I’ve noticed a trend for newlyweds to have elaborate, expensive wedding receptions. Is this necessary, particularly for a temple marriage?

Wedding receptions are popular in many societies, and Latter-day Saints often celebrate their marriages in this manner. Unfortunately, receptions can be quite expensive, particularly for those who go into debt or overextend their budget in trying to “keep up” with friends and neighbors.

A number of alternatives to wedding receptions have been adopted by many people which have brought happiness to the bride and groom. One popular practice is to eliminate the expense of a wedding reception and instead provide the couple with a sum of money to help furnish their new home or cover other expenses.

Even if a reception is chosen, it need not be extravagant. In fact, elaborate wedding receptions sometimes detract from the real meaning of the day. Here are some ideas you may want to consider in planning a reception:

1. **Consider a home reception.** These have been longtime favorites, and they offer many advantages. Our family has hosted four wedding receptions, one in a ward cultural hall, two garden receptions at our home, and, in December, one inside our home. We did not choose home wedding receptions to economize. We found that a reception at home has a warm, personal feeling hard to achieve in a hotel, country club, or reception hall.

2. **Don’t feel bound by society’s expectations.** Some of the most memorable receptions I’ve attended have not followed the traditional patterns set by society. You don’t really need to have a formal reception line, for example. Even if you choose to have one, you do not necessarily need tuxedos, dressed-alike mothers, fancy bridesmaid gowns, or elaborate corsages. Dark suits and Sunday dresses have the virtue of not distracting from the focal point of a reception—the bride and groom.

3. **Think of alternatives to traditional receptions.** Trousseau teas, engagement parties, or wedding breakfasts can take the place of receptions. Because these events are less formal, more intimate, and give more time for visiting, many brides look back on them with warmer, more relaxed memories than they do on receptions.

4. **Plan now for future memories.** Photographs are a good investment, but they need not be costly. We find the ones enjoyed the most are the candid shots taken during the reception, at the wedding.
breakfast, and on the temple grounds. We have found that a skilled family member or friend can take meaningful pictures.

5. **Choose a wedding dress that can be used later.** A wedding dress can serve later as a temple dress. Or, if the dress is tea length or not so full, you can add a contrasting cumberbund and wear it to formal parties. Ecru lace dresses are beautiful in a wedding line and can be worn afterward.

6. **Consider carefully where you want to spend your money.** My younger sister loved engraved wedding invitations, but felt no desire to have her own wedding gown. She borrowed a cousin’s wedding dress and splurged on the invitations.

More and more families are hand-delivering wedding invitations to those who live nearby. How delightful it is to open the door to see a prospective bride or groom holding an invitation to one of the happiest occasions of life.

7. **Be sure the reception or party reflects the personality and tastes of the bride, groom, and family.** For her trousseau, one of my nieces displayed two quilts, her BYU diploma, and a note reading “This is Jamie’s trousseau.” As her father said, “Her trousseau may not be large, but she brings to her marriage a fine mind and a strong testimony.”

Family traditions can add distinction to the festivities. We have always enjoyed making, cutting, and wrapping the groom’s cake ourselves. Because music is such an important part of our family’s life and love, we have chosen to emphasize it as one of the focal points of the reception.

Wisdom, of course, should dictate in these matters. We should always remember the counsel of the prophets that debt, except for essentials such as a house or automobile, should not be incurred. Debt for many members of the Church may be as a millstone around their necks, something which requires great effort and time to remove.

The gospel is a gospel of salvation, both temporal and spiritual. Each Latter-day Saint couple should consider marriage in the temple as the primary source of happiness in this life and eternal joy in the world to come. Some Latter-day Saints have suggested that the time and energy spent on a wedding reception could more profitably be devoted to preparation for the temple marriage itself.

The first miracle Christ performed was at a wedding. At our own weddings, we too celebrate a miracle—the privilege the Lord gives us of making an eternal covenant with him and our beloved spouse. An appropriate reception can be a wonderful way to celebrate this miracle with our loved ones.

*Elaine Holbrook, “I Have a Question,” Ensign, June 1986, 24*