

## Including Children in Ceremony

"We are a family now, a whole, Of which you are a part, And you are just as much my child, As any in my heart. I do not love you differently, Nor would I give up less, Of all that life has given me, To bring you happiness. There is no limit to my love, No boundary you might cross, No price you might be asked to pay, No need to fear its loss. We are now one, the four of us, Windows of one home. As long as I have life and breath, You'll never be alone."

"If children are coming into the marriage, there are many different ways to involve the children in the wedding ceremony itself. I believe it is very important that if children are coming into the marriage that they be recognized or participate in some aspect of the wedding ceremony itself. Children often can not express fears or doubts they have."

"As I have children myself, I am very aware as to how much children will be an influence in the couple's life together. Involving children in the ceremony help them to transition to the new relationship they are now a part of."

### MENTIONING THE CHILDREN:

"I think it is much more important that children hear their names mentioned in the ceremony, than it is that they play any major part of the ceremony. Mentioning their name during the wedding assures that they are an important part of the occasion and have special status which guests and other family members attending do not. Children need to feel important to their parents."

"If children are coming into the marriage, it is appropriate to mention in the ceremony that not only is a marriage being formed, but also a family - and then name each child. If a prayer is in the ceremony, each child's name will be stated in the prayer."

### WHEN CHILDREN FEEL "LEFT OUT":

"Most couples are careful to take time to talk to the children about the marriage before the wedding day and involve children in some aspect of the ceremony. Where children tend to be left out is immediately after the ceremony. The bride and groom walk away and are crowded by "big people" - with the children left out of the immediate post ceremony celebration."

"When children tend to feel most left out is immediately after the ceremony. Children tend to see the world as revolving around themselves - and the wedding ceremony as also their day.

They feel very left out if all the adults celebrate and they are ignored at the end. They also do not know what to do after the ceremony ends."

"The couple should take a moment to hug their children, thank them for helping in the

ceremony, then telling them they are free to play. This recognition is very important."

### **NON CEREMONY ROLES FOR CHILDREN:**

"With many weddings, a good way to involve children (except very young) is to give each their own one-time use camera and have them take pictures they think are important. It will be interesting to see what pictures they take and the photos could be theirs later when developed."

### **CHILDREN IN THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY:**

"Generally, children will not share your sense of excitement about the wedding. Rather, to them it seems more a party occasion. Usually, giving children major roles in the ceremony quickly becomes chores. It is generally best to give a child only one active role and also to be mentioned in the ceremony, rather than to actively involve a child at many different points throughout the ceremony.

"With teenagers, some care should be taken not to give them roles they may feel silly doing. Care should be given in asking a teenager to give the bride away or state agreement with the marriage - as the child may not really feel fully comfortable with the marriage, yet does not want to say so."

### **PARTICIPATION IN THE CEREMONY:**

"For younger children, usually the simple task of holding the rings or bouquet is enough to accomplish a sense of participation. For teenagers, the role may be as simple as standing up with the couple, playing the CD or tape of wedding music, or even just taking pictures of the ceremony."

### **WALKING THE BRIDE FORWARD:**

"If the bride's children, sometimes the children will walk forward with the bride. When asked "who brings this woman to this man?" they answer "We do" or "We do for the family".

### **GIFT FOR THE CHILDREN**

"Typically, couples give children a gift right after they exchange their own rings and vows - usually a necklace or ring - along with a hug and an "I love you."

### **VOWS FOR CHILDREN:**

"Occasionally, a couple will have the children asked, "Do you accept this family and the marriage?" Care should be taken in this decision, as sometimes the child is not completely comfortable with the marriage.