What Happens at a Christian Wedding?

For Christians, marriage is very important. Christians believe marriage should be for life, although 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.

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:

'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.'

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.