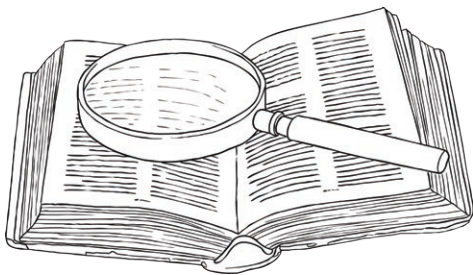


What Happens at a Christian Wedding?

For Christians, marriage is very important. Most Christians believe sexual relations and the bringing up of children should take place only after marriage. Christians believe marriage should be for life, though some Christians will accept divorce in certain situations.

A Christian wedding ceremony is an important occasion that reflects their beliefs about the nature of marriage; as a result, it has many symbolic elements.

The ceremony will usually start when the bride enters the church. She will wear a white dress, which symbolises purity. This reflects the fact that many Christian denominations believe both the bride and groom should be virgins when entering a marriage. Though some denominations accept this may not be the case in the modern world, the tradition of a white dress is still popular.



The priest or minister will then welcome the congregation. The wedding ceremony will vary in different denominations. However, Christian weddings will always contain prayers and readings from the Bible. These passages will be carefully chosen so that they discuss the importance marriage and offer guidance to the couple.

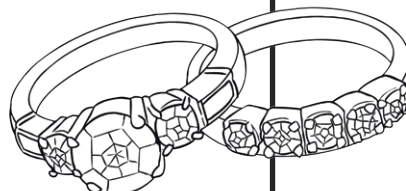
At many wedding ceremonies, the couple will light a candle (or candles). These represent the light of Jesus, which Christians believe will guide the couple throughout their lives.



For most Christians, the most important part of a wedding ceremony is the vows and exchange of rings. The vows are the promises the couple make to each other during their marriage. Couples may write their own vows, but many will choose to use traditional vows such as these suggested by the Church of England:

After making their vows, the couple exchange rings. These circular rings, which have no beginning or end, symbolise that marriage should last forever.

The wedding ceremony will usually be followed by a meal and party. These celebrate the marriage which should, of course, be a joyful occasion.



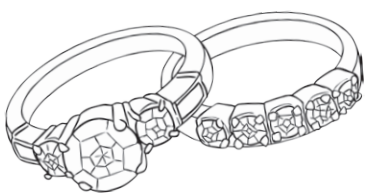
**'I, N, take you, N,
to be my wife,
to have and to hold
from this day forward;
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
till death us do part;
according to God's holy law.
In the presence of God I make this vow.'**

Symbolism at a Christian Wedding

Using the information sheet, research the symbolism of each of the things that happens at a Christian wedding shown below.







Extension

What are the vows? Why do you think some people feel this is the most important part of the wedding?

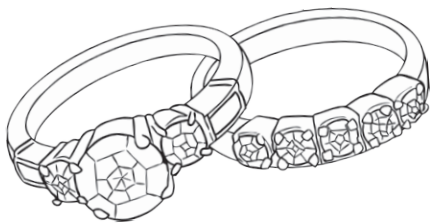
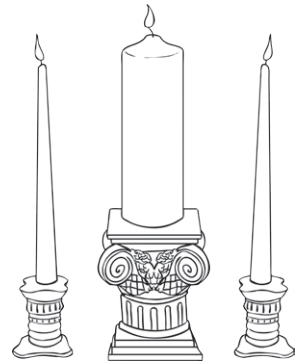
Symbolism at a Christian Wedding **Answers**

The woman's wedding dress is usually white. This symbolises the purity of the couple entering the marriage.



Readings from the Bible are made about marriage and relationships. These contain messages of guidance to help the couple and their guests.

Lighting a candle (or candles) represents the light of Christ which will guide the couple in their married life.



The wedding rings are circular and have no beginning or end. This represents the marriage lasting forever.

Extension

What are the vows? Why do you think some people feel this is the most important part of the wedding?

The vows are the promises the bride and groom make to each other. The vows can vary depending on the couples' preference but usually promise to stay together forever. It often includes the line of caring for each other in 'sickness and in health'. The vows are considered important as they show commitment to each other.