

WEDDING CEREMONY OPTIONS

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Dear Bride & Groom,

Please delete what you don't want to use, insert whatever you like to personalize your ceremony & e-mail this document back to me at least a week before your date.

PRESENTATION OF THE BRIDE

- #1 Who joins this couple in the celebration of their marriage today?
Respondent, "We do" or "I do"
- #2 Who gives their blessings on this marriage and the joining of this family?
Respondent, "We do" or "I do"
- #3 We are here because we love _____ & _____.
We rejoice that they have found each other and that through each other,
They have come to know the power of love. We are gathered here today to
support and share that love. We celebrate this union of their hearts, minds, bodies
& souls and wish them great joy.
- #4 Friends, we are gathered here today in the presence of God to share with _____
and _____ in the most important time of their lives. In the time they
have been together, their love has grown & matured and now, they shall begin
their journey together as husband & wife.

OPENING POEM OR READING

- #1 Love is patient, love is kind.
It does not envy, it does not boast
It is not proud, it is not rude.
It is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered.
It keeps no record of wrongs.
Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects,
always trusts, always hopes, always preserves. (From I Corinthians 13:1-13)
Love is not possession or ownership.
Love arises out of our own sense of well-being and our connectedness to all
things. Therefore, love is generous and yields freedom & trust. Out of love,
We learn to use our gifts to heal and serve, to create peace around us, to honor all
that is sacred in life, to bless what we encounter and wish all beings well.
May you be filled with loving-kindness.
May you be well, mind, body & spirit.
May you be peaceful and at ease
May you share a lifetime of happiness.

#2 A mountain needs a valley to fill complete. The valley does not make the mountain less, but more. And the valley is more a valley because it has a mountain towering over it. So let it be that way with both of you. May you need one another, not to fill you emptiness but to know your fullness.
May you want one another, but not out of lack.
May you entice one another, but not compel one another.
May you embrace one another, but not encircle one another.
May you succeed in all your endeavors, yet not fail in little graces.
May you look for things to praise and pay no attention to small faults.
May you have happiness and may you find it making each other happy.
May you have love, and may you find it loving each other.

#3 “Marriage” from Kahlil Gibran’s The Prophet

You were born together, and together you shall be forever more.
You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days.
But let there be spaces in your togetherness.
And let the winds of heaven dance between you.
Love one another, but make not a bond of love;
let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.
Fill each other's cup, but drink not from one cup.
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.
Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone.
Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music.
Give your heart, but not into each other's keeping.
For only the hands of life can contain your hearts.
And stand together yet not too near together:
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.

#4 By Elizabeth Barret Browning:
I love you not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you.
I love you not only for what you make of yourself, but for what you are making of me. I love you for the part of me you bring out; I love you for putting your hands on my heaped up heart and passing over all the foolish weak things.... and for drawing out the light, all the beautiful belongings that no one else had looked quite far enough to find.
I love you because you have done more than any creed could have done to make me good and more than any fate could of done to make me happy.
You have done it without a touch, without a word, without a sign. You have done it by being yourself.

OPTIONAL

As families and friends, you form the community of support that surrounds _____ and _____. Each of you, by your presence here today, is being called upon to uphold them in honoring and loving each other. Always stand beside them, never between them. Offer them your love and support, not your judgment. Encourage them with your kindness and loving hearts, and honor this marriage into which they have come to be joined today.

What is marriage?

It is the most beautiful thing that can happen between two people in love. A marriage is more than just husband and wife. It is a bridge, which allows the love of two special people to give meaning and worth and wonder to life. It is a continual process of building; of shaping; of communicating; of caring. It is the deepest and sweetest understanding. It is sharing today's and tomorrow's together and making each one more treasured and more complete than anyone could make alone. A marriage is a home interwoven with hopes and memories and dreams. The thankfulness and love it can bring have no comparison.

SECOND READING

#1 From "The Art of Marriage" by William A Peterson

A good marriage must be created.
In the marriage, the little things are the big things.
It is remaining young at heart with a desire to hold hands.
It is remembering to say "I Love you" at least once a day.
It is never going to sleep angry.
It is remaining grateful for each other each and every day.
It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives.
It is standing together, facing the world.
It is doing things for each other in the spirit of joy.

It is making the commitment to forgive and forget.
It is not only marrying the right person,
It is being the right partner

#2 *The Bridge Across Forever* by Richard Bach

A soul mate is someone who has locks that fit our keys, and keys to fit our locks. When we feel safe enough to open the locks, our truest selves step out and we can be completely and honestly who we are; we can be loved for who we are and not for who we're pretending to be. Each unveils the best part of the other. No matter what else goes wrong around us, with that one person we're safe in our own paradise. Our soul mate is someone who shares our deepest longings, our sense of direction. When we're two balloons, and together our direction is up, chances are we've found the right person. Our soul mate is the one who makes life come to life.

#3 In the Tale of the Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams, the Skin Horse explains how when somebody truly loves you, they make you "real."

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

"I suppose *you* are real?" said the Rabbit. And then he wished he had not said it, for he thought the Skin Horse might be sensitive. But the Skin Horse only smiled.

"The Boy's Uncle made me Real," he said. "That was a great many years ago; but once you are Real you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always."

This is the love that becomes blind through the ages, seeing only the pureness of spirit and inner beauty that never fades. May you always appreciate this in each other, as the years pass and you grow old together.

CONVOCATION

- #1 There are no obligations on earth more sweet or tender than those you are about to assume. There are no vows more solemn than those you are about to make. There is no human institution more sacred than that of the commitment you are about to make. From this day forward, you shall be each other's home, comfort & refuge. Your marriage will be strengthened by mutual love & respect.
- #2 Marriage is as ancient an institution as the human family. A wedding is more than a social event or a mere formal observance. It is the celebration of a couple's highest aspirations. A relationship this sacred must not be entered into casually or frivolously, but thoughtfully and deliberately. It is into this covenant that _____ and _____ come now to be joined.
- #3 Christian marriage is not living merely for each other; it is two persons, uniting & joining hands to serve God. Seek His kingdom first, His righteousness, and He will add all other things to you. Do not expect perfection from each other—that belongs solely to God. You need not minimize each other's weaknesses, but always be swift to praise & magnify each other's points of comeliness & strength, and see each other through kind and patient eyes. May you never take each other's love for granted.
- #4 Treat your marriage as a living thing. Treat it with respect and nourish it with whatever it needs to keep it young and vibrant. Remember to be kind to one another. Strive to be gentle with criticism and generous with praise. Be empathetic and trusting. Allow yourselves to transcend your own limitations through the love you have for each other. It is love which shatters all limitations and dissolves all fears. What has brought you together will keep you whole for love is life's greatest emotion and its finest work.
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INVOCATION

- #1 We give thanks for the longing for love and for the capability of loving. We give thanks for _____ and _____, for their open hearts and willing spirits and for the example of love that they embody in our presence. Be with them on this joyous occasion of showing their love, and may all of us who witness this occasion be blessed.
- #2 Join us on this happy day and let this be a day of joy and thanksgiving as we celebrate good fortune for us all. May we embrace all the possibilities for experiencing love that marriage will bring. We ask that the vision that _____ and _____ have of each other always be as radiant as it is today.
- #3 May you be surrounded by deep love and wonderful friends.
May you live together to see your children's children.
May you be poor in misfortune and rich in luck.
May you know nothing but happiness from this day forward.
- #4 We walk through this earth in search of love and understanding, and when these things make themselves felt through the gaze of another person's eyes, we can't help but be moved by it. We want to acknowledge this miracle by recognizing that it is part of the mystery of life. What better way to celebrate the mystery of life than in the midst of nature and these beautiful trees and flowers. Natural beauty reminds of all that is good and pure and right in this world. Every spring as mother nature gives re-birth to all the plants around us, _____ and _____ will continually be reminded of how pure their love is, and may that love be made new again with every changing season....(may continue with Cherokee Prayer)
- #5 Cherokee Prayer
God in heaven above, please protect the ones we love.
We honor all you created as we pledge our hearts and lives together.
We honor Mother Earth and ask for our marriage to be abundant and grow stronger through the seasons.
We honor fire and ask that our union be warm and glowing with love in our hearts.
We honor wind and ask that we sail through life calm and safe in our father's arms.
We honor water to clean and sooth our relationship that it may never thirst for love.
With all the forces of the Universe that you created, we pray for harmony and true happiness as we grow young together.
Amen.
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SERMON

- #1 This ceremony is an opportunity for _____ and _____ to celebrate their love and to honor everyone who has given so much to them. They have been preparing for this day all of their lives and have chosen you as their witnesses. As their witnesses, you have the privilege of experiencing their love in its highest form. Love is the strongest power there is. Love can change lives and make the world a better place. Marriage and family are the most significant bonds in our lives.

Recognizing this, we know we are called to marriage by no mistake. _____ and _____, as you step into marriage, remember the love you feel for each other right now, because marriage will be a process of change and growth. If you approach the future as a united front, you will grow together, rather than drift apart. Remember that when you choose a particular person to make your life whole, you are choosing to be affected by their actions. Whatever is missing in your character, will gradually develop and together you will support each other's spiritual journey and personal growth.

OPTIONAL- LIGHTING OF THE UNITY CANDLE

At this time, I would like to invite the mothers of the bride and groom forward to light a candle, offering their blessings on this relationship.
(TO THE BRIDE AND GROOM)

As you both take your candles to light the unity candle, may it signify to all that this one candle embodies the love that _____ and _____ share, and from this moment forward, you both will be as one.

- #2 (TO THE GROOM)

God has ordained man as the spiritual head, as the responsible provider and as the initiator of love in this human relationship. By His establishment, your strength must be your wife's protector, your character her boast & pride. You must live so that she will find a haven in you for which the heart of a woman truly longs.

(TO THE BRIDE)

It is God's purpose that you be a loving, faithful wife and that you respond to your husband's tenderness with a deep sense of understanding. It is His desire that you possess that inner beauty of soul that never fades: that eternal youth that is found in holding fast the things that never age.

(TO THE COUPLE)

Christian marriage is not merely, living for each other; it is 2 people uniting hands to serve God. May you serve him happily, faithfully, together all the days of your lives. You both stand before us as children of God. It is the duty of you both to delight each in the society of the other, to remember that in interest and in reputation, as in affection, to be henceforth one and undivided. See to it that what God has brought together, man will never tear apart.

#3 Apache Marriage Blessing

Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be the shelter for each other. Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be the warmth for the other. Now you are two persons, but there is only one life before. Go now to your dwelling place to enter into the days of your life together. And may your days be good and long upon the earth.

Treat yourselves and each other with respect, and remind yourselves often of what brought you together. Give the highest priority to the tenderness, gentleness and kindness that your connection deserves. When frustration, difficulty and fear assail your relationship - as they threaten all relationships at one time or another - remember to focus on what is right between you, not only the part which seems wrong. In this way, you can ride out the storms when clouds hide the face of the sun in your lives - remembering that even if you lose sight of it for a moment, the sun is still there. And if each of you takes responsibility for the quality of your life together, it will be marked by abundance and delight.

Optional reading from : Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12

“Two are better than one because they have a good return from their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one that falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.”

Optional reading from Ruth 1: 16-17

“But Ruth said, Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people will be my people, and your God, my God.”

EXPRESSION OF INTENT/ VOWS

#1 _____, will you take this man to be your wedded husband, to live together according to ethical principles? Will you love him in pain and in sorrow? Will you share joy with him when he is happy and respect his dignity as a man, from this day forward, forsaking all others? (BRIDE: “I DO”)

_____, will you take this woman to be your wedded wife, to treat her with honor and respect? Will you love her in pain and in sorrow? Will you share in her joy when she is happy and be true to her, forsaking all others?
(GROOM: “I DO”)

#2 _____ and _____, do you come to this union with a sincere desire to join your lives together? (BRIDE & GROOM “WE DO.”) (Face each other, holding hands)

BRIDE: I _____, take you _____ to be my wedded husband, my partner in life and my one true love. I will cherish your friendship and love you today tomorrow and forever. I will trust and honor you. I will laugh and cry with you and faithfully love you throughout the best and most challenging times. I will always be there for you, as I have given you my hand to hold, so I give you my life to keep.

GROOM: I _____, take you _____, to be my wedded partner in life and my one true love, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, honor and cherish all the days of your life.

#3 Are you ready to say the vows you prepared for each other?
(BRIDE & GROOM RESPOND TOGETHER: “YES”.)

#4 I _____, take you _____ to be my wedded partner in life.
In your eyes, I have found my home.
In your heart, I have found my love.
In your soul, I have found my mate.

Optional response from the congregation:

Ladies & gentlemen here today, do you offer your support & guidance to help nurture the love that _____ & _____ have for each other. If so, respond by saying “I do” (congregational response)

BLESSING OF MARRIAGE

#1 May the light of friendship guide your path together.
May the laughter of children grace the halls of your home.
May the joy of living for one another trip a smile to your lips.
And may the promises you make to each other hold fast and

all you heart's desires be fulfilled.

- #2 Let us pray: Our hearts are filled with great happiness as _____ and _____ pledge their lives to each other. Grant that they will always be true and loving to one another. Temper their hearts with kindness and understanding. May the home they are creating today be a place of love and harmony. Bless this marriage we pray; Amen.
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BLESSING OF THE RINGS

- #1 From the earliest times, the circle has been a symbol of completeness, a symbol of committed love. An unbroken and never ending circle symbolizes a commitment of love that is also never ending. As often as either of you look at this symbol, you will be reminded of your commitment to love each other, which you have made today.
- #2 For thousands of years couples have exchanged rings as tokens of their vows. These simple metal bands are not of great value in and of themselves, but are made precious by wearing them. Your rings say that even in your uniqueness, you have chosen to be bound together.
- #3 Wedding rings are an outward and visible sign of an inward spiritual grace and the unbroken circle of love, signifying to all the union of this man and this woman in marriage. May these rings, which symbolize never-ending love for each other, be blessed and serve as daily reminders of the commitment you made today.
- #4 Just as we bear witness to a written covenant with our signature, so, too, do we exchange wedding rings to seal the vows of marriage. Wedding rings are an enduring symbol that remind us of the pledges we have made to each other and of our responsibility to honor each other by honoring our promises.
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RING EXCHANGE

- #1 Groom/ Bride: I give you this ring as a token of my abiding love, as a sign that I have chosen you above all others. All that I am, and all that I have, I offer to you in joy, in thanksgiving and in sacred union.
- #2 Groom/ Bride: With this ring, I thee wed.
- #3 I _____, give you _____, this ring as a symbol of my commitment to love, honor & respect you. Just as this circle is without end, my commitment to you is eternal.
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OPTIONAL HANDFASTING:

MINISTER TO THE BRIDE:

BRIDE, please hold GROOM'S hands, palms up, where you may see the gift they are to you.

These are the hands of your best friend, young and strong and vibrant with love, that are holding yours on your wedding day, as he promises to love you all the days of his life. These are the hands that will work along side yours, as together you build your future, as you laugh and cry, as you share your innermost secrets and dreams. These are the hands that will passionately love you and cherish you through the years, for a lifetime of happiness together. These are the hands that will countless times wipe the tears from your eyes: tears of sorrow and tears of joy. These are the hands that will comfort you when you are sick, or console you when you are grieving. These are the hands that will tenderly lift your chin and brush your cheek as they raise your face to look into his eyes. Eyes that are filled completely with his overwhelming love and desire for you.

MINISTER TO GROOM

GROOM, please hold BRIDE'S hands, palms up, where you may see the gift they are to you. These are the hands of your best friend, smooth, young and carefree, that are holding yours on your wedding day, as she pledges her love and commitment to you all the days of her life. These are the hands that will hold you tight as you struggle through difficult times. These are the hands that will comfort you when you are sick, or console you when you are grieving. These are the hands that will passionately love you and cherish you through the years, for a lifetime of happiness. These are the hands that will give you support as she encourages you to chase down your dreams. Together as a team, everything you wish for can be realized.

MINISTER

I will now tie this ribbon around BRIDE and GROOM'S hands signifying the love, trust and togetherness they will always share.

PRONOUNCEMENT

- #1 _____ and _____ have come together with their hearts and minds and souls, and pledged to one and other in holy matrimony. I now pronounce them husband and wife. You may kiss the bride!
- #2 _____ and _____, you have declared before all of us that you will live together in marriage. You have made special promises to each other, which have been symbolized by the joining of hands, the sharing of vows and the receiving of rings. By the authority vested in me by the State of Maryland, I now pronounce you to be husband and wife.
OPTIONAL: You may kiss the bride.
- #3 By joining hands now, let it be known that _____ and _____ are joined, body and soul in this lifetime, and that this bond is sacred and eternal. And now that you have stood before me and exchanged these rings and these vows, it gives me great pleasure to present, for the first time, Mr. and Mrs _____!
- #4 Now that you have joined yourselves to each other by solemn vows, and the giving and receiving of rings, I do now, by virtue of the authority invested in me, pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss the bride!
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