

Wedding Ceremony Planning Guide

The goal of this document is to help you think through all your ceremony options. You will notice that some of the options don't apply to you at all, and some of the options need a little tweaking to reflect your wishes. Feel free to edit this document in whatever way works best for you and your wedding! You will review it with your wedding coordinator and then your officiating pastor before it is finalized.

PRELUDE/GUESTS ARRIVE:

Music starts playing minutes before the ceremony by:

- Live musicians
- Soundtrack (Please email the link to a Spotify playlist to your Wedding Coordinator)

Front row reserved for:

- Parents
- Grandparents
- Siblings
- Other: _____

Programs are being handed out by:

- Groomsmen
- Ushers
- They will be on a table by the entrance
- We are not printing programs

Guests are being seated by:

- Groomsmen
- Ushers
- Themselves

Grandparents will:

- Be seated as they arrive
- Be part of the processional
- N/A

Any additional notes for the prelude?:

PROCESSIONAL:

Processional music begins.

Please list out the songs you will be using and when they should begin:

The Pastor/Groom/Groomsmen:

- The pastor, groom, and groomsmen all get into place at the beginning of the processional
- The pastor and groom get into place first – the groomsmen will be escorting the bridesmaids
- The pastor, groom, and groomsmen all get into place after parents/grandparents are seated
- The pastor and groom get into place after the parents/grandparents are seated – the groomsmen will be escorting the bridesmaids
- Other:

Parents/grandparents:

The following family members are often seated by themselves, the groom/groomsmen, or another family member. If a couple is being escorted, the wife will link arms with the escort, and the husband will walk behind.

- Groom’s Paternal grandparents (if not already seated) are seated by _____
- Groom’s Maternal grandparents (if not already seated) are seated by _____
- Brides’ Paternal grandparents (if not already seated) are seated by _____
- Brides’ Maternal grandparents (if not already seated) are seated by _____
- Groom’s Stepparents are seated by _____
- Bride’s Stepparents are seated by _____
- Parents of the groom are seated by _____
- Mother of the bride is seated by _____
- Other:

Bridal party:

- The bridal party will enter by themselves
- The bridesmaids will be escorted by the groomsmen

Ring Bearers/ Flower Girl:

- We have ring bearer(s)
- We have flower girls(s)
- An adult will be accompanying the ring bearer(s)/flower girl(s)

Guests Stand for bride:

- The pastor will ask the congregation to “Please stand”
- The Mother of the Bride will stand to indicate to guests that it is time to stand

Bride Enters:

- Bride enters with her father
- Bride enters with _____
- Any special entrance details we should be aware of?

Any additional notes for the processional?:

CEREMONY:

Your pastor may opt to use different wording; this is just a sample. You can choose to move around service elements for a different flow. You will review and finalize the plan with your pastor.

OPENING REMARKS:

Spoken by Pastor:

Good afternoon. Welcome friends and family. Thanks for joining us here today to witness and celebrate the marriage of GROOM and BRIDE. Marriage is a holy relationship, instituted by God, regulated by his commandments, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be held in honor among all people. On behalf of GROOM and BRIDE and their families, I'd like to welcome you to this very special occasion.

PRAYER OF INVITATION:

[AUDIENCE SEATED]

PRESENTATION OF THE BRIDE:

Pastor: Who gives BRIDE to be married to GROOM?

- Father: I do
- Father: Her mother and I do
- Father and mother: We do
- Other
- We will not be including the presentation of the bride

TIP: Choreograph this moment in advance – e.g. the Father of the bride lifts the bride's veil, gives the bride a hug, shakes groom's hand, then puts her hand in his and sits.

- Bride gives bouquet to MOH and holds hands with the groom (facing groom and holding both hands or facing pastor and holding one hand)
- Bride holds bouquet until wedding vows

CHARGE:

Pastor: Marriage was God's idea. He decided at the creation of the world that this was the highest and best relationship that a man and woman could have. God stood in my place in the Garden of Eden as He was the minister and the sole witness of the very first wedding. Marriage was then guarded in the tones of thunder on the top of Mt Sinai when God gave the law to Moses demanding lifelong fidelity.

Jesus did his first miracle in Cana of Galilee at a wedding and will culminate his great work of forgiveness with a grand marriage feast in heaven when he will be united with his bride, the church. A Christian marriage is centered in Christ and ordained by God. It shows us the mystery of the union between Christ and his church. And the Scriptures command it to be honored among all people.

SCRIPTURE READING:

Your pastor will be glad to make suggestions if you do not have a passage in mind.

- We would like 1 scripture passage read: _____ (e.g. Colossians 3:12-17 NIV)
This passage will be read by: _____
- We would like 2 scripture passages read: _____
The passages will be read by: _____
 - The second passage will be read later in the service
- Other

MESSAGE:

Pastor: (about 15 minutes)

WEDDING VOWS:

You may choose your own vows, but your pastor needs to approve them ahead of time.

[Bride gives bouquet to Maid of Honor if she hasn't already. Bride and groom turn to face each other and hold hands if they haven't already.]

- We will be using the vows below
- We will be using a different set of traditional vows
- We will be writing our own vows

Pastor: I will have you repeat each line after me.

I, GROOM take you BRIDE to be my wife, and I promise before God that I will share my life with you, in all love and honor, through joy and sorrow, in sickness and health, as long as we both shall live, and according to God's holy plan, I give you my love.

I, BRIDE take you GROOM to be my husband, and I promise before God that I will share my life with you, in all love and honor, through joy and sorrow, in sickness and health, as long as we both shall live, and according to God's holy plan, I give you my love.

RING VOWS:

Pastor: GROOM and BRIDE will give each other rings as symbols and reminders of the vows they made today.

[BEST MAN HANDS GROOM THE RING FOR THE BRIDE]

Pastor with Groom repeating: "BRIDE, I give you this ring, wear it with love and joy. I choose you to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish as long as we both shall live. Receive it now as a symbol of our endless union, and unbroken love."

[BEST MAN HANDS BRIDE THE RING FOR THE GROOM]

Pastor with Bride repeating: "GROOM, I give you this ring, wear it with love and joy. I choose you to be my husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish as long as we both shall live. Receive it now as a symbol of our endless union, and unbroken love."

SAMPLE OF SPECIAL SERVICE ELEMENTS:

Other special elements include communion, foot washing, ring warming, worship songs, etc.

Unity Candle Ceremony:

Pastor: GROOM and BRIDE will now take part in a Unity Candle Ceremony to symbolize that they are united in God's eyes as husband and wife, no longer two, but one.

You two become one in God's eyes today. But there will be moments when you don't feel one. When you are feeling the tension of personality differences, conflicting opinions about big decisions, when you are feeling hurt or misunderstood by the other person. May the memory of this ceremony remind you that God sees you as one and calls you to live out that oneness in your marriage. It is a lifelong journey of learning to love and forgive, connect and reconnect, letting the challenges you face make your relationship stronger and more unified than ever before.

SONG:

DURING UNITY CANDLE

[GROOM and BRIDE walk behind the table, light the middle candle, extinguish the original candles, and return to their places]

IMPORTANT: Make sure to include any setup for special elements earlier in the service where necessary. For a unity candle, this would be when the parents/mothers light the separate candles.

We will be including one or more special elements in our service.
(In the box below, please list out your special elements along with where you would like them in the service)

PRAYER OF BLESSING:

- Invite the parents to lay hands on the couple as the Pastor prays
- Invite the parents and the bridal party to lay hands on the couple as the Pastor prays
- Invite everyone to reach out their hands toward the couple symbolically
- None of the above

PRONOUNCEMENT:

Pastor: *GROOM and BRIDE, you have heard these words about love and marriage. Before God and this congregation, you have exchanged your vows and confirmed your commitment to the giving and receiving of rings. You have felt the support of the witnesses gathered here today. By the authority vested in me as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, I pronounce that GROOM and BRIDE are now husband and wife, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, what God has united, let no man divide.*

KISS:

Pastor: GROOM, you may kiss your bride

[Maid of Honor hands BRIDE her flowers]

ANNOUNCE COUPLE:

Pastor: It is now my distinct honor to introduce to you for the very first time!

- Mr. and Mrs. GROOM Last Name
- Mr. and Mrs. GROOM and BRIDE Last Name
- GROOM and BRIDE Last Name
- Mr. GROOM Last Name and Mrs. BRIDE Last Name
- Other: _____

RECESSIONAL:

[GROOM and BRIDE exit followed by bridal party]

- Parents/grandparents will also exit before the other guests are dismissed

DIRECTIONS/DISMISSAL:

- "GROOM and BRIDE will be in shortly to greet you and dismiss you by row. They invite you to celebrate with them at [Reception details]."
- "Please wait for the ushers to dismiss you by row to the receiving line in the lobby. GROOM and BRIDE invite you to celebrate with them at [Reception details]."
- "Please wait for the ushers to dismiss you by row. There will be no receiving line, so GROOM and BRIDE invite you to celebrate with them at [Reception details]."
- "There will be no receiving line, so you are dismissed. GROOM and BRIDE invite you to celebrate with them at [Reception details]."
- Other: _____

DISMISSAL MUSIC:

- Musicians play in the background as people are leaving
- Soundtrack plays in the background as people are leaving

TO REVIEW WITH WEDDING COORDINATOR:

Tech Needs

- Speakers
- Microphones
- Computer projection
- Lighting Support (curtains up or down?)
- Other A/V system elements

Rehearsal Details

Rehearsal date and start time:

Time the wedding party will be decorating the church, if applicable:

Any special requests for the Rehearsal?

Don't forget to bring your marriage license and any decorations or service elements that you plan to have at the wedding to the Rehearsal. The pastor honorarium is also traditionally given at the Rehearsal.

Wedding Day Details

Ceremony date and start time:

Do you want the ceremony to start 5 minutes later to make space for late guests?:

Time the wedding party plans to arrive (*Anything sooner than 2 hours before the ceremony is an extra cost*):

Time the florist, musicians, or other vendors plan to arrive:

What rooms do you need reserved for the wedding party to get ready in/hide in?

Any other building needs?

Any other special requests?