

DOWN HOME: Comic's nonmarriage not funny

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Did you see where comedian Eddie Murphy's New Year's Day wedding on the South Pacific island of Bora Bora to movie producer Tracey Edmonds was "only symbolic"?

I wonder if Edmonds' daddy is scouring all the wedding photos, looking to see if he can find evidence that Murphy had his fingers crossed behind his back. Maybe Murphy walked his new bride back down the aisle, looked over his shoulder, lit up the room with his zillion-watt grin, and shouted, "Just kidding!"

Now, I'll be the first to admit Murphy is a talented comedian and a very, very funny guy. I still crack up remembering some of his "Mr. Robinson's Neighborhood" and "Buckwheat" skits on *Saturday Night Live*. His *Beverly Hills Cop* franchise had its moments of jocularly. And his sidekick Donkey stole every episode of *Shrek*.

But this just ain't funny.

Of course, Murphy and Edmonds are grownups, and they have a right to back out of a marriage. And, apparently, even a non-marriage, for that matter.

The big news was they decided to get “married” in the first place. So many people, especially people with famous names and faces and Hollywood ZIP codes, don’t seem to bother. And when they do, they present two big questions: Can you count the number of previous marriages on one hand or two? How long will it last?

In Murphy and Edmonds’ case, it didn’t last at all. Their ceremony didn’t count, but they will “remain friends,” Murphy’s publicist said.

All morning, I’ve been trying to figure out why this episode of disposable matrimony has crawled all over me. While I’ve laughed at and with Murphy for years, I’ve never idolized him. Besides, “stars” do stuff like this all the time.

Well, the bone in my throat is this line: “Murphy has six children from previous relationships.” Six kids. “Relationships,” plural.

My youngest daughter, Molly, and I are preparing to speak to other daughters and dads in our church’s True Love Waits program. And I’ve been re-reading research by sociologists Barbara Dafoe Whitehead and David Blankenhorn.

They’ve discovered the most significant factor in determining whether girls will be promiscuous and boys will be violent is whether their fathers live at home with them. We may be portrayed as dumb and clueless, but loving, present fathers make a profound difference in children’s lives.

Maybe Murphy is a wonderful father, but I don’t see how he can be present and available for six children in at least more than one location when his primary objective seems to be how far and wide he can scatter his seed.

OK, I know I’m preaching to the choir. And I haven’t even tried to be funny this time (like I succeed very often). But please do this: Pray for and encourage fathers. And teach your sons and grandsons to be faithful.

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