

# Get Gospel Top Tips

## Our top 10 tips for civil ceremonies!

by Jules Rendell

- 1. Be on time!** Civil ceremonies are a lot quicker than church ones, and unfortunately sometimes registrars can be very busy with a number of weddings in one day. If you're unlucky enough to be on a day like that, the later you are, the shorter your service will be. Think of all that preparation and thought you've poured into the order of service, and suddenly it's rushed, chopped and cut short. We recently sang at a wedding where the bride was only ten minutes late - fairly normal for a church wedding - but the registrar had a whopping six weddings to officiate that day! Their service was a stingy 17 minutes long, with one song cut, one reading cut and a very rushed officiation. How sad! You only have one wedding ceremony - make it count and be on time.
- 2. No religion allowed!** That's right, you're not allowed anything remotely religious in a civil ceremony. Sometimes couples forget what actually is religious, as so much religious music is entwined with our culture. For example, the hymn 'Jerusalem', or 'I Vow To Thee My Country' are both popular sports anthems but both hymns. Registrars sometimes ask to see the lyrics of the songs we sing to check it's all religion free. And sometimes, because our name is *Get Gospel*, you can't even put our name in the orders of service! Thankfully, not all registrars are this strict but it's always good to check with them, or check with us what songs you can have.
- 3. Make the service your own.** As civil ceremonies are short, it can all be over far too soon. Take time to figure out how to make it memorable and special. Readings can be funny, instructional or deep - and if you can get all three in one go, you're winning. I recommend choosing things that make your guests chuckle to help them - and you - relax.
- 4. Choose songs that represent your tastes.** Go for what you enjoy rather than what you think you should have, or what your mother wants! If you're not into classical music, Pachelbel's Canon will bore you to tears. Get your guests clapping along to *Happy* instead. If you prefer the Star Wars theme tune to Ed Sheeran's *Thinking Out Loud* go for it 100%! It's these things that make your wedding stick in people's minds for years to come.
- 5. Be yourselves.** Relax. Enjoy the ride. Laugh. Giggle. Cry. Don't be afraid to talk to the registrar or your guests - this is YOUR day, and these are your friends and family. No one will tell you off! Be mindful; take it all in as it's happening. Let your personalities shine through.

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- 6. Take time to walk down the aisle.** It may be the most nerve wracking thing you'll do that decade, or even your life, with everyone looking at you, acute self awareness, anxiety you'll trip over and being about to make the most important declaration of your life... (oh dear, I'm probably making it worse!) but atmosphere is everything in a moment like this. Civil ceremonies are often held in smaller rooms than church ceremonies, so you've less walking time to play with. You may want to send your bridesmaids down the aisle first. Make sure they walk slowly too *and smile!* I've been a bridesmaid six times so far and it doesn't come instinctively even to a smiley person like me, so your bridesmaids may need encouragement. Depending on the length of the song you pick, it's quite likely that you should wait for quite a while before you begin walking. It's always better to build up anticipation than rush.
- 7. Practise the processional walk.** You can always ask for a copy of the music you're having for a entrance rehearsal. Visualise it in the days leading up and on the morning itself. Preparation is everything.
- 8. Consider carefully what atmosphere you'd like to create.** Is it serene? Is it joyful? Is it excited? Is it emotional? Do you have a message that you want to convey through the music? Find a song to convey those feelings - we can help you find one, even if it isn't one that we're going to sing. I've sung at hundreds of weddings with all types of music, so I have lots of ideas.
- 9. Make walking out as husband and wife a joyful moment!** Take your time, enjoy the applause, do a dance if you feel inclined! We recommend upbeat, happy songs for the recessional, and ones that have an impact straight away. Songs can sometimes be rearranged to start with a bang in case it takes 45 seconds to get to the well known chorus. We are all set to help you choose and give advice as to what will work well on the day.
- 10. There's a before and after too!** Have you ever been to a wedding where there's deathly silence after the exit song has finished? It's feels quite weird! It's good to figure out what music would be good to follow on - oftentimes we sing after the ceremony too, sometimes outside as guests are mingling for a spot of entertainment. Before the ceremony, it's important to create an atmosphere, whether it's joyful and exciting or calm and focused. Music is the only thing that can really do that.

Well, I hope I've given you some good pointers and I hope I haven't piled a bunch more of organisation on your plate! If there's one thing I want to communicate, it's how important music is to the overall atmosphere of the ceremony - it can make it so memorable! And that's what we aspire to do for every single wedding we perform at.

Good luck!