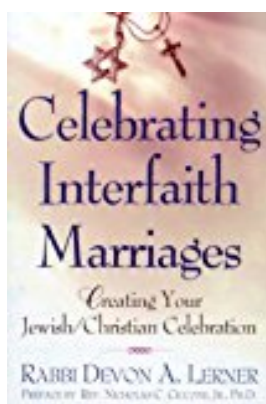


[PDF] Celebrating Interfaith Marriages: Creating Your Jewish/Christian Ceremony

- pdf download free book



Books Details:

Title: Celebrating Interfaith Marria

Author:

Released: 2011-04-01

Language:

Pages: 288

ISBN:

ISBN13:

ASIN: B0056IBGXQ

[**CLICK HERE FOR DOWNLOAD**](#)

pdf, mobi, epub, azw, kindle

Description:

About the Author Rabbi Devon A. Lerner (Arlington, MA) has served congregations in Atlanta, Richmond, and Boston. She received an M.S.W. from Boston University in 1986 and since that time has had a private practice specializing in interfaith wedding ceremonies.

* PART I *

Interfaith Weddings

On the Emotional Side

Creating your own ceremony can be fun and exciting. The process provides you as a couple with a unique opportunity to express your love in words that speak to your own hearts and souls. But the thought of creating such a ceremony scares many people. Few know where to begin, and many doubt their creative abilities. If you are feeling a bit uncertain, let me assure you that regardless of your background or level of religious education, you can craft a beautiful ceremony. All the information you need is in these pages. I will lead you step-by-step through this process, one that is easier than most imagine.

But before I begin talking about ceremonies, I want to address some of the emotional issues that often accompany wedding-day preparations.

Between You and Your Partner

When you announced your engagement, you were full of excitement and joy. Now, as you begin planning for your wedding day, you may feel a great deal of stress. This is normal. Planning any wedding, regardless of size, is stressful because of the endless number of details, including everything from choosing the color of your napkins, to deciding who will preside over your service, to managing the wishes and feelings of two different families. These details consume more time and energy than most couples anticipate, even when they have a wedding coordinator; so try to give yourselves enough space between your engagement and your wedding day to handle all of the arrangements. For most couples, this means starting the wedding planning at least a year in advance. Many popular wedding sites, bands, caterers, photographers, etc., book their calendars this early, if not earlier. If you have a year between your engagement and your wedding, you will also have enough time to make decisions about many other details without feeling too pressured. Be aware, however, that regardless of how much advanced planning you do, you will be spending a significant amount of time on last-minute details during the months just before your wedding, such as addressing your invitations, going to dress fittings, and determining the seating arrangements for your guests. In every stage of your planning, try to focus on the purpose of your gathering, which is the celebration of your love and marriage. This may sound like an obvious goal, but you can easily lose yourselves in the flurry of all the details. One way to keep your focus is to work on planning your ceremony.

In addition to the normal wedding preparations, you, as an interfaith couple, must ask yourselves questions that same-faith couples do not, such as: What does my faith mean to me? How comfortable or uncomfortable am I with my partner's faith and traditions? If we choose to have children, how will we raise them? How will our parents respond to our marriage and to our religious choices? If we choose one faith for the children, will the partner whose religion was not chosen feel left out? How will we celebrate the holidays in our home?

These are difficult questions to answer because they reach into our hearts in ways that defy logic. I have never met a couple, for example, who lost sleep over their theological differences about the nature of God. But I have met many couples who cannot decide how they will raise the children, not because they are observant Jews and Christians, but because they feel guilty or just uneasy about choosing one faith over the other.

If you are struggling over this question about how you will raise your children, you are not alone. This is usually the most difficult question that interfaith couples must answer. It is especially difficult

when both partners are strongly identified with their traditions and faith. If you choose one faith for your children, one of you must accept the fact that your children will not be raised with the traditions and beliefs so familiar and dear to you. How, for example, will you feel if your child has a bat mitzvah, but no first communion? What will happen if you have a Christmas tree in your home? How would you feel about bringing Jesus into your children's lives? How would you feel if your children did not know Jesus in the way you do? Whatever decision you make, it is certain that holidays will not be exactly the same as they were when you were growing up.

Many couples want to postpone the decision of faith for their family until their first child is born. I urge you not to do this. In my experience this decision gets more, not less, difficult over time. The real issue is not the children but your relationship. Ultimately, your children will follow whatever path you choose for them, at least for the first several years of their lives. What is it that is preventing you from coming to terms with this decision now? Are you afraid of your partner's or your family's reactions, or are you simply not sure what you yourself want? It is important to answer these and related questions so that you do not begin your marriage with a major unresolved issue. If you do choose one faith for your children and that faith is not yours, you will experience a sense of loss, and you may fear, as many do, that this choice will leave you out of a major part of your family's life. While it is true that you will not share in the religious life of your children in the same way as your partner, it is also true that your children will not love you less because of this difference. Show them and teach them about your beliefs and traditions. They will enjoy learning and feel closer to you for sharing this time with them. You will also be teaching your children, through your example, that people of different faiths can live happy, full, and shared family lives.

Of course, raising your children in one faith is not your only option. You may decide to raise them in both traditions or to let them make their own choice as they grow older. While I have my own biases about each option, I know that any one of these choices can lead to a very close and happy family life, if both you and your partner fully support the decision you make.

For more information and help dealing with this and other interfaith family life issues, I recommend that you talk to other interfaith couples and that you read some books on interfaith families. *The Intermarriage Handbook*, by Jim Remsen and Judy Petsonk (New York: Morrow, 1998), has been particularly helpful for some couples I have married and counseled. Many Reform Jewish congregations and organizations also sponsor interfaith programs for couples who want to explore these issues. Check with your local Reform rabbis and Jewish community organizations for information about programs in your area. If you like surfing the Internet, I also recommend that you visit some interfaith Web sites. They will lead you to some additional interfaith resources.

As you read and talk with others, you will discover that your conversations about interfaith issues will not end with your decision about the children or with the end of your wedding. This is not something to be feared, but welcomed as a normal part of your life. You may celebrate holidays one way this year and a different way next year. You will continue to explore and experiment until you find just the right expression for you. Remember that all of life is an ongoing process

From Your Parents' Perspective

Your wedding day is as emotional for your parents as it is for you, but for obviously different reasons. They will rejoice in your happiness, but they may feel some nostalgia and some sense of loss as they watch you pledge your love to your partner, confirming that you are not a child anymore. They will remember their own wedding day and reflect on their life together, on the good and the bad. They will be anxious about all the details of the wedding; if they are divorced, they may feel anxious about seeing each other. And the list goes on. With so much stress, it is not unusual for tensions to rise and for family members to behave in ways that you have never seen before. Try to keep in mind that this is mostly situational stress and will likely subside immediately following the wedding.

One wedding stress you can alleviate is your parents' anxiety about the ceremony itself. Both families are usually anxious about the ceremony because they do not know what to expect. They

wonder: Will the ceremony be balanced, representing both sides equally? Will the unfamiliar elements be explained so we don't feel alienated? Will the rabbi, priest, minister, or officiant say something that will offend us? Will the ceremony honor us and be sensitive to our history, customs, and beliefs? These are normal questions and concerns. You can calm your parents' fears by showing them a draft of your ceremony. They almost always feel relieved when they see the text because now they know there will be no surprises; and in the very rare event that your parents do object strongly to some part of the service, you have time to edit, if you wish.

Understanding the Jewish Response to Jesus

One element that is not usually included in interfaith ceremonies are prayers said in Jesus' name. It is not easy for many Christians to understand why many Jews react so negatively to these prayers. After all, wasn't Jesus Jewish? Do we not all pray to the same God? Of course the answer to both of these questions is yes, but the problem is more complex. It involves issues of history as well as theology.

For Christians, Jesus is the foundation and focus of their faith. He was and is the messiah, God, and their savior. His teachings, as recorded in the New Testament, are the focus of worship, study, and prayer. But for Jews, Jesus was not a messiah or God, but rather a very human prophet; so, for Jews, it is inappropriate, and even sacrilegious, to say prayers in his name.

In addition to the theologic...

- Title: Celebrating Interfaith Marriages: Creating Your Jewish/Christian Ceremony
 - Author:
 - Released: 2011-04-01
 - Language:
 - Pages: 288
 - ISBN:
 - ISBN13:
 - ASIN: B0056IBGXQ
-