physical need, Paul states that even food is not worthy of such a position. Like his statement in Romans 14:15-20, Paul makes clear in 1 Corinthians 6:13 that food in itself is of little importance when compared to the greater concerns with which one ought to be occupied. Both food and the stomach which it enters will be abolished by God. The statement that the stomach will be abolished might at first appear to be contradictory to the second part of the verse which states that the body is meant for the Lord insofar as the stomach is part of the body. However, both parts of the verse seem to share the fundamental agreement that God's power and prerogative take precedence over dietary matters. Paul's logic, then, refutes a possible argument which might deem fornication comparable to food. If an interlocutor may be tempted to argue that food fulfills the physical need of hunger just as fornication

³ Greg Carey, "What does the Bible actually say about marriage?" *The Huffington Post*, July 7, 2011. huffingtonpost.com.

fulfills the physical need for sexual satisfaction, Paul has already disarmed this argument by subsuming the body and its physical needs under the ownership of the Lord.

Verse 14 asserts that God raised the Lord and will raise "us." The modifier "by his power" could be paired grammatically with either the raising of the Lord or the raising of "us." If Paul's statement in Romans 8:11 might serve as a qualifier to his statement here in 1 Corinthians 6:14, it seems likely that the power of which Paul speaks is, in his mind, one and the same power. Thus, "by his power" is perhaps best read in conjunction with both the raising of the Lord and the raising of "us."

The opening of verse 15 poses a rhetorical question ("Do you not know ...?") which serves as a refrain of sorts throughout 1 Corinthians where it appears 10 times (3:16; 5:6; 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19; 9:13, 24). Paul's answer in the negative makes use of one of Paul's favorite rhetorical answers (μη γενοιτο) which also appears 10 times in Romans and three times in Galatians.

After posing another rhetorical question in the beginning of verse 16, Paul supports his position against sexual relations with prostitutes by quoting from Genesis 2:24. Paul's quotation here suggests that he is using the Greek text of Genesis rather than the Hebrew. While the Greek of Genesis 2:24 specifies that it is "the two" (οἱ δύο) who will become one flesh, the Hebrew only suggests that "they" will become one flesh. Paul's scriptural quotation here is also notable because of his odd introduction of it. Paul frequently introduces scriptural quotations with the introduction "it is written ..." (γεγραπται, e.g. Romans 4:17; 8:36; 14:11; 1 Corinthians 1:19; 3:19, 9:9; 2 Corinthians 8:15; 9:9; Galatians 3:10; 4:22, etc.). Here in verse 16, however, he uses for the only time in his extant epistles the formula "it is said ..." (φησιν).

In verse 18, Paul explicates the imperative that undergirds the entirety of this section: Flee fornication! Paul's verb choice here might suggest echoes of the account of Joseph's fleeing fornication with Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39:15 where the verb in the Greek is the same. However, given that Paul does not choose to develop this allusion further, this verse may be better understood when read with Paul's injunction in 1 Corinthians 10:14 to flee from idolatry. In the cases of both fornication and idolatry, the sinner commits the error of investing energy into something that is not God.

After another rhetorical "do you not know ...?" in verse 19, Paul concludes this section in verse 20 by reminding his audience of their ownership by God. In a time when slave ownership was prevalent, Paul's suggestion that humans could be bought would likely not have sounded as offensive as it now does to modern ears. Rather, to those in the Corinthian congregation who were already enslaved, the promise of being bought by a divine master who would treat them well may even have come as a word of hope. Paul's final imperative in 20b stands as a fitting summary to the whole of this section on avoiding sexual immorality. Because one can be united with the Lord in spirit (verse 17), the body should also be used as a space in which glory might be given to God.

About three years ago I read about Angela and Stephen Ray had been married 25 years, and were in the process of raising four boys. Their secret? Angela told *The Washington Post* (June 6, 2011) was that the humor and teamwork that have gotten them this far are what she hopes will sustain them for the next 25 years. But on a practical level she says, "Keep the refrigerator stocked with food, would be my advice." I just thought that this might be a helpful reminder, but we might add, "keep the refrigerator stocked with heart healthy snacks."

At many wedding receptions, it's a tradition for the bride to toss the bouquet into the air, shortly before she and her new husband depart on the honeymoon. Those who rush to the dance floor and jockey for

position, in hopes of catching it, are usually the unmarried women. According to folklore, the woman who catches the bouquet will be the next one married. At some receptions, the action on the dance floor, the moment the bouquet starts to descend, has led to real injuries -- and more than a few mangled bouquets.

At our daughter, Meredith's wedding to Jason, she decided to do something a bit different -- not necessarily unique, but something that actually might make for a better tradition. Jason and Meredith were married at the Wells Memorial Presbyterian Church in Avalon, New Jersey. It is a place where Martha and I have been on vacation for over forty years now. Although most brides encourage a matrimonial scrum for the bouquet, Meredith gave her bouquet away. The organist for the wedding, Betty Ewart and her husband Bob, (now deceased) were at the reception. Meredith having done some calculation realized that Betty and Bob were the couple in attendance who had been married the longest and so she presented her Betty with her bouquet.

Such an action can bring a whole different atmosphere to the reception hall. Of course, Meredith had the freedom to make a choice, but her choice had the potential to speak volumes to those who were there for the party. All of the well-wishers found themselves applauding and honoring the success and

in
Bob
in
hopes



perseverance
marriage of
and Betty and
that, their
for Jason and
Meredith