

Daily Union Article
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Topic: Gift Giving

Summer time is full of family reunions, swimming parties, weekends at the lake, baseball games and yes, weddings! It can be a challenge to select gifts that both fit the couple and fit into your budget. This article is designed to give you some ideas about gifting and budgeting for your family or friend's wedding celebration.

According to a study conducted by Bankrate.com, millennials spend from little to a lot for wedding gifts. The study reports that people ages 18 to 29 were both the most likely to go the inexpensive route with one in four spending less than \$50 on a gift for a close friend or family member, to as much as over \$200 on a gift for a close friend or family member. But where do you draw the line and how do you determine what you will spend?

I have read through several different articles and etiquette guides that offer some direction on how much to spend for a wedding gift. There are several things that can factor in to how much you choose to spend, but perhaps the most important thing to consider is "How much can I afford?" With the heat we have been experiencing, it is likely that your electric bill will be unusually high for June. That alone will likely reduce the amount of spending cash you have for gifting.

Another consideration is "How close am I to the person/couple I am buying for?" Is the bridal shower or wedding invitation from a family member, co-worker, life-long friend, or college roommate? The closer your relationship is to the person getting married, the more you are likely to spend on a gift for them.

Additionally, you might consider how many different occasions you may be involved in where gifts are traditionally given. For example, if you have a sister getting married, you are likely going to host a bridal shower, get invited to the matron of honor's bridal shower, and perhaps even a third bridal shower invitation will come from your sister's co-workers or church family. Once these factors are put into focus, you can move on to the total amount you feel you want to, or can afford to, spend.

Generally speaking, the suggested minimum amount to budget for a wedding gift would be \$20 for those you work with or are a casual friend, \$50 for a friend in your circle of friends, and \$100 or more for close friends or family. Keep in mind these are just suggestions. You have to determine what your family budget can handle and make your decision based on that.

It is too easy to overspend on wedding expenses. A recent CNBC report shared that parents of the couple collectively contribute an average of \$19,000 for the wedding. This comprises about two-thirds of the total cost of the average American wedding expenditures! Traditionally, the bride's family spends more on the wedding (\$12,000) than the groom's family does (\$7,000). Only 1 in 10 couples pay for their own wedding, so parents are still

likely to be heavily involved in providing financial resources for the wedding. If you are a parent helping to pay for the wedding expenses that is another thing to factor in on how much you spend on the gifts you give at the various showers you are invited to.

If you find yourself struggling to purchase a practical, meaningful and budget friendly gifts, here are a few ideas to get you thinking about your options.

- 1) Perhaps consider purchasing a cookbook. I like to purchase church cookbooks to give as gifts. Often times these are fundraisers for the church and offer some really good home-style recipes. If you want to step it up a bit, check out the list offered by Brides magazine – just search for “7 Essential Cookbooks You Need to Have on Your Wedding Registry.” This list offers some traditional favorites as well as a few trendy options.
- 2) A coffee maker is another practical gift. You can find great options on both ends of the expense spectrum. Consumer Reports offers their evaluation of coffee makers in a scientific and objective way. They also consider cost alongside performance. You can find information about their review at www.consumerreports.org/coffee-makers.
- 3) A customized gift, such as a picture frame, stemware, or chair throw would make a nice personalized gift. There are a wide variety of places you can make these types of purchases including department stores, craft and hobby businesses, or online mail-order businesses.
- 4) A gift card, where the newlyweds could enjoy a quiet intimate meal, might be a good option for those couples who already have everything. As the average age of marriage continues to rise, a gift card is an alternative. Although gift cards are sometimes considered impersonal, a card that is for a specific experience, like a nice dinner, can add a personal touch to the gift.

Ideally, you were invited to the wedding because they wanted you to celebrate with them as they enter their next phase of life together as a couple. Your presence at the wedding may be the best gift you can give. Go to the wedding, enjoy the festivities, and celebrate alongside them. Your time and friendship is a precious gift in itself.

If you need more information on making decisions based on a family budget, feel free to contact me at the Geary County K-State Research and Extension Office at 785-238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!