

OPTIONAL CEREMONY ADD ONS

Family and Friends Response:

Marriage is the promise of hope between two people who love each other, who honor each other as individuals, and who wish to unite their lives and share the future together. In this ceremony, they dedicate themselves to the happiness and well-being of each other, in a union of mutual caring and responsibility. Therefore, it is all the more important that those of you here with _____ and _____ may stand as witnesses to the happiness which they have found together, and to the promises they have made to each other. As they join their lives in marriage, they also bring you together in a new relationship, creating new bonds of trust and ties of affection. Will all of you by God's grace, do everything in your power to preserve this marriage? Will all of you, who have supported these two in friendship and love, now bestow your blessing upon them? If so please show them your support by saying, "We will". [We will]

Unity Sand Blending Ceremony:

_____ and _____ may your love always be as constant as the never-ending waves, flowing endlessly from the depths of the sea. Just as there will never be a morning without the ocean's flow, there will never be a day without your love for each other. You have just sealed your relationship by the giving and receiving of rings. You have committed here today to share the rest of your lives with each other. This beautiful union is symbolized through the combining of these two individual shells of sand. The first shell represents you _____, and all that you were, all that you are, and all that you will ever be, and the other represents you _____ and all that you were, all that you are and all that you will ever be. Each one holds its own unique beauty, strength, and character. They can stand on their own and be whole, without need of anything else. However when these two are blended together they create an entirely new and extraordinarily more intricate entity. Each grain of sand brings to the mixture a lasting beauty that forever enriches the combination.

Please pour the sand into this common container to symbolize the union of your two lives.

This container of sand now represents your new life together, although you are two separate people your lives are now entwined together. Just as these grains of sand can never be separated and poured again into the individual containers, so will your marriage be a molding of two individual personalities, bonded together forming one heart, one love. The life that each of you experienced now, individually, will hereafter be inseparably united, for the two shall become one.

Family Sand Blending Ceremony:

We are all members of one family, God's family. Today as _____ and _____ have sealed their commitment to each other with the exchange of rings they too make a commitment to _____ and _____. We recognize the significant role that they will play in this marriage celebrated today. _____ and _____ will now join _____ and _____ in this commitment to each other by contributing a part of each individual person into one blended family. Today, this relationship is symbolized through the pouring of these _____ individual shells of sand, each representing a member of the family in all that they were, all that that are, and all that they will ever be. As each individual's sand is poured into the family's one united common container, the individual containers of sand will no longer exist, but will be joined together as one.

Please pour the sand into this common container to symbolize the blending of your lives.

Just as these grains of sand can never be separated and poured again into the individual containers, so will become the bond with your new family.

The Red Rose Exchange *First gift as husband & wife. Two roses are all that is necessary.*

_____ and _____ your gift to each other for your wedding today has been your wedding rings - which shall always be an outward demonstration of your vows of love and respect; and a public showing of your commitment to each other. You now have the most honorable title that may exist between a man and a woman - the title of "husband" and "wife." In the elegant language of flowers, red roses are a symbol of love; the giving of a single red rose is a clear and unmistakable way of saying the words "I love you." For this reason it is fitting that the first gift you exchange as husband and wife would be the gift of a single red rose.

Please exchange your first gift as husband and wife.

You both have given and received one of the most valuable and precious gifts of life - one I hope you always remember - the gift of true and abiding love within the devotion of marriage. In every marriage there are times when it is difficult to find the right words, and the ones we love the most are the ones we can most easily hurt. There are times when it may be difficult to say "I'm sorry" or "I forgive you" or "I need you" or "I'm hurting." _____ and _____ I would ask that wherever you may make your home, that you choose a special location And at those times when words fail, that you leave a red rose at that spot you have both selected -- a rose that will say what matters more than all other words..."I still love you; The other should accept this rose for the words that cannot be found, and remember the love and hope that you both have shared today.

Mothers Rose Presentation:

Marriage is a coming together of two lives and a celebration of the love of two people. But it is more. The love that _____ and _____ feel for one another is the flowering of a seed their parents planted in their hearts years ago. As they embrace one another in their love, so do they embrace the families that have been brought together on this happy occasion. As a sign

of their love for their families, _____ and _____ would like to offer these symbols of eternal love, these roses, to their mothers, _____ and _____.

_____ and _____ want you to know that your efforts were not in vain and that your love is very much appreciated, they thank you for everything you've instilled in them. These Roses are a promise that no matter how far apart you are that you are not forgotten and a reminder that you are always in their hearts and prayers.

Hand Blessing Ceremony

[Bride], please hold [Groom's] hands palms up, so you may see the gift that 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 passionately love you and cherish you through the years, for a lifetime of happiness.

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 you will place with expectant joy upon your stomach, until he too, feels his child stir within you.

These are the hands that look so large and strong, yet will be so gentle as he holds your baby for the first time.

These are the hands that will work long hours for you and your new family.

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 in illness, and hold you when fear or grief engulfs your heart.

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.

**Optional: At this point while the groom's hands are still on top, the officiant asks the groom to take a good long look at the position of his hands. As the groom looks down at his hands the officiant says, "Because this is the last time you will have the upper hand".*

[Groom], please hold [Bride's] hands palms up, so you may see the gift that 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 promises to passionately love you and cherish you through the years, for a lifetime of happiness.

These are the hands that will hold each child in tender love, soothing them through illness and hurt, supporting and encouraging them along the way, knowing when it is time to let go.

These are the hands that will massage tension from you neck and back in the evenings after you've both had a long hard day.

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 hold you in joy and excitement and hope, each time she tells you that you are to have another child, that together you have created a new life.

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.

God, bless these hands that you see before you this day. May they always be held by one another. Give them the strength to hold on during the storms of stress and the dark of disillusionment. Keep them tender and gentle as they nurture each other in their wondrous love. Help these hands to continue building a relationship founded in your grace, rich in caring, and devoted in reaching for your perfection. May [Groom] and [Bride] see their four hands as healer, protector, shelter and guide. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

Or

May these hands be blessed that we see before us this day. May they always be held by one another. May they have the strength to hold on during the storms of stress and the dark of disillusionment. May they remain tender and gentle as they nurture each other in their wondrous love. May these hands continue building a relationship founded in love, rich in caring, and devoted in reaching for perfection. May [Groom] and [Bride] see their four hands as healer, protector, shelter and guide.

Wine Ceremony:

The purpose of the Wine Ceremony is for the bride and groom to share their first drink together as wife and husband and to show the coming together of two families. This is a special moment for _____ and _____ to toast their love, devotion, and friendship.

Officiant pours wine into the Cup and holds it up.

The years of life are as a cup of wine poured out for you to drink. This cup of wine contains within it a wine with certain properties that are sweet and symbolic of happiness, joy, hope, peace, love and delight. This same wine also holds some bitter properties that are symbolic of disappointment, sorrow, grief, despair, and life's trials and tribulations. Together the sweet and the bitter represent "Love's Journey" and all of the experiences that are a natural part of it.

This cup of wine is symbolic of the cup of life. As you share the wine from this cup, you undertake to share all that the future may bring. All the sweetness life's cup may hold for each of you will be the sweeter because you drink it together. Whatever drops of bitterness it may contain will be less bitter because you share them. This cup of wine is symbolic of the pledges you

have made to one another to share together the fullness of life. As you drink from this cup, you acknowledge to one another that your lives, separate until this moment, have now become one.

Officiant hands the Cup to Bride and Groom. - *Now drink to your love you've shared in the past.*

The Bride and Groom sip from the Cup - *Drink to your love in the present, on this your wedding day.*

The Bride and Groom sip from the Cup - *And drink to your love in the future and forever more!*

_____ and _____ as you have shared the wine from this cup of wine, so may you share your lives. From love all things proceed and unto love they must return. May you find life's joys heightened, its bitterness sweetened, and all of life enriched by God's blessings upon you.

Hand-Fasting Ceremony (May be used as a substitute for the Declaration of Intent)

_____ and _____ have chosen to incorporate the ancient Celtic ritual of Hand-fasting into their wedding ceremony today. Hand-fasting is a wedding ritual in which the couples' hands are tied together with a ceremonial cloth or cord. Hand-fasting is a declaration of intent, where the bride and groom clearly state that they are marrying of their own free will.

_____ and _____ know now before you go further, that since your lives have crossed in this life, you have formed eternal and sacred bonds. As you seek to enter this state of matrimony you should strive to make real the ideals that give meaning to this ceremony and to the institution of marriage. With full awareness, know that within this circle you are not only declaring your intent to be hand-fasted before your friends and family, but you speak that intent also to God. The promises made today and the ties that are bound here greatly strengthen your union and will cross the years and lives of each soul's growth.

Do you still seek to enter this ceremony? (Yes)

_____ and _____, I please look into each others eyes. (Hold hands – Bride's left hand, Groom's right hand)

Will you honor and respect one another, and seek to never break that honor? (We will)

The first cord is draped over the couples' hands.

Will you share each other's pain and seek to ease it? (We will)

Second cord is draped over the hands.

Will you share the burdens of each so that your spirits may grow in this union? (We will)

Third cord is draped over the couples' hands.

Will you share each other's laughter, and look for the brightness in life and the positive in each other? (We will)

Fourth cord is draped over the couples' hands. [Tie cords together]

_____ and _____, as your hands are bound together now, so your lives and spirits are joined in a union of love and trust. The knots of this binding are not formed by these cords but, rather by the vows you have made. For always you hold in your own hands the fate of this union. Above you are the stars and below you is the earth. Like the stars your love should be a constant source of light, and like the earth, a firm foundation from which to grow.

God, bless these hands that you see before you this day. May they always be held by one another. Give them the strength to hold on during the storms of stress and the dark of disillusionment. Keep them tender and gentle as they nurture each other in their wondrous love. Help these hands to continue building a relationship founded in your grace, rich in caring, and devoted in reaching for your perfection. May [Groom] and [Bride] see their hands as healer, protector, shelter and guide. We ask this in Your name, Jesus, Amen.

Or

May these hands be blessed that we see before us this day. May they always be held by one another. May they have the strength to hold on during the storms of stress and the dark of disillusionment. May they remain tender and gentle as they nurture each other in their wondrous love. May these hands continue building a relationship founded in love, rich in caring, and devoted in reaching for perfection. May [Groom] and [Bride] see their hands as healer, protector, shelter and guide.

Breaking of the Glass Ceremony:

"The breaking of the glass at the end of a wedding ceremony serves to remind of two very important aspects of a marriage. The bride and groom - and everyone - should consider these marriage vows as an IRREVOCABLE ACT - just as permanent and final as the breaking of this glass is unchangeable. There have been many different explanations for the breaking of the glass. Today, the fragility of the glass suggests the frailty of human relationships. The glass is broken to protect this marriage with the implied prayer. "May your bond of love be as difficult to break as it would be to put together the pieces of this glass."

After _____ breaks the glass, I invite everyone to shout the Hebrew words "Mazel Tov," meaning "Good Luck" and "Congratulations."

The glass or light bulb is wrapped in a white towel. The best man will place the glass before the groom. However, it is not broken at this point. Instead, the officiant continues to declare the bride and groom to be "husband and wife".

With "congratulations, you may kiss your bride!" the groom then smashes the glass with his foot and kisses the bride.

Communion

The cup and the bread waits on a small table. The Minister then passes the bread to the bride and groom, each facing the other.

Minister: For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.

The groom then the serves it to the bride, the bride serves it to the groom. The Minister then lifts the cup and passes it to the bride and groom, they hold it between them.

Minister: "In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, " This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Each in turn serves the cup to the other, the groom passes it back to the Minister.

Minister: As you have shared this bread and cup, May you always share in the unity and peace of the Spirit.

Unity Candle Ceremony

_____ and _____, you have just sealed your relationship by the giving and receiving of rings. You have committed here today to share the rest of your lives with each other. This beautiful union is now symbolized by the lighting of the Unity Candle. The center candle you are about to light is a candle of Marriage. Its fire is magical because it represents the light of two people in love. It is a candle of Unity because both must come together, giving a spark of themselves, to create the new light. This candle is also a candle of Commitment because it takes two people working together to keep it aflame. It has been said that life is like a flame, It has its own warmth, and its own brilliance. But it's in the union of two, that something brighter, warmer, more wonderful takes place.

_____ and _____ please light the center candle to symbolize the union of your two lives as one.

As you have lit this candle today, may the brightness of the flame shine throughout your lives. May the radiance of this one light be a testimony of your unity. May this candle burn brightly as a symbol of your commitment to each other. May it give you strength and joy in your bodies, minds, and spirits. The life that each of you experienced now, individually, will hereafter be inseparably united, for the two shall become one. May your union be forever blessed.

The Coin Ceremony

The groom gives the bride 13 coins, or arrhae, blessed by the Minister, as a sign of his dedication to his wife's well being and the welfare of their future children. Either an attendant or an especially designated extra member of the wedding party carries the coins. After the ring exchange, the Groom is given the coins, which he then gives to the Bride. The Bride gives them in turn to her Maid of Honor. The symbolism, which may be explained by the wedding celebrant, is that the Groom recognizes his responsibility as a provider.

The Veil and the Cord/Lasso Ceremony

The Veil and and the Cord/Lasso are both associated with a wedding prayer during the ceremony. Special additional members of the wedding party are in charge of draping a white veil over the bride's head and the groom's shoulders. Then the yugal (a decorative silk cord) in a figure-eight shape--to symbolize everlasting fidelity--is placed over the shoulders of the kneeling Bride and Groom. Thus symbolically tied together and clothed as one, the couple remains kneeling for the prayer. After the prayer and before either attempt to rise, the same people who put it on remove the the Cord/ Lasso and then the Veil.

Jumping The Broom

Most often jumping of the broom occurs during the recessional, as the couple turn to head back down the aisle. The couple jumps over a decorated broom laid on the ground before them, while holding hands. This symbolizes the cutting of ties with the old life before they were together and represents the old remnants being swept away. The straw end represents the brushing away of all their old cares and worries. The strong wooden handle represents the strength of your commitment to each other, and the straight, unconditionally committed path you will follow together in marriage. The leap that the couple takes over the broom is also symbolic. Starting a new life with another person does require a "leap of faith". But by taking the

leap, the individuals make a gesture of dedication to working together through the tough times ahead and the willingness to care for and defend one another. Some say that whoever jumps the highest will be the boss of the house!

READING SELECTIONS

Marriage Joins Two People In The Circle Of Its Love - Edmund O'Neill

Marriage is a commitment to life, the best that two people can find and bring out in each other. It offers opportunities for sharing and growth that no other relationship can equal. It is a physical and an emotional joining that is promised for a lifetime. Within the circle of its love, marriage encompasses all of life's most important relationships. A wife and a husband are each other's best friend, confidant, lover, teacher, listener, and critic. And there may come times when one partner is heartbroken or ailing, and the love of the other may resemble the tender caring of a parent for a child. Marriage deepens and enriches every facet of life. Happiness is fuller, memories are fresher, commitment is stronger, even anger is felt more strongly, and passes away more quickly. Marriage understands and forgives the mistakes life is unable to avoid. It encourages and nurtures new life, new experiences, and new ways of expressing a love that is deeper than life. When two people pledge their love and care for each other in marriage, they create a spirit unique unto themselves which binds them closer than any spoken or written words. Marriage is a promise, a potential made in the hearts of two people who love each other and takes a lifetime to fulfill.

Marriage Means Being In Love for the Rest of Your Life - Chris Ardis

Marriage is love walking hand in hand together. It's laughing with each other about silly little things, and learning to discuss big things with care and tenderness. In marriage, love is trusting each other when you're apart. It's getting over disappointments and hurts, knowing that these are present in all relationships. It's the realization that there is no one else in this world that you'd rather be with than the one you're married to. It's thinking of new things to do together; It's growing old together. Marriage is being in love for the rest of your life.

Kahil Gibran (From The Prophet)

"True love gives nothing but itself, and takes nothing but from itself, for love is sufficient unto love. Love has no other desire but to fulfill itself, to awake at dawn and give thanks for another day of loving, to rest at noon and meditate love's ecstasy, to return home at eventide with gratitude, and then to sleep with a prayer for the beloved in your heart, and a song of praise upon your lips."

Unknown Author

When God created man and placed him in the Garden of Eden he saw that it was not good for man to live alone, so God made a companion for man. In this act of creation, God didn't take the woman from man's head, lest she should rule over him; nor from his feet, lest he should trample upon her- but from his side, that she should be equal with him, and close to his heart, that he should love, cherish, and honor her. God presented woman to man for their mutual joy and that they may give to each other companionship, help, and comfort. Marriage is God's gift to deliver us from our isolation and loneliness. It is our opportunity to give each other the gifts of God and to receive the gifts of God from each other.

Victor Hugo

You can give without loving, but you can never love without giving. The great acts of love are done by those who are habitually performing small acts of kindness. We pardon to the extent that we love. Love is knowing that even when you are alone, you will never be lonely again. And great happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved. Loved for ourselves. And even loved in spite of ourselves.

From "The Strength to Love" (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

"The meaning of love is not to be confused with some sentimental outpouring. Love is something much more than emotional bosh. An overflowing love which seeks nothing in return, is the love of God operating in the human heart. Love is the most durable power in the world - the most potent instrument available in mankind's quest for peace and security. The great military leaders of the past have gone, and their empires have crumbled and burned to ashes. But the empire of Jesus, built solidly and majestically on the foundation of love, is still growing."

From A Natural History Of Love - Diane Ackerman

Love. What a small word we use for an idea so immense and powerful. It has altered the flow of history, calmed monsters, kindled works of art, cheered the forlorn, turned tough guys to mush, consoled the enslaved, driven strong women mad, glorified the humble, fueled national scandals, bankrupted robber barons, and made mincemeat of kings. How can love's spaciousness be conveyed in the narrow confines of one syllable? Love is an ancient delirium, a desire older than civilization, with taproots spreading into deep and mysterious days. The heart is a living museum. In each of its galleries, no matter how narrow or dimly lit, preserved forever like wondrous diatoms, are our moments of loving, and being loved.

True Love (Author Unknown)

True love is a sacred flame that burns eternally,
And none can dim its special glow or change its destiny.
True love speaks in tender tones and hears with gentle ear,
True love gives with open heart and true love conquers fear.

True love makes no harsh demands It neither rules nor binds,
True love holds with gentle hands the hearts that it entwines.

Unknown Author

Remember, anything beautiful that you have, came from God. In the beginning, God gave us our free will and our identity to walk this earth. Don't ever try to change each other, because if you do, you will lose exactly what you fell in love with. So, each day try to find one more thing that is beautiful in your mate and each day know that the next day will be more beautiful than the one before. As long as you are doing this, you are seeking beauty, joy, and love in each other.

To Be One With Each Other - George Eliot (1819-1880)

"What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are to join for life—to strengthen each other in all labor, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent, unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting."

Love Reflects Love in Return - The Divine Comedy by Dante

"The love of God, Unutterable and perfect, flows into a pure soul the way light rushes into a transparent object. The more love we receive, the more love we shine forth; so that, as we grow clear and open, the more complete the joy of loving is. And the more souls who resonate together, the greater the intensity of their love for, mirror-like, each soul reflects the other."

Marriage Advice - Jane Wells (1886)

Let your love be stronger than your hate or anger. Learn the wisdom of compromise, for it is better to bend a little than to break. Believe the best rather than the worst. People have a way of living up or down to your opinion of them. Remember that true friendship is the basis for any lasting relationship. The person you choose to marry is deserving of the courtesies and kindnesses you bestow on your friends. Please hand this down to your children and your children's children.

When a Man and a Woman Are in Love - Stephen T.Fader

His life lies within hers and her life lies within his. Each lives as an individual, yet they also live for one another. Each strives for independent goals, but they also work together to achieve their dreams. They will give to one another what they need to survive and help fulfill each other's wants. They will turn one another's disappointment into satisfaction. They will turn one another's frustration into contentment. They will work as a mirror, reflecting to each other their strengths and weaknesses. They will work together to alleviate the emotional walls that may separate them. They will work together to build a better understanding of one another. They will learn to lean on each other, but not so much as to be a burden on the other. They will learn to reach out to one another, but not so much as to suffocate the other. They will learn when it is time to speak and when it is time to listen. They will be there to comfort each other in times of sorrow. They will be there to celebrate together in times of happiness. They will be one another's friend, guiding each other to the happiness that life holds. They will be one another's companion, facing together the challenges that life may present. When a man and a woman are in love, his life lies within hers and her life lies within his. Together they will love one another for the rest of their lives and forever.

Sooner or Later

Sooner or later we begin to understand that love is more than verses on valentines, and romance in the movies. We begin to know that love is here and now, real and true, the most important thing in our lives. For love is the creator of our favorite memories, and the foundation of our fondest dreams. Love is a promise that is always kept, a fortune that can never be spent, a seed that can flourish in even the most unlikely of places. And this radiance that never fades, this mysterious and magical joy, is the greatest treasure of all -- one known only by those who love.

Irrational Season by Madeleine L'Engle - A Selection

But ultimately there comes a moment when a decision must be made. Ultimately two people who love each other must ask themselves how much they hope for as their love grows and deepens, and how much risk they are willing to take...It is indeed a fearful gamble... Because it is the nature of love to create, a marriage itself is something which has to be created, so that, together we become a new creature. To marry is the biggest risk in human relations that a person can take...If we commit ourselves to one person for life this is not, as many people think, a rejection of freedom; rather it demands the courage to move into all the risks of freedom, and the risk of love which is permanent; into that love which is not possession, but participation...It takes a lifetime to learn another person...When love is not possession, but participation, then it is part of that co-creation which is our human calling, and which implies such risk that it is often rejected.

The Key to Love

The key to love is understanding ... The ability to comprehend not only the spoken word. but those unspoken gestures, the little things that say so much by themselves.

The key to love is forgiveness... To accept each others faults and pardon mistakes, without forgetting, but with remembering what you learn from them.

The key to love is sharing... Facing your good fortunes as well as the bad, together; both conquering problems, forever searching for ways to intensify your happiness.

The key to love is giving... Without thought of return, but with hope of just a simple smile, and by giving in but never giving up.

The key to love is respect... Realizing that you are two separate people, with different ideas; that you don't belong to each other, that you belong with each other, and share a mutual bond.

The key to love is inside us all... It takes time and patience to unlock all the ingredients that will take you to its threshold; it is the continual learning process that demands a lot of work... but the rewards are more than worth the effort... and that is the key to love.

Marriage is love - Gloria Matthew

If two are caring as they are sharing life's hopes and fears.

If the music of laughter outweighs sadness and tears. Marriage is togetherness.

If both derive pleasure from the mere presence of each other, yet when parted no jealousies restrict, worry or smother.

Marriage is freedom.

If achievements mean more when they benefit two and consideration is shown with each point of view. Marriage is respect.

And if togetherness, freedom and respect are combined with a joy that words can never fully define, then marriage is love.

Unknown Author

You share today the joy of a deep commitment and a sacred trust, and you have given each other the most precious gift of love, treasure it, nurture it and encourage it with all the honesty you used in creating it you are sharing something rare and beautiful. Always speak the truth and listen attentively so that you may understand each other's thoughts and intentions, inspire each other by sharing your accomplishments. Say I love you often to retain the warmth between you. Laugh a lot too, even when you are angry. Remember you are each other's best friend. Stand together and for each other always. May each day be a blessing and the fulfillment of your dreams.

The Promise - Heather Berry

Within this blessed union of souls, where two hearts intertwine to become one, there lies a promise. Perfectly born, divinely created, and intimately shared, it is a place where the hope and majesty of beginnings reside. Where all things are made possible by the astounding love shared by two spirits. As you hold each other's hands in this promise, and eagerly look into the future in each other's eyes, may your unconditional love and devotion take you to places where you've both only dreamed. Where you'll dwell for a lifetime of happiness, sheltered in the warmth of each other's arms.

Love Is Friendship Caught Fire - Laura Hendricks

Love is friendship caught fire; it is quiet, mutual confidence, sharing and forgiving. It is loyalty through good and bad times. It settles for less than perfection, and makes allowances for human weaknesses. Love is content with the present, hopes for the future, and does not brood over the past. It is the day-in and day-out chronicles of irritations, problems, compromises, small disappointments, big victories, and working toward common goals. If you have love in your life, it can make up for a great many things you lack. If you do not have it, no matter what else there is, it is not enough.

Excerpt from "The Bridge Across Forever" - 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.

True Friendship - Judy Bielicki

It is often said that it is love that makes the world go round. However, without doubt, it is friendship which keeps our spinning existence on an even keel. True friendship provides so many of the essentials for a happy life -- it is the foundation on which to build an enduring relationship, it is the mortar which bonds us together in harmony, and it is the calm, warm protection we sometimes need when the world outside seems cold and chaotic. True friendship holds a mirror to our foibles and failings, without destroying our sense of worthiness. True friendship nurtures our hopes, supports us in our disappointments, and encourages us to grow to our best potential. {Bride's Name} and {Groom's Name} came together as friends. Today, they pledge to each other not only their love, but also the strength, warmth and, most importantly, the fun of true friendship.

What is love? - Walter Rinder

Love is just not looking at each other and saying "You're wonderful".

There are times when we are anything but wonderful.

Love is looking out in the same direction.

It is linking our strength to pull a common load.

It is pushing together towards the far horizons, hand in hand.

Love is knowing that when our strength falters, we can borrow the strength of someone who cares.

Love is a strange awareness that our sorrows will be shared and made lighter by sharing;

that joys will be enriched and multiplied by the joy of another.

Love is knowing someone else cares that we are not alone in life.

To Love (Author Unknown)

To love is to enter a whole New World, a world of togetherness, a world of sharing.... All that is dearest and deepest within your hearts. To love is to remember and keep alive forever all those unique qualities that drew you to one another in the beginning.... Those first halting phrases... That wonderful feeling of oneness when your eyes first met. To love is to constantly

search for new ways to bring each other happiness, to make the most of every moment you share together, and marvel at how your feelings for one another keep rising to new dimensions. To love is to create an oasis of tranquility for one another and a quiet place, apart from others, where you need not pretend...where you can be yourselves.... And know within your hearts, you will be accepted by one another. To love is to greet each day with anticipation...Always eager for another opportunity to share new adventures...And gather up new memories together! To love is to follow the rainbow through the rain, to be able to laugh at yourselves and be willing to say...."I was wrong, I'm sorry"...To forgive, and more importantly, to forget, and to always believe and trust in one another. To love is to watch with wonder all the miracles of creation, to find beauty in all the simple things of life, and to find, within yourselves, a deeper appreciation and a new awareness of how wonderful it is to be alive...To be happy...To be together. To love is coming together from the pathways of your past and then moving forward... Hand in hand, along the uncharted roads of your future, ready to risk, to dream, and to dare.... Always believing that all things are possible with faith and love.

The Art Of A Good Marriage - Wilferd Arlan Peterson

Happiness in marriage is not something that just happens. A good marriage must be created. In the art of marriage, the little things are big things...

It is never being too old 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 never taking the other for granted; the courtship should not end with the honeymoon, it should continue through all the years.

It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives.

It is standing together facing the world.

It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family.

It is doing things for each other, not in the attitude of duty or sacrifice, but in the spirit of joy.

It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways.

It is not expecting the husband to wear a halo or the wife to have wings of an angel.

It is not looking for perfection in each other.

It is cultivating flexibility, patience, understanding and a sense of humor.

It is having the capacity to forgive and forget.

It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow.

It is finding room for the things of the spirit.

It is a common search for the good and the beautiful.

It is establishing a relationship in which the independence is equal, dependence is mutual and the obligation is reciprocal.

It is not only marrying the right partner,

it is being the right partner.

On Love - Thomas à Kempis (1379-1471)

Love is a mighty power, a great and complete good.

Love alone lightens every burden, and makes rough places smooth.

It bears every hardship as though it were nothing, and renders all bitterness sweet and acceptable.

Nothing is sweeter than love,

Nothing stronger,

Nothing higher,

Nothing wider,

Nothing more pleasant,

Nothing fuller or better in heaven or earth; for love is born of God.

Love flies, runs and leaps for joy.

It is free and unrestrained.

Love knows no limits, but ardently transcends all bounds.

Love feels no burden, takes no account of toil,

attempts things beyond its strength.

Love sees nothing as impossible,

for it feels able to achieve all things.

It is strange and effective,

while those who lack love faint and fail.

Love is not fickle and sentimental,

nor is it intent on vanities.

Like a living flame and a burning torch,

it surges upward and surely surmounts every obstacle.

ALTERNATIVE VOWS TO SAY TO EACH OTHER

Alternative Vow # 1

Where there has been cold, you have brought warmth; where my life was dark, you have brought light. _____, I promise before family and friends to be your husband/wife from this day forward. Let us make of our two lives, one life, and let us always honor and respect each other.

Alternative Vow # 2

_____, as freely as God has given me life, I join my life with yours. Wherever you go, I will go; whatever you face, I will face. For good or ill, in happiness or sadness, come riches or poverty, I take you as my husband/wife, and will give myself to no other.

Alternative Vow # 3

As I stand here today with the world as my witness,
I pledge to you my undying and everlasting love.
I will stand beside you as your partner,
I will stand before you as your protector,
And I will stand behind you as your solace.
Please spend and end your life with me.

VOWS TO READ TO YOUR SPOUCE

My Greatest Love - Author Unknown

_____, you are my greatest love and my last love. Until I met you I didn't give true love much thought, but since you came into my life, I struggle desperately to find the words to tell you how much I love you - how I adore you. It is difficult for me to verbalize my feelings for you, because mere words can't begin to express my deep love. I thank God for you, _____, and I pledge myself to you now, to be your ever-faithful wife/husband. I give you my mind, my body and my heart and I promise to love you and cherish you for as long as we both shall live.

I Promise - Dorothy R. Colgan

I promise to give you the best of myself and to ask of you no more than you can give.
I promise to respect you as your own person and to realize that your interests, desires and needs are no less important than my own.
I promise to share with you my time and my attention and to bring joy, strength and imagination to our relationship.
I promise to keep myself open to you, to let you see through the window of my world into my innermost fears and feelings, secrets and dreams.
I promise to grow along with you, to be willing to face changes in order to keep our relationship alive and exciting.
I promise to love you in good times and in bad, with all I have to give and all I feel inside in the only way I know how.
Completely and forever.

The Perfect Love, The Perfect Friend - Renee Duvall

Because you are my love... I know the joy that comes from feeling closer to someone than I've ever felt before.
Because you are my love... I know the passion of wanting to share everything I have, everything I am with you and only you.
Because you are my friend... I know that I can count on you to hold my hand through the rough times and to be there to share the good times too.
Because you are my friend... I'll always have someone to make me smile just when I need it most, and to encourage me when I'm feeling confused or doubtful.
I know that I must be one of the luckiest people in the world to have someone like you.
The perfect love, the perfect friend.

Anonymous

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.

BLESSINGS / BENEDICTIONS

Old Apache Blessing (Author unknown)

Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be shelter to the other. Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be warmth to the other. Now there is no loneliness. You are two bodies, but there is one life before you, and one home. You will take each others hand and you'll turn together to look at the road you traveled to reach this---the hour of your happiness. It stretches behind you and the future lies ahead. A long and winding road, whose every turn means discovery, old hopes, new laughter and shared tears. May beauty surround you both in the journey ahead and through all the years, May happiness be your companion and your days together be good and long upon the earth. The adventure has just begun!

Irish Blessing (Traditional)

May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,

The rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.
May green be the grass you walk on,
May blue be the skies above you,
May pure be the joys that surround you,
May true be the hearts that love you
May God be with you and bless you;
May you see your children's children.
May you be poor in misfortune, Rich in blessings,
May you know nothing but happiness
From this day forward.

A Blessing

May you never take each other for granted but always experience the wonders of your union. May your love consist not only in gazing into each other's eyes, but also in looking outward in the same direction. May your life together be a source of strength and inspiration to yourselves, your families and your friends. May you never forget the beginning of your love for one another, take care of it, nurture it, and allow it to grow strong and firm in the years that are to come. May you always concentrate on making each other happy and secure in your commitment to one another and always rely on your ability to keep the promises you have made to one another today throughout the thick and thin of life's experiences. And may you always be in love. May your love be as beautiful each day you share as it is on this day of Your Wedding and may all of your wishes come true.

This Day

May this day shine eternally in your lives.
May it add brilliance to every achievement
and cast a divine light over any misfortune.
May you care for each other in all sadness.
May you give cheer to each other.
May you give vitality to each other in all undertakings.
May all that is virtuous, beautiful and honest, remain with you always.

Blessing For A Marriage - James Dillet Freeman

May your marriage bring you all the exquisite excitements a marriage should bring, and may life grant you also patience, tolerance, and understanding. May you always need one another - not so much to fill your emptiness as to help you know your fullness. A mountain needs a valley to be 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 with you and you. May you need one another, but not out of weakness. May you want one another, but not out of lack. May you entice one another, but not compel one another. May you succeed in all important ways with one another, and not fail in the little graces. May you look for things to praise, often say, "I love you!" and take no notice of small faults. If you have quarrels that push you apart, may both of you hope to have good sense enough to take the first step back. May you enter into the mystery which is the awareness of one another's presence - no more physical than spiritual, warm and near when you are side by side, and warm and near when you are in separate rooms or even distant cities. May you have happiness, and may you find it making one another happy. May you have love, and may you find it loving one another!

Blessing Style Three (Sandstrom)

May God bless you with hope enough to keep the dawn in your love, and fear enough to keep you holding hands in the dark. Unity enough to keep your roots entwined, and separation enough to keep you reaching out for each other. Harmony enough to keep romance in your song, and discord enough to keep you tuning your love. Amen

The Lord Bless You And Keep You

The Lord bless you and keep you both. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious upon you. The Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you peace, happiness, and joy, at this moment, throughout your married life, and forevermore. Amen.

Trinity Blessing

May God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve, and keep you; may His favor be upon you; and fill you with every spiritual blessing and grace, that you may so live together in this life, that in the world to come you may have life everlasting. Amen.

Blessing: Adapted From Colossians 3:12-17

_____ and _____, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. May the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. _____ and _____, may the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms,

hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Blessing: Adapted From Philippians 2:1, 2, 5

If there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make _____ and _____ more complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Have this attitude among yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus.

Blessing: Adapted From Ephesians 5:15-22

_____ and _____, be very careful how you live—not as unwise but as wise, taking advantage of every opportunity, because the days are evil. For this reason do not be foolish, but be wise by understanding what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, which is excess, but be filled by the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your hearts to the Lord. Always give thanks to God the Father for each other in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

PRAYERS

Opening Prayer

Father in heaven, You ordained marriage for your children, and You gave us love. We present to You _____ and _____, who come this day to be married. Grant that they may be ever true and loving, living together in such a way as to never bring heartbreak into their marriage. Temper their hearts with kindness and help them to be sweethearts, helpmates, friend and guide, and together, may they meet the cares and problems of life confidently. May their home truly be a place of love and harmony where your Holy Spirit is ever-present. Lord, we give you thanks for _____ and _____, for their open hearts and willing spirits, and for the example of love that they embody here in our presence. Be with them on this joyous occasion of showing their love and making their vows; and be with us, their witnesses, that we may all be changed by what is said and witnessed here. Bless their wedding day and walk beside them, through all their life together. In Jesus Name. Amen

Closing Marriage Blessing Prayer

Lord, You are our Father and our Friend, as you have heard these words of promise just spoken, may Your Holy Spirit deepen in the minds of _____ and _____ the sense of the sacred and binding power of their vows. In Your Name these words were spoken to make these lives one, may Your rich blessing be added. May the covenant of love they make be blessed with true devotion and spiritual commitment. Help them to realize that nothing nor no one is perfect and to look for the good in all things and all people including themselves. Help them to respect each other's likes and dislikes, opinions and beliefs, hopes and dreams and fears even though they may not always understand them. Help them to learn from each other and to help each other to grow mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Help them to realize that no matter what happens to them they will hold on to each other and know that things have a way of working out for the good. When selfishness shows itself, grant generosity; when mistrust is a temptation, give moral strength; when there is misunderstanding, give patience and gentleness; if suffering becomes a part of their lives, give them a strong faith and an abiding love. May they always turn to You for guidance, for strength, for provision and for direction. May they glorify You in the choices they make, and in all that they do. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen

A Marriage Prayer - by Bud Henry Bowen (adapted)

Bless their marriage, O God, as they begin their journey down the road of life together. We don't know what lies ahead for the road turns and bends. But help them to make the best of whatever comes their way.

Help them to continue to enjoy each other as they did when they first met. Help them to realize that nothing nor no one is perfect and to look for the good in all things and all people including themselves.

Help them to respect each other's likes and dislikes, opinions and beliefs, hopes and dreams and fears even though they may not always understand them.

Help them to learn from each other and to help each other to grow mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Help them to realize that no matter what happens to them they will hold on to each other and know that things have a way of working out for the good.

Help them to create for their children a peaceful, stable home of love as a foundation on which they can build their lives.

But most of all, dear God, help them to keep lit the torch of love' that they now share so that by their loving example they may pass on the light of love to their children and to their children's children forever. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. give us this day our daily bread, and forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Prayer

Eternal Father, creator, redeemer, lover of our souls, we now turn to You, and as the first act of _____ and _____ in their newly formed union, we ask You to protect their home. May they always turn to You for guidance, for strength, for provision and for direction. May they glorify You in the choices they make, and in all that they do. Use them to draw others to Yourself, and let them stand as a testimony to the world of Your faithfulness. Amen.

Let Us Pray

Eternal God, You are our Father and our Friend, as you have heard these words of promise just spoken, may Your Holy Spirit deepen in the minds of _____ and _____ the sense of the sacred and binding power of their vows. In Your Name these words were spoken to make these lives one, may Your rich blessing be added. Give them Your grace and guidance that they may loyally fulfill the vows they have taken. May Your joy remain with them always, may they be a blessing to each other, and to those around them, finding in the blessedness of the home life on earth a sample of the happiness of Your eternal home. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Covenant of Love

Father in heaven, You ordained marriage for your children, and You gave us love. We present to You _____ and _____, who come this day to be married. May the covenant of love they make be blessed with true devotion and spiritual commitment. We ask that You will give them the ability to keep the covenant they have made. When selfishness shows itself, grant generosity; when mistrust is a temptation, give moral strength; when there is misunderstanding, give patience and gentleness; if suffering becomes a part of their lives, give them a strong faith and an abiding love. In Jesus Name. Amen

The Prayer - St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226)

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is discord, union;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy;

O Divine Master, Grant that we may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console,

To be understood as to understand,

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen

SCRIPTURES

1 Corinthians 13 (Excerpt)

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 with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Love Chapter (1st Corinthians 13:4-7) (Contemporary Paraphrased Version)

Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud. Love is never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand it's own way. Love is not irritable or touchy. Love does not hold grudges and will hardly notice when others do it wrong. Love is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone, you will be loyal to them no matter what the costs. You will always believe in them, always expect the best in them, and will always stand your ground in defending them.

1 Corinthians 13 (The whole chapter)

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. 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 with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Ephesians 5:21-5:33

Always give thanks to God the Father for each other in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church—he himself being the savior of the body. But as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself

up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Ruth 1:16-17

"Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me."

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Song of Songs

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned.

Genesis 2:18-24

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper -- as a counterpart for him." Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable counterpart was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and He brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

Mark 10:6-9

From the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.