

Do Barn Weddings Diminish the Solemnity of Marriage?

A headline in *The Atlantic* caught my eye the other day. "[Why is Everybody Getting Married in a Barn?](#)" the article asked.

I had to laugh, because I'm pretty sure I've had a similar question put to me *at least* once in the last year. Clearly there's something of a trend going on, and if you haven't been invited to a barn wedding yet, you likely will in the near future.

As *The Atlantic* explains, barn weddings have risen from two percent of all weddings to 15 percent in just eight years. Possible reasons for this include the prevalence of Pinterest (burlap, lace, and Mason Jars, you know), as well as the quest to advance a unique identity (although, when everyone is having a barn wedding, one wonders how such an idea is unique).

But the article goes on to give a couple other reasons why the rustic approach is so popular, both of which have a lot to do with the state of current culture.

The first appears to be a longing for community. One barn owner declares, "It's about how heartfelt it feels – people sitting together, breaking bread, sharing the experience."

If we're honest, it's not hard to see that the experience of closeness is disappearing. Families see it in the difficulty they have eating dinner together, both with and without the presence of social media. Communities see it in the decline of various [civic organizations](#). And [neighborhoods](#) see it in the lack of interactions between the residents of the city block.

Thus, in this sense, the surge of the barn wedding is a positive trend. It's drawing people together and filling a void of interpersonal relations in a real sense instead of the

false one often perpetuated on social media.

The second reason, however, is a decline of formality. *The Atlantic* seems to believe this is a good thing. Having a wedding in a barn is far more comfortable, after all, than one in a hotel ballroom or even the traditional church.

But this is where I wonder if the trend of barn weddings heads into dangerous territory. Marriage after all, is a solemn occasion, “not to be entered into... lightly,” as the *Book of Common Prayer* [famously states](#).

C.S. Lewis expounded on the importance of the formalities of the marriage ceremony in his famous work, [Mere Christianity](#), noting:

“Justice, as I said before, includes the keeping of promises. Now everyone who has been married in a church has made a public, solemn promise to stick to his (or her) partner till death. The duty of keeping that promise has no special connection with sexual morality: it is in the same position as any other promise. If, as modern people are always telling us, the sexual impulse is just like all our other impulses, then it ought to be treated like all our other impulses; and as their indulgence is controlled by our promises, so should its be. ...

Granted, marriage can be a solemn, sacred thing no matter the venue in which it occurs – it all depends on the heart and attitude of the couple. But when we remove marriage ceremonies en masse to the lighter, more fun atmosphere of a casual barn, might we also remove their solemnity? And in a society where the solemnity of marriage has already [been diminished](#), is that such a wise idea?

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