



ESL Podcast 303 – A Traditional Wedding

GLOSSARY

wedding – a ceremony that creates a marriage; a ceremony that makes two people married

* They had a beautiful and very large wedding, with almost 300 guests.

civil ceremony – a wedding ceremony that is not religious; a wedding ceremony that meet only legal (not religious) requirements

* Katy wants to get married in her church, but her future husband wants only a civil ceremony.

minister – a religious leader in many Christian churches, similar to a priest or pastor

* When Damian's mother died, Damian spent a lot of time talking to the minister about how he was feeling.

to officiate – to lead a wedding or other ceremony; to be in charge of a ceremony; to do all the things that are officially part of a ceremony

* Who officiated at your wedding?

fiancé (man) / fiancée (woman) – a person to whom one has promised to get married; the man or woman whom one is engaged to

* Did your parents know your fiancé well before you two decided to get married?

to join – to bring two people or things together; to make two people or things become one

* The two small medical offices joined to form a new, larger office.

holy – sacred; blessed by God; related to God and/or religion

* The church is a holy place and people enter it with respect.

matrimony – marriage; the union of two people as a married couple

* Before I consider matrimony, I want to get a good job and be out of debt.

to hold (one's) peace – to not say anything against something; to remain quiet about one's opposition to something

* I can't hold my peace any longer! I have to tell Jeremy that I think what he's doing is wrong.



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to face (someone) – to move one’s body so that one is standing in front of another person, and look at into that person’s face or eyes

* The two men faced each other angrily, and everyone was worried that they would start to fight.

lawfully wedded – legally married; married in accordance with the laws

* Mr. and Mrs. Tannenbaum have been lawfully wedded for more than 50 years.

to have and to hold – to own; to possess and keep

* I don’t understand how people can promise to have and to hold each other for the rest of their lives, and then get divorced a few years later!

to cherish – to love and take care of something or someone very much; to adore and honor something or someone

* I cherish the moments that we had together, and I will never forget them.

until death do (one) part – until death separates two people; until death

* Keanu has promised to love, honor, and respect her until death does them part.

symbol – a thing or image that represents something else

* In the United States, red roses are a symbol of love, and yellow roses are a symbol of friendship.

With this ring, I thee wed – A traditional phrase used in weddings when one person puts a ring on the other person’s finger and they become married; I marry you with this ring

* Sonja had tears in her eyes when she said, “With this ring, I thee wed.”

to applaud – to clap; to quickly hit one’s hands together many times to make noise and show that one is pleased with something

* Everyone applauded when the Governor entered the room.

honor – privilege; something that one is proud to do; joy

* When Jeff received the Nobel Prize, he told the audience that it was a great honor.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does the minister ask people to “hold your peace”?
 - a) Because he wants them to stop fighting with each other.
 - b) Because if they don’t object now, they shouldn’t do it later.
 - c) Because it’s another way of saying “hold hands.”

2. What does the minister mean when he says, “I now pronounce you husband and wife”?
 - a) He means that he pronounced their names properly.
 - b) He means that he accidentally said “husband” instead of “wife.”
 - c) He means that he is officially stating that they are a married couple.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

minister

The word “minister,” in this podcast, means a religious leader in many Christian churches, similar to a priest or pastor: “Are women allowed to be ministers in your church?” As a verb, “to minister” means to work as a religious minister: “He has been ministering in this community for 25 years.” The phrase “to minister to (someone)” means to take care of sick or poor people: “Mother Theresa was famous for her efforts to minister to India’s poorest people.” A “minister” is also an important leader in the government in many countries, although not in the United States: “Who is Peru’s Minister of Foreign Affairs?” These ministers work in “ministries,” or government departments: “The Ministry of Education is responsible for the nation’s school system.”

to join

In this podcast, the verb “to join” means to bring two people or things together, or to make them become one: “Use a nail to join these two pieces of wood together.” The verb “to join” also means to become a member, or to begin to participate in an organization: “Juanita joined the Girl Scouts when she was seven years old.” The phrase “to join in” means to do something that other people are doing: “Everyone was singing together, but Carol wouldn’t join in because she thinks she’s a bad singer.” Finally, the phrase “to join up with (someone)” means to do something with another person or group of people later: “You and Sally go to the restaurant now, and we’ll join up with you later, as soon as we finish this assignment.”



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CULTURE NOTE

A “wedding party” is the group of people who have official “roles” (sets of responsibilities) during a wedding. The most important members of the wedding party are the “bride” (the woman who will become the wife) and the “groom” or “bridegroom” (the man who will become the husband). In a “traditional wedding,” or a wedding that follows many old “customs” (cultural practices), the bride and groom ask many people to be members of their wedding party.

The bride invites her sister or a close friend to be her “maid of honor” (if she is not married) or “matron of honor” (if she is married). The maid or matron of honor usually helps the bride with the details of planning the wedding, and helps her get dressed on the day of the wedding.

The groom invites his brother or a close friend to be the “best man.” The best man usually helps the groom get dressed on the day of his wedding, and holds the wedding rings during the ceremony.

The bride and groom may invite a young girl, usually four to eight years old, to be the “flower girl,” who gently throws flower “petals” (the small, colored pieces of a flower) onto the ground when the bride walks into the room. Another member of the wedding party is the “ring bearer,” who is a young boy who carries the wedding rings on a small pillow.

Other members of a traditional wedding party include “bridesmaids” and “ushers.” “Bridesmaids” are close female friends of the bride who wear “matching” (the same) dresses and walk in front of the bride. “Ushers” are usually male friends and relatives of the bride and groom who help guests find their seats and organize the wedding gifts that the guests bring.

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – b; 2 – c



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 303: A Traditional Wedding.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 303. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Remember to visit our website at eslpod.com. Take a look at our ESL Podcast Store; it has some additional premium courses in daily conversational English and business English. You can also take a look at our “English Through Stories” mystery, [Deadly Letters](#).

This episode is about a traditional wedding that you would find in the United States. Let's get started.

[start of story]

I arrived at my friend Karin's wedding a little late and the ceremony had already begun. I've been to a lot of civil ceremonies, but it had been a while since I had attended a religious one. They had asked a minister to officiate.

When I arrived, Karin and her fiancé, Jan, were standing in front of the church.

Minister: We are gathered here today to join Jan and Karin in holy matrimony. If there is anyone here who knows of a reason why these two should not be joined in marriage, speak now or forever hold your peace.

Fortunately, no one said anything.

Minister: Jan and Karin, please face each other and join hands.

Minister: [To Jan] Do you, Jan Casanova, take Karin Valentine, to be your lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold, to love and to cherish, for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health, 'till death do you part.

Jan said, “I do,” and the minister asked Karin the same question, and she said, “I do,” as well.



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Minister: May I have the rings? [To Jan] Please place this ring, a symbol of your love, on Karin's hand and say, "With this ring, I thee wed."

Jan put the ring on the fourth finger of Karin's left hand. Karin said the same thing and put a ring on Jan's finger.

Minister: I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may now kiss the bride.

Jan and Karin kissed and we all applauded.

Minister: Ladies and gentleman, it is my great honor to present to you for the very first time the happy couple, Jan and Karin.

[end of story]

In this episode we are at a wedding, what we would call a "traditional wedding." It may also be called a "church wedding" that you would see in a Christian church. Of course, those in other religious traditions would have a somewhat different wedding. But this is the sort of wedding that you would see in the movies, a traditional church wedding.

The woman in the story says that she arrived at her friend Karin's wedding a little late. The "wedding," of course, is the ceremony (the act of getting married – when two people get married). The person in our story says that she has been to a lot of civil ceremonies, but it had been a while since she attended a religious one. There's two ways of getting married in the United States. One is to get married by a recognized priest, minister, rabbi – a religious leader. The other way is by a civil ceremony. "Civil" (civil) here means government; it's not a religious ceremony. You are married not by a minister or a priest, but by a justice of the peace. This is a judge or someone who is legally recognized to have the power to marry you. Every state is different in terms of its laws and rules, but all states have the option (the availability) of getting married just by the government.

Now, if you get married in a church in the United States, or a synagogue or other religious organization, you still have to get a license from the government. But you don't have to have two different weddings, a church wedding and then a government (or civil) wedding. The government recognizes church weddings as legal as long as you get a license from the county where you are living (the state in which you are living).

Most marriages – most weddings – are church weddings in the United States. About 30 to 40 percent of all weddings are civil ceremonies, with a justice of the



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peace (a judge) marrying you, often in a government building but not necessarily; you can get married anywhere. In this case, the wedding has a minister, and the minister is officiating at the wedding. A “minister” is a religious leader in a Christian church, usually, similar to a priest. To “officiate” means to lead the wedding (to be in charge of the ceremony – the wedding ceremony).

When she arrives, Karin and her fiancé, Jan, were standing in front of the church. Your “fiancé” is the man or woman that you are promised to in marriage – that you are going to get married to. If it’s a man, it’s spelled f-i-a-n-c-é with an accent over the “e” – it’s a French word originally. If it’s a woman, there are two “e”s at the end of the word (fiancée). So your fiancé is the person that you are engaged to (the person you are going to marry).

The minister begins the ceremony in a very traditional way, using expressions that you will hear in the movies sometimes: “We are gathered here together (we are here together) to join Jan and Karin in holy matrimony.” To “join” in this case means to bring two people together to marry them. “Holy matrimony” is another word for marriage. “Holy” (holy) means sacred (blessed by God); “matrimony” is another word for marriage. So “holy matrimony” is a marriage approved by, or blessed by, God.

“If there is anyone here who knows of a reason why these two should not be joined in marriage, speak now or forever hold your peace.” Again, this is very traditional wording. If there is anyone who has some reason why these two people should not be married, speak now (say something now) or forever hold your peace. To “hold your peace” means never to say anything about something – to remain quiet about your feelings or thoughts about this subject. Again, it’s a traditional expression that you hear at weddings: “speak now or forever hold your peace.” Fortunately, no one said anything. No one ever says anything! Only in the movies will someone say, “No! They can’t be married! I love her!” – something like that.

The minister says, “Jan and Karin, please face each other and join hands.” To “face each other” means to turn and to look at each other so that you are – your bodies are parallel; you are looking into each other’s eyes. Then the minister says to Jan, “Do you, Jan Casanova, take Karin Valentine, to be your lawfully wedded wife.” “Lawfully” just means legally, “wedded” is another word for married. So, do you take her to be your lawfully wedded wife – do you agree to have her as your wife.

The minister continues “to have and to hold.” “To have and to hold” means to own – to possess, to keep. He continues, “to love and to cherish.” To “cherish”



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(cherish) is to love, to take care of something. “For better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health,” so he’s saying good times, bad times, if you’re rich, if you’re poor, if you’re sick, if you’re healthy it doesn’t matter, she will be your wife. The final part of the expression is “till death do you part.” “Till” means the same as until; to “part” means to separate. So the expression “till death do you part” means until one of you dies. After you die, then you don’t have to worry about being married! Some people say you die when you get married but I’m – I’m not saying that!

So the minister says to Jan, “Do you, Jan Casanova, take Karin Valentine, to be your lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold, to love and to cherish, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, ‘till death do you part.” Jan says, “I do.” That’s what you say when the minister, priest, or justice of the peace asks you this question, you say, “I do.” You don’t normally say “yes,” you say, “I do.” The minister then asked Karin the same question, and she said, “I do.”

The minister then says, “May I have the rings?” In a traditional wedding, the man and the woman each have a ring on their finger that signifies that they are married. The minister says to Jan, “Please place this ring, a symbol of your love, on Karin’s hand.” A “symbol” is a thing or image that represents something else, so the ring is a symbol of your love. The minister tells Jan to say to Karin, “With this ring, I thee wed.” “With this ring (this wedding ring), I thee (thee) wed.” “Thee” is an old word meaning “you”; to “wed” means to marry. Again, it’s an old traditional expression or phrase: “With this ring, I thee wed,” I am marrying you and I am giving you this ring as a sign (or symbol) of that.

Jan puts the ring on Karin’s left hand, on her fourth finger. Karin says the same thing to Jan and puts it on his finger. The minister then says, “I now pronounce you husband and wife.” “I now pronounce” means I am now saying (I am announcing – I am making it true) that you are husband and wife. A more traditional expression that you may hear, also, is “man and wife” – “I now pronounce you man and wife”; a more modern version would be “husband and wife.” He then says to Jan, “You may now kiss the bride.” And that is, again, a traditional thing, and if the woman in an old-fashioned wedding is wearing – or a very traditional wedding – is wearing a veil (something that covers her face) she would lift that up, and then they would kiss, and everyone would clap – everyone would applaud. To “applaud,” or to “clap,” is to put your hands together [Jeff claps his hands] like that; that’s to “applaud.”

The minister, at the end, says, “Ladies and gentleman, it is my great honor – it is my great privilege (something that I am proud of) – it is my great honor to present



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to you for the very first time the happy couple, Jan and Karin.” It’s also possible for the minister to say “Mr. and Mrs. Jan Casanova” if the woman is going to take the last name of the man, and almost all women in the U.S. do take their husband’s last name when they get married – not all, however, but the majority do.

Now let’s listen to our dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

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[end of story]

The script for this episode was written by the happily married Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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