

Honoring Different Religions & Backgrounds in Your Wedding Ceremony

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Your Wedding, Your Way. It's one of the most important days of your life and your wedding ceremony should be all that you want it to be, but it may not always be easy.

Different religions, diverse backgrounds, in-law relationships. These are all areas that may cause difficulty when planning your wedding ceremony. Combining diverse backgrounds and religions into a beautiful, personalized ceremony may seem like an impossible task at times, but by looking outside the traditional venues and identifying important areas for the both the bride and the groom, it can be accomplished. Your wedding ceremony should honor your backgrounds, while creating a beautiful beginning for both the bride and groom and their families.

Acknowledging your different faiths, styles and traditions is your first step towards creating "Your Wedding, Your Way." This can be done by selecting key elements from both the bride and the groom and including them when you create your ceremony. Remember, it's your ceremony and it should reflect the uniqueness of your relationship.

Prayers and readings are one way to include both of your faiths in the ceremony. You can honor your parents and family by having a member of each family share a reading from their faith. In situations where the bride or groom no longer practices the religion, acknowledging the family's faith helps to bridge the gap.

Another way to include your family is by using a special ritual in your ceremony such as the "Presentation of the Rose" or the lighting of the "Unity Candle." The unity candle is a symbol of family unity. Usually a single candle (representing the newly married couple) is lit with two individual candles, each representing the bride and groom's families. This type of custom in the ceremony acknowledges your past, while bringing together the families for a new beginning.

Other traditions that can be used include the "Breaking of the Glass", "Vessel of the Rose", "Huppah", "Releasing of the Doves" and of course, many others. The Breaking of the Glass is a Jewish tradition that represents the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and can also represent the fragileness and special care that the marriage relationship deserves. Many times couples save the pieces of glass from the ceremony in a symbolic box. Releasing of the Doves after the ceremony symbolizes love, peace, prosperity and good luck for the bride and groom. The Huppah is another Jewish tradition where the ceremony takes place as the couple stands under an ornamental canopy. This canopy symbolizes the nomadic tents of Israel and the new home that the couple will soon share.

For blended families, the "Family Medallion" is a ritual that is used in ceremonies where children of the bride or groom are involved. The coin represents the beauty of the family and is given to the children during the ceremony. Families may also desire to give other personalized gifts or mementos that reflect their love and appreciation.

Including these different pieces of the bride and groom's background simply builds the richness, uniqueness and togetherness of the ceremony. It allows both families to share their faiths and backgrounds with the guests in a ceremony that celebrates the past, while also creating and celebrating a new union.