

Nature and Purpose of Marriage

Christian Wedding Ceremony

Commitment: A sense of dedication and obligation to someone or something

Christian Attitudes to Marriage:

Marriage is the basis of family life. It is regarded as:

- God-given
- The best basis for creating an environment into which children should be born
- A lifelong commitment
- A wedding ceremony is an important rite of passage in many religious traditions. It is a celebration that recognises the importance of marriage and it includes rituals and symbolism, which often reflect the purpose of marriage.

For Christians, marriage is:

- A gift given to humanity by God
- A Sacrament – an important rite of passage
- ‘*Ordained by God*’, as stated in the Christian marriage service, meaning ‘set aside’ for a particular job or role. In this case, married couples believe that their role is to now live in a partnership with God. The vows exchanged between a bride and groom in a Christian wedding service reflect this.
- In the Gospels, Jesus teaches about the importance of marriage. This refers back to the idea in Genesis that, as part of God’s creation, *God made man and woman*. Jesus uses powerful language to express the meaning that marriage is the complete joining together of two people in a very special way. It is implied that the relationship becomes the most important human relationship for the couple who are married.
- “*At the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh.*”
- The marriage service says, ‘what man has joined together, let no man put asunder,’ meaning that marriage should be a lifelong union.

I.....take you.....
to be my wife (or husband).
to have and to hold
from this day forward
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
till death do us part,
according to God’s holy law;
and this is my solemn vow.

Exchange the rings and say:

With my body I honour you

All that I am I give to you

And all that I have I share with you

Within the love of God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Christians believe that marriage is a gift from God and traditionally Christian marriage ceremonies have taken place in a chapel or a church to reflect this belief. A typical wedding ceremony in the Church of England is performed by a vicar and would include:

- The vicar welcomes everyone
- The vicar gives a short **sermon** on the nature and purpose of marriage
- An exchange of **vows**, which reflect the main Christian beliefs about marriage

The vicar declares the couple married

There are **prayers** and **Bible readings**; the priest gives a **sermon**

There may be **hymns** with an appropriate theme

The legal requirement in Britain is for the newly married couple to **sign the register**, witnessed by a registrar and witnesses, which makes the marriage ceremony legal

In an Anglican church the couple always marry in front of the **altar**

Interfaith Marriage

- In a **pluralist** (multi-faith) society, inter-faith marriage – where two people of different faiths marry – is an issue that religions must respond to. Examples of issues raised by inter-faith marriage are:
- In the Orthodox tradition, marriage can only take place if the Christians have been baptised
- In RC, the partner who is not Catholic must agree to any children of the marriage being allowed to follow the Catholic faith
- Where there is an issue about a couple marrying in a place of worship, a civil ceremony can happen with a religious blessing

Issues faced by inter-faith marriage:

- Following religious **dietary rules** in the home (e.g. if one partner follows kosher laws)
- There might be different expectations about **gender roles**
- Religious communities might **refuse** to accept the inter-faith marriage
- Different beliefs about **moral issues**, e.g. the use of contraception
- **Children** might be told different things about death and the afterlife
- Parents might be torn between religions that **children** are raised in
- Families might want to celebrate different religious **festivals**

Issues

Christian Wedding



Commitment

