

**These are some of the questions I ask couples in the beginning of the ceremony planning process**

As a wedding officiant I often meet with couples and I ask them if they have questions. Generally, they don't even know what to ask. So much of what's involved in a wedding ceremony is often thought of as a church service. When you aren't having a church service what exactly do you do????

What I do when I sit down with a couple is just start asking questions.

And, most of my questions are based on experience so they can be totally bizarre questions. And honestly? Some of my more bizarre questions all happened at one wedding. It goes something like this...

**How many guest are you inviting?**

**How many people are in your wedding party?**

**What kind of wedding are you looking for? Religious or nonreligious or a mix of both?**

This gives more of an idea of what you want. Perhaps you want a Christian ceremony or an atheist ceremony? Sometimes couples want a Star Wars ceremony or another theme. This would be the point where you would explain your family dynamics when it comes to religion and your ceremony. There is no right or wrong here. It's how we know in which direction to go.

My idea of the ceremony is it will be love based, romantic and light hearted. I can include humor as not to be stuffy but still very respectful. I want the two of you and your guests to be engaged in the ceremony. I don't want the two of you to be nervous or sick with worry. I want you to be comfortable. I also want your guests to be engaged in the ceremony and not thinking about when the bar opens or how incredibly boring wedding ceremonies are. In the Indiana Wedding Officials Network boring ceremonies are a myth!! Memorable ceremonies are a reality! Guests usually comment that it was the best wedding ceremony they've ever been to.

At this point we can discuss parts of the ceremony that are important to you. Perhaps Jewish or Catholic traditions or a Pagan handfasting?

### **Will you be drunk at your wedding?**

The first time I asked that question the couple looked very concerned. They were under the understanding that I was not a religious officiant.

In reality, I do not care IF you are drunk at your wedding. I pretty much assume you will be drinking at your wedding. I'm concerned if you will be drunk at your ceremony. I just want to know what I'll be dealing with. I've had the reply: Absolutely! I will need at least a bottle of champagne to get through the ceremony. The rehearsal is VERY important! Other couples will know what I'm talking about and

say "we might have a problem with one of my groomsmen but he promised...." I had one bride reply "I have 7 drunkles, but they are happy drunks!" Usually, my next question is "how do you want me to respond if they interrupt your wedding ceremony?" As far as the drunkles were concerned It was agreed if they got crazy drunk and made comments I could make comments back in the same jovial manner!

Some families simply drink at parties. It's part of their family dynamics. I don't judge that. I have a family too!! I do have to keep in mind when we sign the marriage license or if lighting candles is a good idea.

### **Will you have children at your wedding and in your wedding?**

I think we can all agree that little kids in weddings are adorable! I say, don't have any expectations! They are there for cuteness factor!! The most wonderful thing I've ever seen is a groom walking down the aisle

to pick up his nephew who refused to cooperate. He LOVED his nephew, he wanted him in his wedding very, very much. The little guy was very well prepared for his job. Last minute? Someone decided it was a good idea to take the pacifier out of his mouth. LOL!!! OMG!! SO NOT A GOOD IDEA!!! The groom did not care. He scooped him up and took him to the front. The way this question came about was at a wedding with a baby. The mother and father of the baby were also in the wedding party. The baby cried the entire time. No one was

removing the child from the ceremony. Again, I just want to know. Often couple have wonderful memories of being children at family weddings and really want to go with the flow with their nieces and nephews.

Maybe you are have a completely child-free wedding with great intention. That very much sets a tone for your wedding. You want your guests (and officiant) in formal evening wear and you want a very simple ceremony so the party can begin.

### **Will you have people participating in your wedding?**

Often, couples already know who they want to participate in their ceremony. Their mothers want to be included or you want to present flowers to important people. Maybe your aunts or uncles or other relatives of friends are going to perform readings. This helps us to decide what readings or unity ceremonies are appropriate based on those performing them. Sometimes the couple will allow the readers to choose what they want to read.

Maybe you will be exchanging vows with your children? Your cousin will be singing? I want to help the ceremony to flow well and these answers are taking into consideration.

### **Would you like to write your own vows?**

Some couples most definitely do. Other couples most definitely do NOT. You should know there is no right or wrong. There are options here you may not be aware of. In many religious ceremonies the couple repeats the vows after the religious leader. I still remember asking this question to a groom and his response was:

"Why should I repeat after you? I can speak for myself!"

I had literally never thought about it that way. He makes an awesome point. Other couples know that they will be repeating after me

because that's the way it has always been done in their minds and they've practiced it, they are in it together and it's perfect!!

Some couples very much want to write their own vows. There are options with this as well. Maybe they want to be asked the simple marriage vows as a questions first and then they speak their own words. Maybe you want to exchange formal vow and use your own vows as part of your ring exchange? Once, I had a couple write their vows on scrolls and then exchange them. They then had to read the vows that were written to them. Options are endless!

### **Will you be exchanging rings?**

This seems like a very crazy question. But, it's not. Some people get tattoo's. Sometimes brides will receive a ring but the groom won't. It's got absolutely nothing to do with fidelity, the groom may be an electrician or work with his hands and know he will not wear it so they choose not to spend the money on the ring. It's written in some religious ceremony that they couple exchanges rings as part of it, like the ring has deep meaning. Personally, a ring has any meaning you choose to give it. I did recently marry a groom that lost a finger due to his wedding ring. His new bride purchased him a ring that is supposed to shatter on impact as to NOT have it happen again.

### **Will your father be giving you away or presenting you in marriage?**

This is a question a bride either has an immediate answer for or looks puzzled. Some brides are very close to their fathers. They are having their dream wedding. Of COURSE their father is giving them away!!

(duh) Other brides will definitely say "I will be presented by my father." Others will ask what I mean and I'll explain it and then they will discuss it with their father. Every family has different dynamic and this is one of those places it shows. Sometimes the brides mother will give her away. Sometimes the couple will follow a Jewish tradition of the brides family presenting the bride and the grooms family will present the groom. Some grooms have relationships with their mothers and want to include her in this way. Some brides have very adult relationships with their fathers where they will walk down the aisle together and that's it. No presentation at all. Many brides have

two dads. A biological father and a step father and they are both active in their lives and both awesome dads. Once, a bride had two full sets of parents. Her father walked her down the aisle and took his place next to his wife. Then, mom, dad, step mom and step dad stood and we asked them all who gives her away and they all answered "We do."

My brother and his wife processed down the aisle together. Some brides walk alone. There is no right or wrong!!

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