

DOWN HOME: Wedding season, 2nd time around

June 6, 2008

Joanna and I have landed squarely in the middle of another wedding season.

I'm not talking about May and June.

I'm talking about age 48 to 55 or so.

Except for preachers, most people pass through wedding seasons. When you're a young adult, you attend zillions of weddings, because your friends are getting married. Then you get to skip out on weddings for several years. (Or husbands do, anyway; wives maybe go to more, but I never paid much attention.) After 20 years or so, you start going to weddings all over again. That's because your children and your friends' children get married. This spring and summer, we've been invited to four weddings.

Of course, weddings are not created equal. Some weddings are more fun than others.

Weddings that involve shotguns? Not fun.

Weddings that involve barbecue, chocolate-covered strawberries and/or cream-cheese-and-tiny-chocolate-chip dip? Definitely fun.

Weddings that involve dancing with the bridesmaids? Sounds fun, but I can only guess, since nearly all the weddings and receptions Jo and I attend take place in Baptist churches. (Maybe I should make friends with more Methodists and Presbyterians.)

During my first season of weddings, having just taken a bride myself, I

instinctively identified with the grooms. I understood the clumsy/awkward way they stood in a tux, because that is how I stood in a tux. I understood that faint-but-unmistakable “Can’t we get this reception over with and get on with the honeymoon?” look in the groom’s eyes as his grandmothers kiss him. Every wedding was a chance to relive my own.

Now, in this second season of weddings, having married off one daughter with another still single, I instinctively identify with the fathers of the bride. I know what they know—that no human being with a Y-chromosome is worthy of spending an afternoon, much less a lifetime, with a dad’s precious daughter. I understand how broke they feel. And, most assuredly, I appreciate how clumsy/awkward they feel at the reception, like they’ve just stumbled into a party for someone else, but the edge of the spotlight keeps hitting them in the eyes.

Still, sappy romantic that I am, I nearly always cry at weddings in this second nuptial season. A guy’s not supposed to admit that, I know. But this time around, I realize how hard marriage is, even under the best of circumstances. Like everything else worth having, marriage takes work, patience, courage, grace, memory (of blessings), forgetfulness (of mistakes), laughter, tears and tenderness.

Part of me cries for the fathers and mothers, who give up their children to others’ children—just as God planned it, but difficult nonetheless.

And part of me cries at the sweet optimism of young love and the simplicity of “I do.”