

I will admit that being a photographer in Las Vegas has given me a skewed vision of wedding chapels. Even so it seems like they have changed a lot from the way they used to be. Back in the day, there was no difficulty with picking out wedding chapels. In most cases, you would simply be married in the church you had attended since birth. Your wedding chapel was just, well, your chapel. It made a lot of sense, if you think about it. Although not all wedding chapels are gorgeous, the one you were raised in is the one that most accurately symbolizes your faith. A wedding is not so much a new beginning as a relationship meant to symbolize your continued commitment to community life. Why go to some exotic location, when you can do it at home?

Las Vegas chapels, of course, are the antithesis of this. In some ways, they actually seemed to pride themselves on their phoniness. Las Vegas wedding chapels are almost unreal. Some of them have gigantic, ornamental organs that don't play - mere props to create an impressive, Gothic image. Other ones are set up to look like ancient Egypt, or perhaps a woodland scene complete with neon flashing trees. Basically, modern American weddings have become something much different than what they used to be. Rather than symbols of lasting commitment, they are journeys into fantasy. It is no wonder that so few marriages last.

Of course, as a wedding photographer, I am definitely a part of it. Wedding photography, after all, has nothing to do with capturing reality, or even personality. Because images of beauty have become more and more standardized, good wedding photographs should be digitally edited until they most closely resemble conventional standards of beauty. Granted, there are some couples that want a wedding photographer with an artistic touch, but they are fewer and fewer. Just as people want their wedding ceremonies to be held on California beaches, they want their wedding pictures to show them as California beach dwellers - lean, tan, and flawless.

Don't get me wrong - there is nothing wrong with using a wedding chapel you find beautiful. Wedding chapels should be beautiful. Everything about the day should be beautiful. Even so, however, it is helpful to keep in mind that a wedding ceremony and a wedding party are different things. The ceremony should be quiet and sacred. the party is where you let loose.