

Why do people make marriage vows?

Marriage in Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism

Read the 4 quotations below. They are about getting married. How many reasons for getting married can you find in the quotations? Note down the reasons in the box at the bottom of the page.

We knew we wanted to have children so we thought it was time to get married. We thought it would be better for the children if their Mum and Dad were married.

Simon and Varsa

There were 120 people at our wedding, it was a brilliant day that we will always remember. It was a big party but everyone was there because they cared about us.

Natalie and Aaron

We met at school and were friends for ages before we started going out together. When we had been going out for a while we knew this was forever and so decided to get married. It was important for us to make our promises to one another before God and our friends and family because when times are hard that is who we will turn to for help.

Ruth and Jacob

Marriage was really important to us as Muslims because it was something the Prophet did and said others should do too. Our parents suggested we met and then we found out we got on really well and had loads in common. We decided we wanted to get married and our families helped us organise the wedding – just the start of our journey together.

Khadija and Ishmael

Some reasons to get married are...

Marriage promises

Choose to research into two religions. Choose from Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism.

Read the information sheets for the religions you have chosen. You can find them at the end of this work, on pages 4, 5 and 6.

- On the information sheets, underline any promises that are being made by a couple getting married.
- Answer the questions in the boxes below. Fill in one box for each religion that you learnt about.

What do people promise when they get married?	What do people promise when they get married?
Why do they make these promises?	Why do they make these promises?

Writing your report

Your job is to write an information leaflet about marriage for your local library. Write your information leaflet on a separate sheet of paper.

The report should:

- Be written in the third person (they, he, she)
- Be written in the present tense
- Use technical language (eg vow, ketubah, prayer, samskara)
- Share factual information about marriage vows
- Include an illustration

The following sentence starters will help you write your report. Choose at least two from each column.

Marriage is an important ceremony for many religious people because...	An example of the vows a Christian takes Is...This vow is important in marriage because...	One similarity between promises made in... and...is...	It is interesting that...
A key feature of all marriage ceremonies for Christians/ Hindus/ Jewish people is...	An example of the promises a Jewish person takes is... This promise is important in marriage because...	One difference between promises made in... and...is...	Many people who are not religious choose to marry because...
Many Christians/ Hindus/ Jewish people think...	An example of the steps a Hindu takes in the marriage ceremony are ...These steps are important in marriage because . . .	Many Christians/ Hindus/ Jewish people find marriage promises helpful because...	Many people think that...
The marriage ceremony is an ancient ceremony but...			

Creating a ceremony

What are the features of a happy marriage? Think of four features. Write each one below. Next think of a symbolic action that could take place in a marriage ceremony to represent each feature of a happy marriage. Draw or write about them below.

Feature of a happy marriage	Symbolic action to represent the feature

These resources have been taken from Opening up Promises



For more resources like this, please visit <https://shop.natre.org.uk/natre-membership/>

Resource sheet: marriage promises in Christianity

Extracts from the Church of England Marriage Service

N and N are now to enter this way of life.

They will each give their consent to the other and make solemn vows, and in token of this they will [each] give and receive a ring.

We pray with them that the Holy Spirit will guide and strengthen them, that they may fulfil God's purposes for the whole of their earthly life together.

N, will you take N to be your wife?

Will you love her, comfort her, honour and protect her, and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

I will

N, will you take N to be your husband?

Will you love him, comfort him, honour and protect him, and, forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

I will

Will you, the families and friends of N and N, support and uphold them in their marriage now and in the years to come?

We will

I, N, take you, N,
to be my husband/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;



Vows in Christian marriage

When Christians decide to marry they will talk with a minister, vicar or priest in their local chapel or church. Usually the minister will discuss with them the importance of the vows they are going to make to one another.

The vows can't be altered although sometimes couples write a poem, choose a reading or a song to express individual ideas.

For more information on weddings in Christian churches:

see: www.churchofengland.org/weddings-baptisms-funerals/weddings.aspx

www.request.org.uk/main/dowhat/weddings/wedding00.htm

Promises before God

For Christians it is important to make their promises before God. Christians believe that their marriage is a partnership of three – with God there to support them in their marriage.

Prayers in the marriage service express this belief.

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Resource sheet: marriage promises in Judaism

The ketubah: a wedding contract for Jewish people

A ketubah is signed before a Jewish wedding by both the bride and the groom. It reminds them of the seriousness of what they are doing and how they must treat one another. Most Jewish people have their ketubah designed specifically for them.

Search under images on the internet for examples of a ketubah.



Chuppah

Traditionally, the chuppah (canopy) consists of a cloth, sheet or a tallit, supported by four poles which are sometimes carried by attendants to the ceremony. A chuppah is symbolic of the home that the wedding couple will build together. There are no walls in this new home, which encourages the couple to follow in the ways of Abraham and Sarah, whose tent was always open to guests.

See: www.refuel.org.uk/jewish-way-of-life/jwol/

Skip the introduction and look under: What we do for 'Time' and then 'Life cycle'.

Exchanging the rings

When Jewish people exchange rings under the chuppah, the man and sometimes the woman speaks these vows.

'With this ring be thou consecrated unto me as my husband according to the law of God and the faith of Israel.'

A sample ketubah

On the first day of the week, the 19th day of the month of Nisan in the year 5771, Jonathan and Miriam entered into a holy covenant as husband and wife, according to the tradition of Moses and Israel, and said each to the other:

I betroth you to me in everlasting faithfulness. In the spirit of Jewish tradition, I will be your loving friend as you are mine. Set me as a seal upon your heart, like the deal upon your hand, for love is stronger than death. And I will cherish you, honour you, uphold and sustain you in all truth and sincerity, in times of joy as well as hardship. I will respect you and the divine image within you. May our hearts be united for ever in faith and hope. Let our home be built on Torah and loving kindness, rich in wisdom and reverence. May we always keep these words in our hearts as a symbol of our eternal commitment to each other: I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine.

This covenant has been witnessed and signed according to the laws and traditions that began with Abraham and Sarah and continued through Moses and the people of Israel. It is valid and binding.

Resource sheet: marriage promises in Hinduism

Saptapadi: seven steps

The most important part of a Hindu wedding is when the bride and groom take seven steps around a holy fire. These seven steps are the vows that they make to one another and the ceremony shows how close they will be to one another in married life. There are different interpretations of what the steps mean. Two different interpretations are given below.

The first step shows that the husband will lead the way. **We share a drink as a sign of sharing everything.**

The second step means that both families accept the new young person as their own child. **We share some food as a sign of sharing everything.**

The third step stands for husband and wife accepting and loving each other's families. **We agree to share our wealth.**

The fourth step is a reminder that children are a gift. **We hope for good health.**

At the fifth step, we say 'good luck or bad luck, we will be one family'. **We hope for the gift of children.**

The sixth step reminds us: Happy or sad, bride and groom will share everything. **We will celebrate all of life's good times.**

The seventh step is to say prayers to the gods and goddesses: may only death end our marriage. **We pray to God for friendship for each other for ever, to join us together in worship.**

Hindu weddings: a part of life's journey

In Hinduism there are 16 samskaras, events which mark the important parts of life's journey. Not all families follow all of the samskaras.

Marriage is an extremely important samskara.

'For me marriage was the most important day of my life so far. My wife and I are now united by our beliefs, the seven promises we made, and our love for each other. Our families have come together too.'

Amit

