

Parts of Weddings

Gathered by the Rev. Douglas Wilson

Please feel free to pick and choose among these different words, choosing a sentence here, a paragraph there, or an idea wherever you find one you like. These are all different, and will speak to you, while most will not. Collages rule.

A note about sources: I do not claim to be author of most of this material. I have gathered them from a great many sources over many years. I have listed authors and sources for some, but have not attempted to do so for everything. I do not want to plagiarize anyone's work, and I'm happy to add acknowledgements to any authors/sources not already provided here.

Introductions

1.) Welcoming (long version)

Dearly Beloved, we are gathered together to join this man and this woman in holy matrimony, which is an estate made honorable by the faithful keeping of good men and women throughout time. It is, therefore, not to be entered into inadvisably or lightly, but reverently and discreetly. Into this holy estate these two persons come now to be joined.

____ and _____, who stand here before us, have asked each of us, their family and friends, to witness to the depth and strength of a special love that has been growing between them for some time. Today marks the beginning of a formal commitment they are making to one another. This is a union of hearts that the church can bless and the state make legal, but that neither can create nor annul.

You who are here have made a choice to travel, some of you from very far, to be here with _____ and _____. Not just to be here, but to lend your unique presence and your joyous spirit to the wedding event. This day will be memorable in part because you came to share your support and best wishes.

Marriage is very much a vote for the past, an affirmation of love for the families that gave rise to _____ and _____. Within their families they learned to trust enough, to have faith enough, to go another round on their own, together. So we are honoring their families here today, and thanking them for all they have given to their children and their grandchildren, in a line stretching back in time. We remember fondly those beloved relatives and friends who could not be with us today, through death or disability or distance, people _____ and _____ love very much.

Marriage involves the intimate sharing of two lives, lives that are continually developing and growing. If these lives are shared, the individuality of each partner can be enhanced, rather than diminished. Deep knowledge of another is not something that can be achieved quickly, and real understanding of the other's feelings can develop fully only with years of intimacy.

This wonderful knowledge of another person grows out of really caring for the other, so much so that one wants to understand as completely as possible what the other is feeling. Thus it is possible

to share not only the joys and successes, but also the burden of worries and sorrows. To be known in this way is a priceless thing. Such understanding and acceptance make it easier to live with our problems and failings. Let us proceed.

2.) Welcoming (shorter)

We are gathered together to join this man and this woman in holy matrimony, which is made honorable by the faithful keeping of good men and women throughout time. It is, therefore, not to be entered into inadvisedly or lightly, but reverently and discreetly. Into this holy estate these two persons come now to be joined.

____ and ____, who stand here before us, have asked each of us, their family and friends, to witness the depth and strength of a special commitment that has been growing between them for some time. This is a union of hearts that the Church can bless and the Commonwealth can make legal, but that neither can create nor annul.

Marriage is very much a vote for the past, an affirmation of love for the families that gave rise to ____ and _____. Within their families they learned to trust enough and to have faith enough to enter into marriage themselves. We remember fondly those beloved relatives who could not be with us today, people ____ and ____ love very much. We honor and thank their families here today for all they have given.

A marriage that lasts is one that is continually developing. Deep knowledge of another is not something that can be achieved quickly, and real understanding of the other's feelings can develop fully only with years of intimacy. This wonderful knowledge of another person grows out of really caring for the other and really wanting to understand as completely as possible what the other is feeling and thinking. To be understood and accepted in this way makes it possible to share not only the joys and successes, but also the sorrows and failures.

Marriage symbolizes the intimate sharing of two lives. This sharing can enhance, rather than diminish, the individuality of each partner. A good and balanced relationship is one in which neither person is overpowered nor absorbed by the other. It is out of the tension between separateness and union that love, whose incredible strength is equal only to its incredible fragility, is born and reborn. Let us give ourselves in love, but let us not give ourselves away.

3.) Welcoming (shortest)

____ and ____ have chosen this beautiful day to declare their love for one another before you, their dear friends and close family. Not all of their friends and family could be here today in the flesh, but in our hearts they are all here.

A very real and sacred event is happening today, a covenant is being entered, for ____ and ____ believe they can find greater fulfillment together than they can alone. Marriage is a bold act of faith, perhaps the most daring commitment two people can make. We risk what we are for the sake of what we can become, together with another. Particularly in this day and age, when our entire future is filled with uncertainty, to marry is an act of affirmation and hope. Let us proceed.

4.) Another short intro:

"Responsible love is accepting and understanding. Love grows at different rates and in different directions in all individuals. Love in marriage, or in any close relationship, is the process of growing hand in hand, but separately. Separately, because it's impossible to expect that two individuals, even in love, will grow at the same rate and in the same direction. This means that one may not always totally understand or appreciate another's growth or its resultant behavior. But love helps us to accept the fact that the other individual is behaving only as she or he is able to behave at the moment. To ask that he or she act otherwise is to ask the impossible."

This marriage is an affirmation of ____ and ____'s love for their friends and family, those who are here as well as those who could not be here. You have offered ____ and ____ your love and support, which they will continue to need in the inevitable and unavoidable hard times ahead. If you offer this love and support, you will also be able to share their happiness and joy. So as they strengthen our lives by taking this courageous and loving step, let us consciously and deeply open our hearts to them today and in the future. Marriage engages us in a complex and mysterious process of growth and change which cannot work without the loving support of you, their friends.

5.) A Different Welcome, focusing on Love:

Love has always been a thing highly praised and much sought after. One cannot force love, or make a sport of it, or persuade it to happen, or buy it with favors or with gold. Love will find you, but only if you are willing to be found, willing to be open to love, willing to let down your defenses, willing to let go of past hurts and fears, willing to try again, willing to be vulnerable. Love asks much of us, but the returns are immeasurable.

Love is something all human beings need, but love is not the same for any two people. It is as unique as each human being, and it is unique to each human being. Therefore it cannot be a predetermined idea, it cannot be forced to fit into a pre-existing mold. It must be allowed to remain unique, and this uniqueness must never be stifled, but always be preserved and encouraged.

This cannot happen unless two people are willing and able to accept one another for what they are, and let go of judging the other. Love will come when two people can rejoice and celebrate in each other's uniqueness. Love is limitless, it can take flight on gossamer wings, it can dance and improvise to music never before heard. It can grow tall and strong toward the sun, with roots free to sink deep into the fertile earth.

Vows of Friends and Family

1.) Affirmation of the Community

The marriage of ____ and ____ has called us together because this union touches each one of us. Many of you have traveled a great distance to be here with them today, and they thank you for making that journey. You have known them, loved them and supported them as individuals and as a couple. By your presence here you are acknowledging your love and respect for them, for their decision to join their lives in marriage, and to celebrate that new form of their relationship.

Do you who are family and friends of this couple affirm your continuing support and love to

____ and ____ as they grow in their marriage?

We do.

Do you offer to them the best of your care and counsel in their times of struggle and your celebration with them in their times of joy?

We do.

Will you wholeheartedly accept each of them in this community and share with them the tasks of making the world a neighborhood of human care and support?

We will.

2.) Friendship

Above all, love is a matter of friendship, for it is friendship that brings forth understanding, patience and trust. Friendship is the arch enemy of malice, suspicion and selfishness. With their friendship as the fertile land upon which they hoe their garden, ____ and ____ will harvest a rich crop of happiness, respect, tenderness, kindness and generosity.

And I ask that you, their parents, who gave them the gift of life, and nurtured them and watched them grow in mind, body and spirit: Do you grant to these two people, your children, your blessings? Do you pledge to love and support them in their marriage?

"WE DO!"

We would like to ask that you, their good friends, also take a vow: Do you, the witnesses of this marriage, grant to these two people your blessings? Do you pledge to continue to be friends and to support them in their marriage? If so, please say "We Do."

"WE DO!"

Stories

The Story of Oatmeal

Many years ago ____ found a name for the human love, which s/he has come to call "stirring-the-oatmeal" love. Within this phrase, if we will humble ourselves enough to look, is the very essence of human love, and highlights the difference between love and romance. Stirring oatmeal is not exciting or thrilling, it is a humble act that brings love down to earth. It symbolizes a willingness to share ordinary human love, to find meaning in simple, unromantic tasks like earning a living, living within a budget, putting out the garbage, feeding the grandchildren in the middle of the night. To "stir the oatmeal" means to find the relatedness, the value, even the beauty, in simple and ordinary things. Like the rice hulling of the Zen monks, the spinning wheel of Gandhi, the tent making of Saint Paul, it represents the discovery of the sacred in the midst of the humble and ordinary.

Jung once said that feeling is a matter of the small. And in human love, we can see that it is true. The real relatedness between two people is experienced in the small tasks they do together: the quiet conversation when the day's dramas have come to rest, the soft word of understanding, the daily companionship, the encouragement offered in a difficult moment, the small gift when least expected, the spontaneous gesture of love.

Blessings

1.) Please join hands with your neighbors for the blessing.

A very real and sacred event is taking place here today. Since before recorded time men and women have joined together to form a bond to strengthen and deepen a partnership. This bonding continues to this day, as the sacred event of a wedding sanctifies a marriage and a life together. As these two dear and gifted souls have blessed us this day by asking that we witness and share their wedding, let us bless them by carefully and consciously opening our hearts, sharing the love we all have, but which too often lies buried deep within us. As we allow that love to flow from us, it will fill the room, bathing ____ and ____ in the warmth of its glow. We all possess vast reservoirs of love within ourselves, and can use a blessed occasion such as this day to reexperience the joy of our common love. As we learn to open our hearts to ____ and ____, we gain the gift of their concern for the world and knowing that there is a world beyond this couple, that exists beyond this room, filled with love, beyond this day.

2.) Chinook Blessing

Blessing of galaxies, blessing of stars

Great stars, small stars, red stars, blue ones.

Blessing of nebula, blessing of supernova,

Planets, satellites, asteroids, comets.

Blessing of our sun and moon, blessing of our earth

Oceans, rivers, continents, mountain ranges.

Blessing of wind and cloud, blessing of rain,

Fog bank, snowdrift, lightning and thunder.

Bless the wisdom of the holy one above us.

Bless the truth of the holy one beneath us.

Bless the love of the holy one within us.

Blessing of green plants, blessing of forests

Cedar, douglas fir, swordfern, spice bush.

Blessing of fish and birds, blessing of mammals:

Brook trout, wood thrush, cougar and bear.

May all humankind likewise offer blessing

Old woman, young woman, wise man and foolish.

Blessing of youthfulness, blessing of children

Big boys, little boys, big girls, little ones.

Bless the wisdom of the holy one above us.

Bless the truth of the holy one beneath us.

Bless the love of the holy one within us.

Blessing of _____ and _____

Let us give thanks, thanks for all that sustains us and we ask that we may never stop learning from the wisdom of the Earth, the Universe, the Spirit that bonds us all.

We give thanks to the Earth that nourishes our bodies and provides our home.

We give thanks to the rocks and the soil from which all life springs.

We give thanks to the waters of the Earth: the springs and streams, the marshes, rivers and lakes, the oceans.

We give thanks to the rains that have blessed us so profusely these past few weeks.

We give thanks to all the beings of the Earth: The lowly and diminutive and the grand alike; the snails and whales, frog and fox, toad and chipmunk and salamanders, worms and ants.

We give our thanks to the four-legged beasts: bear, beaver, squirrel, moose, deer....

We are thankful to the plants: the ferns and grasses and berries, the herbs and bushes, flowers and trees that give us sustenance and beauty.

We give thanks to the winged ones: bat, dragonfly, butterfly, moth, and to the birds: owl, chickadee, sparrow, and hawk; we are thankful for their beauty and their song.

We give thanks to the sky -- the winds who give us breath, the clouds who give us rain.

We give our thanks to the Moon who creates the tides in the waters of the Earth and within our bodies.

We give thanks to the Sun who gives us life.

And we thank the stars for guiding our ancestors through the seasons and over the seas.

For all this amazing and awesome and ever changing world, we are thankful.

Readings

1.) Marriage Takes a Lifetime, by Theodore Parker

Men and women, and especially young people, do not know that it takes years to marry completely two hearts, even of the most loving and well-assorted. But nature allows no sudden change. We slope very gradually from the cradle to the summit of life. Marriage is gradual, a fraction of us at a time. A happy wedlock is a long falling in love. I know young persons think love belongs only to the brown-haired and crimson-cheeked. So it does for its' beginning, just as Mount Washington begins at Boston Bay. But the golden marriage is a part of love that the bridal day knows nothing of.

A perfect and complete marriage, where wedlock is everything you could ask and the ideal of marriage becomes actual, is not common. Perhaps it is as rare as perfect personal beauty. Men and

women are married fractionally, now a small fraction, then a large fraction. Very few are married totally, and they only after some forty or fifty years of gradual approach and experiment.

Such a large and sweet fruit is a complete marriage that it needs a long summer to ripen in, and then a long winter to mellow and season in. But a real, happy marriage of love and judgment between a noble man and woman is one of the things so very handsome that if the sun were, as the Greek poets fabled, a god, that god might stop the world and hold it still now and then, in order to look all day long on some example thereof, and feast the eyes on such a spectacle.

2.) Illusions in Love, by Duncan Howlett

Most of us have far too many illusions about life, and a vast number of those illusions are concentrated in marriage. We think it should be all joy and gladness, all wonder and delight, and we are disappointed when it turns out not to be. We forget that life is not like that, and since marriage is for life, marriage cannot be that way either. Marriage is whatever life is, except that it thrusts the landscape of life into much sharper relief.

The terrain is the same but the heights are far higher and the valleys much deeper. The plains are much broader, the woodland and fields much greener and more lovely. But the deserts are much broader, too, and the heat more intense, the thorns are thicker, the briars sharper, the storms of wind and weather blow much harder. If the sunlight is brighter and the landscape more lovely, the nights are darker and colder and more lonely.

If you would keep your emotions and yourself safe from harm, do not let the love that stirs within you deepen into the commitments of marriage. For if you do you will never be safe again. If you do you will expose yourself to the possibility of anguish and pain your soul may not be able to bear. But know this, too: you will also expose yourself to a depth of feeling, a richness of emotion, and a potential for joy and happiness that will reduce the life you previously knew to the dimensions of the flickering shadows on your television screen. Marriage, when it is right, is like a secret society. Cynics on the outside will scoff. But those who are living the experience will know the truth.

3.) Love, by Thomas a Kempis

Love is a great thing, yea, a great and thorough good; by itself it makes everything that is heavy light; and it bears evenly all that is uneven.

It carries a burden that is not burden; it will not be kept back by anything low and mean; it desires to be free from all worldly affections, and not to be entangled by outward prosperity, or by adversity subdued.

Love feels no burden, thinks nothing of trouble, attempts what is above its strength, pleads no excuse of impossibility.

It is therefore able to undertake all things, and it completes many things, and permits them to take effect, where those who do not love would faint and lie down.

Though weary, it is not tired; though pressed it is not straitened; though alarmed, it is not

confounded; but as a living flame it forces its way upward, and securely passes through all.

4.) Mt. Abraham

Passing through this moss cool glen
we pause to trail our fingers
over wind worn roots
grown deep in stone.

You stand, each leaning
toward the other,
hands just brushing.
Light dapples
the space between.
A veery calls
etherial spiral song.

Beyond this, the mass
of stone; root veined earthbone
bearing the signs
of igneous birth
glacial scars

impenetrable
yet opened
by the smallest seed.

5.) Poem by May Sarton

How pure the hearts of lovers as they walk
Through the rich quiet fields
Where the stiff wheat grows heavy on the stalk
And over barley and its paler golds
The air is bright--

They do not even walk yet hand in hand,
But every sense is pricked alive so sharp
That life breathes through them from the burning land
And they could use the wind itself for harp,
And oh, to drink the light!

Now all around them earth moves toward an end,
The gold turning to bronze, the barley tasseled,
The fruit stored up, and soon the sheaves will bend
Their heads together in the rich wedding-bed
All are about to enter.

The hearts of lovers as they walk, how pure:

How cool the wind upon the open palm
As they move on toward harvest, and so sure
Even this ripening has a marvelous calm
And a still center.

6.) The Prophet, by Kahlil Gibran

You were born together, and together you
shall be forever more.
You shall be together when the white
wings of death scatter your days.
Ay, you shall be together even in the
silent memory of God.
But let there be spaces in your togetherness,
And let the winds of the heavens 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 hearts, but not into each
other's keeping.
For only the hand 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.

7.) Kabir

The flute of interior time is played whether we hear it or not
What we mean by "love" is its sound coming in
When love hits the farthest edge of excess, it reaches a wisdom
And the fragrance of that knowledge!
It penetrates our thick bodies,
It goes through walls--

Its network of notes has a structure
as if a million suns were arranged inside.
This tune has truth in it.
Where else have you heard a sound like this?

8.) Reflections on Love, by Anne Morrow Lindbergh

When you love someone you do not love them all the time, in exactly the same way, from moment to moment. That is an impossibility. It is even a lie to pretend to. And yet this is exactly what most of us demand. We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life, of love, of relationships. We leap at the flow of the tide and resist in terror its ebb. We are afraid it will never return. We insist on permanency, on duration, on continuity; when the only continuity possible, in life as in love, is in growth, in fluidity--in freedom, in the sense that dancers are free, barely touching as they pass, but partners in the same pattern. The only real security is not in owning or possessing, not in demanding, not in hoping even. Security in a relationship lies neither in looking back to what it was in nostalgia, nor forward to what it might be in dread or anticipation, but in living in the present relationship and accepting it as it is now. For relationships, too, must be like islands. One must accept them for what they are here and now, within their limits--islands, surrounded and interrupted by the sea, continually visited and abandoned by the tides. One must accept the security of the winged life, of ebb and flow...

9.) Friendship by Robert Johnson in *We*

Human love necessarily includes friendship: friendship within relationship, within marriage, between husband and wife. When a man and a woman are truly friends, they know each other's difficult points and weaknesses, but they are not inclined to stand in judgment on them. They are more concerned with helping each other and enjoying each other than they are with finding fault. Genuine friends want to affirm rather than to judge; they don't coddle, but neither do they dwell on our inadequacies. Friends back each other up in the tough times, help each other with the sordid and ordinary tasks of life. They don't impose impossible standards on each other, they don't ask for perfection, and they help each other rather than grind each other down with demands.

10.) Fidelity, by Denis de Rougemont in *Love of the Western World*

Let me insist that fidelity in marriage cannot be merely that negative attitude so frequently imagined, it must be active. To be content not to deceive one's wife or husband could be an indication of indigence, not one of love. Fidelity demand far more: it wants the good of the beloved, and when it acts in behalf of that good it is creating in its own presence the neighbor. And it is by this round about way through the other that the self rises into being a person - beyond its own happiness. Thus as persons a married couple are a mutual creation, and to become persons is the double achievement of "active love." What denies both the individual and the natural egotism is what constructs a person. At this point faithfulness in marriage is discovered to be the law of a new life....

A life allied with mine, for the rest of our lives - that is the miracle of marriage. Another life that wills my good as much as its own, because it is united with mine...

To be in love is not necessarily to love. To be in love is a state; to love, an act. A state is

suffered, or undergone, but an act has to be decided upon. Now, the promise which marriage means cannot fairly be made to apply to the future of a state in which I am at the moment, but it can and should mortgage the culture of conscious acts which I take on - to love, to remain faithful, to bring up my children....

The imperative, "Love God and thy neighbor as thyself" creates structures of active relations. The imperative, "Be in love!" would be devoid of meaning; or, if it could be obeyed, would deprive us of our freedom.

11.) Friendship, by Kahlil Gibran

Your friend is your needs answered.
She is your field which you sow with love
and reap with thanksgiving.
And she is your board and your fireside,
For you come to her with your hunger,
And you seek her for peace.
When your friend speaks her mind you
fear not the "nay" in your own mind,
nor do you withhold the "aye."
And when she is silent your heart ceases
not to listen to her heart;
For without words, in friendship,
all thoughts, all desires, all expectations
are born and shared,
with joy that is unacclaimed.
When you part from your friend, you grieve not;
For that which you love most in her
may be clearer in her absence,
As the mountain to the climber is clearer from the plain.

And let there be no purpose in friendship
save the deepening of the spirit.
For love that seeks aught
but the disclosure of its own mystery
is not love, but a net cast forth:
and only the unprofitable is caught.
And let your best be for your friend.
If he must know the ebb of your tide,
let him know its flood also.
For what is your friend
that you should see him with hours to kill?
Seek him always with hours to live.
For it is his to fill your need,
but not your emptiness.
And in the sweetness of friendship
let there be laughter, and sharing of pleasures,
For in the dew of little things

the heart finds its morning
and is refreshed.

12.) Commitment, by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Until one is committed there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness, concerning all acts of initiative and creation. There is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, the Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance which no one could have dreamed would have come this way. Whatever you can do or dream you can begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now.

13.) Marriage, by Joyce and Barry Vissell in *The Shared Heart*

A wedding is a couple's proclamation of commitment; not only to each other but to the spiritual path ahead. Marriage is joining hands and hearts together for greater service to (our earth and the myriad life forms our earth supports). True, a committed couple can do this without being married. But to do this among friends and family, in the highly focused energy and power of a spiritual ceremony, makes a permanent imprint of all that takes place, and greatly benefits the couple. Many people are not aware that angels and a whole host of invisible beings are drawn together by any gathering with a sincere, heart-felt motive. It is their work to help redirect all the energies and bought-forms released by the participants. Ordinary thoughts or negative energies are ignored, in the same way that bees ignore all but the flower's ripe pollen. In a wedding these unseen beings help to gather and focus the love on everyone present onto the couple providing a sustaining strength for their relationship.

Learning to love one other person completely teaches you how to love all people. Learning to love all that is unlovable in your husband or wife, learning how to rise above the pettiness, disagreements, judgments, and human preoccupations, establishes in you a love for all humanity. For if you are a committed couple, every grievance you have with life, every trait you dislike in yourself, you will sooner or later project onto your partner. The closer you become to another human being, the more this person will mirror those qualities in yourself that you are not at peace with. If you are courageous, marriage and the committed love relationship will provide deep personal growth.

Before the couple says their vows to one another, we direct all those present to close their eyes. We ask them to remember the important vows they have made in this life, such as wedding vows, vows to serve, vows to love their children. Then we ask them to go deeper still and try to remember the vow they made before coming to earth: the vow to use this life to come into greater light and to love one another as deeply as possible. Such a remembrance seems difficult for people in their everyday consciousness. However, during the magic of the wedding ceremony all are uplifted, and while their attention is drawn to this very important vow, they can sometimes re-experience it and once again find the strength of it within themselves.

14.) Reading from an Unknown Source

Some worlds end...

the little ones we live in as children;
the endless ones from out of which we reach for maturity;
the foolish ones we make of self and hurt;
the empty ones too small for all but one.

The years turn under...

tides and seasons run - marked with years and minutes,
some to forget, some to remember.

May this be a time to long remember
woven with thought of life to come
and hope, and love, and joy in human hearts.

So have we come together...

joining for a moment to honor what is good,
and celebrate this time and place and the promise
of a woman and a man and commitment and future.

15.) Sonnet 116, by William Shakespeare

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments; love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
Oh, no, it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

16.) Reading from Northern Exposure – November 11, 1994

Marriage -- hard term to define. Especially for me -- I've ducked it like a root canal. Still, there's no denying, marriage ranks right up there with birth and death as one of the three biggies in the human safari. It's the only one, though, that we celebrate with conscious awareness. Very few of us remember our Christening and even fewer attend our own funeral. Pick a society -- any society -- Zuni, Ndembu, Pennsylvania Dutch -- what do they have in common? Marriage. Kinda like a cultural handrail --it links folks to the past and guides 'em to the future.

But that's not all Marriage is, the union of disparate elements: male and female, yin and

yang, proton and electron. What are we talking about here? The very tension that binds the universe - creation itself. "I am the sky," says the Hindu bridegroom to his bride. You are the earth. We are sky and earth, united.

17.) Youth, by Abbie Hoffman, Sept. 16, 1987 U of S Carolina

We need young people at the front because young people make revolution. Every idea I had, every idea that every one of my gurus had, they had the idea when they were seventeen years old and then just kept refining it. We didn't invent the cry of justice and peace in the 1960s and we certainly didn't write the final chapter. There's a lot of work to be done out there. I urge you, young people especially, take your personal computers, take your energy, your young legs, your eagerness, your natural feelings for justice and peace and a better deal for the planet and go out and make tomorrow better than it is today, better than we tried to make it yesterday.

18.) A Quaker Reading

To become a husband and wife makes each of you responsible no longer for yourselves alone. It demands of each an increase, beyond all you now might think, of patience - patience to bear the enlarged responsibilities, and to bear with the incapacities, the weaknesses, the human failings which you are each aware of in yourself and will discover in the other. For God has created no man or woman even nearly perfect. But we grow in both our virtue and our capacity to love by the testing, against the world and each other, of those weaknesses that, by the grace of God, we can convert into strengths. The glory of a great marriage lies in the surprises which loving support, acceptance, and graceful forgiveness can bring forth.

Let there never be an end to the rejoicing in the endless mystery of each other's possibilities. Let there never be a day when one can say of the other: "I know you perfectly, like the inside of a watch." For that will be the end of growth, and of truth. Love, true love, is not an invader but a protector, a cherisher. Preserve the sanctity of each other's selves; nourish and foster and respect that sanctity; and as you seek to bring joy to the other, to comfort, to heal, and to sustain, you still remain two persons, but will create one unshakable life.

Responsive Readings

1. From the Chinook Blessing Litany

We call upon the earth, our planet home, with its beautiful depths and soaring heights, its vitality and abundance of life, and together we ask that it:
Teach us, and show us the way.

We call upon the mountains, the Cascades and the Rockies, the high green valleys and meadows filled with wild flowers, the snows that never melt, the summits of intense silence, and we ask that they:
Teach us, and show us the way.

We call upon the waters that rim the earth, horizon to horizon, that flow in our rivers and streams, that fall upon our gardens and fields, and we ask that they:
Teach us, and show us the way.

We call upon the land which grows our food, the nurturing soil,
the fertile fields, the abundant gardens and orchards, and we ask that they:
Teach us, and show us the way.

We call upon the forests, the great trees reaching strongly to the sky with earth in their roots and the
heavens in their branches, the fir and the pine and the cedar, and we ask them to:
Teach us, and show us the way.

We call upon the creatures of the fields and forests and the seas, our brothers and sisters the wolves
and deer, the eagle and dove, the great whales and the dolphin, the beautiful orca and salmon who
share our Northwest home, and we ask them to:
Teach us, and show us the way.

We call upon all those who have lived on this earth, our ancestors and our friends, who dreamed the
best for future generations, and upon whose lives our lives are built, and with thanksgiving, we call
upon them to:
Teach us, and show us the way.

And lastly, we call upon all that we hold most sacred, the presence and power of the Great Spirit of
love and truth which flows through all the universe...to be with us to:
Teach us, and show us the way.

2.) A Dialogue Read by Friends and Family

I understand now, as I did not in my twenties, that "happily ever after" doesn't happen in real life the
way it does in stories, or even as I was told.

Will you be patient while I learn of my way of loving you?

Starting over is difficult. Let us continue to be patient as we continue to settle in together.

I look forward to our life together unfolding, moving and growing. Let's spend our old age
together.

Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I'm sixty-four?

We're pretty much grown up now. These aren't our formative years. We each have a strong sense
of self that is the result of a lot of years of all kinds of introspection.

You can count on me to tend the fire of my Shadow.

I will continue to work to grow and change where I can and I will not expect you to be other than
who you are right now.

As I range through the cycles of my life, I trust each cycle to return me to my equilibrium, and I
notice my return is not without change.

There are times we each get busy with other things, and then we drift apart in unnoticed ways and distance sneaks up on us.

I want a loving house in which to create my work.

Even though we communicate well with each other, I will pay attention to our communication - in all its forms - so that we may check our tendency to drift.

I'm going away for a while and I'll be back.

You are like my father, my brother, my sister, my mother: a collage of my family.

I am entering this relationship with the full understanding of the exciting risks involved and a willingness to fully participate in this great victory of hope and optimism over experience.

You can rely on me. You can trust me. And you can count on that.

Charge to the couple

Marriage is a supreme sharing of experience and an adventure in the most intimate of relationships. It is the joyous uniting of a man and a woman whose friendship and mutual understanding have flowered into love and respect. Marriage symbolizes an intimate sharing of two lives that does not diminish but enhances the individuality of each partner. A fulfilling marriage continually develops; each person develops, while growing in understanding of the other. Real understanding of another matures with years of will and concern. This profound knowledge of another person, unfolding from great care for the other, frees you both to share fully the joys and sorrows of a common life. To know and be known in this way shall bring you closer while enhancing each person's individuality. To give yourself in love means a dedication to exploring that tension between separateness and union that is intimacy. As neither one of you overpowers or absorbs the other, your strong and precious love is continually rediscovered. Thus may your two solitudes protect and touch and greet each other.

_____ and _____, I remind you, as you stand in the presence of God, that love and loyalty are the foundations of a happy and enduring home.

During the days of your engagement you have given careful thought to the meaning of your marriage. You began the joining of your lives--and we pray that you will continue to grow together throughout the time you share.

The future is unknown to any of us. Yet your love for one another and trust in the goodness of God's will make possible the act of faith you now make in our midst.

As you exchange vows of faithfulness, we will be listening and supporting you with our love. As you make your promises to each other, we will be reminded of promises we have made and be moved to renew our own.

Exclamation of Joy

YOW! Are we having fun yet? Let us proceed.

Dialogues Between the Couple

1.) Apples and Oranges

A friend of mine, after hearing me tell of the difficulties of adjusting to this relationship, suggested that we seemed like apples and oranges. I have thought about that image. Apples, crisp and tart like a New England fall day. Tasty. Oranges, lush and sweet from Florida or California. Peel the skin and the whole room knows its there. The scent alone can make your mouth water. They look nice together in the fruit bowl - and they make a lovely fruit salad.

Maybe we are like apple and oranges. We come from different places, we've had different life experiences, and though we have many of the same values there are those that are different. At this point in my life, I'm not looking to blend with a partner in a way where we become one. I value and appreciate our individuality. And I value and appreciate our differences, as well as our similarities.

So ____, my love, let us be married and we will enjoy a lovely and a lively fruit salad.
Yes ____, my love, let us be married.

2.) Alternately Read Commitments

I choose to commit myself to you to give my love unconditionally, ever flowing, evolving and deepening with the years.

I, too, choose to commit myself to you to give my love unconditionally, ever flowing, evolving and deepening with the years.

I am committed to being your clearest and truest reflection.

I, too, am committed to being your clearest and truest reflection.

I am committed to doing all that I can to take care of myself so that I may fully and freely love you as I grow and change.

I, too, am committed to doing all that I can to take care of myself so that I may fully and freely love you as I grow and change.

I am committed to supporting you as you seek to fulfill your purpose and potential in life, whatever that may be.

I, too, am committed to supporting you as you seek to fulfill your purpose and potential in life, whatever that may be.

I am committed to enjoying and celebrating your uniqueness and acknowledging that ultimately you are a perfect and beautiful reflection of myself.

I, too, am committed to enjoying and celebrating your uniqueness and acknowledging that ultimately you are a perfect and beautiful reflection of myself.

I am committed to creating an environment within myself where I am open and humble, where I can listen and understand you no matter what words you may or may not use so that you will always be free to express yourself completely.

I, too, am committed to creating an environment within myself where I am open and humble, where I can listen and understand you no matter what words you may or may not use so that you will always be free to express yourself completely.

I am committed to creating a home and a family with you that is based on our highest ideals of love, consideration and sharing.

I, too, am committed to creating a home and a family with you that is based on our highest ideals of love, consideration and sharing.

I embrace change as a vital aspect of our relationship. In so doing I vow to communicate should any part of these commitments need to be amended, updated or altered in order to remain consistent with what we are choosing to create together.

I, too, embrace change as a vital aspect of our relationship. In so doing I vow to communicate should any part of these commitments need to be amended, updated or altered in order to remain consistent with what we are choosing to create together.

Vows

1.) The Classic Vows

I, _____,
Take thee, _____,
To be my wedded husband
To have and to hold
For better or for worse
In sickness and in health
To love and to cherish so long as we both shall live.

I, _____,
Take thee, _____,
To be my wedded wife
To have and to hold
For better or for worse
In sickness and in health
To love and to cherish so long as we both shall live.

2.) In the Sight of God

We gather today so a wedding may take place. Not just a wedding of two people, but of two spiritual beings, each seeking to be one with God. Each seeking to walk in the light and be vessels of that light. Their pathway is clear. They are of the spirit and they are meant to walk together.

Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God and the presence of these witnesses to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony.

Do you, _____, love this woman, _____, so that you would choose her over all others and honor her as your wife?

Do you, _____, love this man, _____, so that you would choose him over all others and honor him as your husband?

3.) Alternately Read Vows

I vow to give you my love and trust

To be your loyal partner, friend and lover

And to be the mother of our child, _____.

I vow to give you my love and trust

To be your loyal partner, friend and lover

To accept you with all of your strengths and weaknesses.

To accept you with all your strengths and weaknesses

To challenge you to reach towards your fullest potential.

To challenge you to reach towards your fullest potential

To support you in realizing your dreams.

To support you in realizing your dreams

To give my devoted love and attention to our family, surrounding community and world community. These are my hopes as we enter into this journey of marriage together.

To give my devoted love and attention to our family, surrounding community and world community. These are my hopes as we enter into this journey of marriage together.

I, _____, ask thee, _____

To be my wedded husband

To have and to hold

For better or for worse

In sickness and in health

To love and to cherish from this day forward

I will.

I, _____, ask thee, _____

To be my wedded wife

To have and to hold

For better or for worse

In sickness and in health

To love and to cherish from this day forward

I will.

4.) Vows of the I Will-I Will Kind

Please join hands. The hand offered by each of you is an extension of self, just as is your mutual love. Cherish the touch, for you touch not only your own, but another life, Be ever sensitive to its pulse, Seek always to understand and respect its rhythm.

As you exchange vows of commitment, we will be listening and supporting you with our love. As

you make your promises to each other we will be reminded of promises we have made and be moved to renew our own.

____, will you have ____ to be your wife, to love with always in the spirit of honesty and openness in which love has grown between you? Will you honor and embrace the infinite dimensions of your marriage and of yourselves so that your love and trust may continue to deepen?
"I will."

____, will you have ____ to be your husband, to love with always in the spirit of honesty and openness in which love has grown between you? Will you honor and embrace the infinite dimensions of your marriage and of yourselves so that your love and trust may continue to deepen?
"I will."

Please repeat after me:

I, _____, take you, _____ to be my wife,
my lifelong partner and friend, trusted companion and confidante.
I pledge my faithfulness to you in sorrow and in joy,
in times of scarcity and times of abundance,
through all the changes of our lives.

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my husband,
my lifelong partner and friend, trusted companion and confidante.
I pledge my faithfulness to you in sorrow and in joy,
in times of scarcity and times of abundance,
through all the changes of our lives.

5.) Different Vows

Please repeat after me:

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, in laughter and in tears, in conflict and at peace, in doubt and in trust, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, to love and cherish from this day forward, til death do us part.

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold, in laughter and in tears, in conflict and at peace, in doubt and in trust, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, to love and cherish from this day forward, til death do us part.

6.) Still different Vows

Please repeat after me:

I, _____,
take you, _____, as my wife.
I pledge to share my life openly with you,
to speak the truth to you in love;
I promise to honor and tenderly care for you,
to cherish and encourage your fulfillment as an individual
through all the changes of our lives.

I, _____
take you, _____, as my husband.
I pledge to share my life openly with you,
to speak the truth to you in love;
I promise to honor and tenderly care for you,
to cherish and encourage your fulfillment as an individual
through all the changes of our lives.

7.) Yet Another Option

Minister: We are gathered here to witness _____ and _____ make their vows to one another. Do you both promise to nourish and share this gift of love, to hold it most dear, and to acknowledge it as your true home?

I do.

I do.

_____ I promise to nurture loves virtues and let them, like _____ water from a fountain, flow through our work and our _____ works, through our play and our music, through our relationships and friendships out to the whole world.

_____ And so do I.

Minister: Do you promise to be in touch with the source of life and of love so that you can be true to yourselves and be free?

I do.

I do.

_____ I promise to relate from the best in myself to the best in _____ you so that our loves enriches both of us and I promise _____ to express my love for you wholeheartedly.

_____ I promise to relate from the best in myself to the best in _____ you so that our loves enriches both of us and I promise to _____ express my love for you wholeheartedly.

Minister: Do you promise to trust one another and do you promise to be trustworthy?

I do.

I do.

_____ I promise that in our life together I will obey the laws _____ that lead to health in every level of being.

_____ And so do I.

_____ I promise to live with you as one flesh and to forsake all _____ others.

_____ And so do I.

Minister: Do you promise to accept each other's history and obligations with patience, understanding and open hearted love, and to let your relationships with others enrich your relationship with each other?

I do.

I do.

_____ We promise to live so as to allow the spirit between us be _____ honest, purifying refreshing
_____ fun, exuberant, expanding
_____ sweet, tender, peaceful
_____ enduring
_____ faithful

Both: everlasting.

The Rings

1.) The ring, a perfect circle, from ancient times has been a symbol of eternity. So may this marriage be eternally filled with love and mutual respect. May these rings remind you always of the enduring love you have for one another.

Please repeat after me:

With this ring I thee wed, and pledge my faithful love.

With this ring I thee wed, and pledge my faithful love.

2.) The ring with no beginning and no end is a symbol of the love you share, which in giving is returned continually. It is a symbol of the sun and the earth and the universe, of wholeness and perfection and peace, and of the sacred circle of love in which we all stand this day. May these rings always remind you of the promises you are making today and the love which gives them life.

Please repeat after me:

With this ring I thee wed, and pledge my faithful love.

With this ring I thee wed, and pledge my faithful love.

The Pronouncement

To love someone is not just a feeling, it is a decision, it is judgment, it is a promise.

Please join hands.

Would it be fair to say that you, the closest family and dearest friends of _____ and _____, have come to honor and bless this joining together, this wedding, to send them into this marriage with your deepest love and highest aspirations?

(Murmur of assent)

If this is so, please join together by holding hands or otherwise touching the people near you. As you join together physically, please consciously open your hearts, your minds and your souls to this dear couple, allowing your love to flow out of you, allowing that love to embrace _____ and _____.

Traditionally it has been the responsibility of the minister or rabbi or priest to pronounce the couple husband and wife, but I would like to share that honor with all of you. For as much as _____ _____ and _____ _____ have publicly proclaimed their love unto one another, exchanged vows of marriage and sealed these vows with the gift of rings, when I give the sign, please join me in saying: We now pronounce you husband and wife.

"We Now Pronounce You Husband and Wife!"

Gigantic Kiss!

Prayer for the Marriage

1.) **Let us pray.**

May these two people, now married, fulfill the covenant they have made here today. We

pray for peace and creativity as well as for love and laughter in the lives of ____ and _____. May they openly give and openly take from each other. May they encourage one another whatever may befall them, sharing in each other's joy, trusting themselves and each other, welcoming life without fear. We pray for their home, may it be a place of beauty and simplicity, where the warmth of love puts both crisis and every day life into perspective. May their hearts and minds and souls be woven ever more closely together, so the bond that unites them will be strengthened. We pray for courage for them when the road is hard and for humility when they are favored. May they carry the past gratefully and may they face their future with pleasure and hope. When there is pain may it lie in the arms of a greater peace that rests secure. May this be true for them and for each of us here, for through our love for them we come into their lives.

Amen.

2.) Let us pray (slight variation of the one above)

May these two people, now married, fulfill the covenant they have made here today. May they openly give and openly take from each other, sharing in each other's joy and welcoming life without fear. May their hearts and minds and souls be woven ever more closely together, and the bond that unites them be ever strengthened. We pray for their home, may it be a place of beauty, simplicity and tranquility. May they gratefully acknowledge the lessons of the past and may they face their future with wisdom, hope and joy. We pray for courage for them when the road is hard and for humility when they are favored. When there is pain may it lie in the arms of a greater peace that rests secure. May this be true for them, and for each of us here, for through our love for them we become part of their lives.

Amen and thank you.

3.) Another version

Touched by many meanings of this hour and overjoyed by its promises, we celebrate with ____ and ____ their happiness. Let us offer a prayer of thanksgiving. May God grant that their shared adventure be rich with moments of serenity as well as excitement; vital with problems that test, as well as with successes that lift; marked by a sense of personal freedom, as well as mutual responsibility. May they find in each other companionship as well as love, understanding as well as compassion, challenge as well as agreement. And when there is pain, may it lie in the arms of a greater peace that rests secure. May the home they establish encompass the beauty of nature--having the elements of simplicity, exuberance, color, and a harmony with the rhythms of life. May it be a place where the pressures of a cluttered world can be sorted out and brought into focus; where accumulated tensions can be released and understood; where personal needs do not tower over concern for others; where the warmth of love and good will puts both crisis and everyday life into perspective. May they, by the example of their lives, bring a greater good to our searching world.

Amen.

4.) Another version

God of Life; God of Love; send thy blessing upon this couple. Enable them faithfully to perform this covenant which they made in thy presence. May their hearts be filled with love and fidelity; may they be a blessing and a comfort each to the other; sharers of each other's joys, consolers of each other's sorrows, helpers to each other in all the experiences of life. Grant that they may faithfully discharge the duties which belong to the condition of marriage into which they have entered, and that they - and all who may be committed to their care - may proceed in the ways of

truth, goodness, beauty, and an ever growing love.

Amen

5.) Another version

May the home they establish encompass the beauty of nature--having the elements of simplicity, exuberance, color, and a harmony with the rhythms of life. May it be a place where the pressures of a cluttered world can be sorted out and brought into focus; where accumulated tensions can be released and understood; where personal needs do not tower over concern for others; where the warmth of love and good will puts both crisis and everyday life into perspective. May they, by the example of their lives, bring a greater good to our searching world. Amen.

6.) Another version

Oh Most Holy One,
Spirit of Love and Light,
Send your blessings upon ____ and ____ today,
as they embark on this journey that we call marriage.
May their lives be rich with the abundance of all that is good.
May the lessons they learn as they travel together
be lessons learned in love.
And when there is pain,
may it lie in the arms of a greater peace that rests secure.
May they have the courage and the wisdom to continue to share fully their thoughts, their feelings,
their dreams, the very essence of who they are.
May they each be there for the other on this journey of life, to support the other in becoming
everything that can be as individuals and as a couple.
May the light of ____ and ____'s love continue to shine forth for all of us, as a wonderful example
of what true partnership is meant to be.
And may this be true for them and for each of us here, for through out love for them we become
part of their lives.
Amen

Wine Ceremony

Many many cultures honor wine as one of the great blessings in life. Let their drinking of it now serve as a warm up for the celebration that is to follow. Let this be a symbol of ____ and ____'s sharing of their lives with each other. The transform-ation of the grapes into something else can be seen as sacred, as drinking the wine changes our consciousness, as getting married changes individuals into a couple, into something new.

"No limits are set to the ascent of women and men, and to each and everyone the highest stands open. Here it is only your personal choice that decides." Martin Buber

We pray for courage for ____ and ____ when the road is hard, and for humility when they are favored. May they carry the past gratefully and may they face their future with pleasure and hope. When there is pain may it lie in the arms of a greater peace that rests secure. May this be true for them and for each of us here, for through our love for them we become part of their lives.

Amen

The breaking of the wine glass represents the fragile nature of love and of life. We need to nurture love and appreciate it, hold it up to the light and drink fully for life, for once broken it is not possible to repair. Break the glass underfoot, and forever remember this day and your vows for each other. And remember that whenever another glass is broken or if any other trouble befalls you, think of it as an extension of this glass and be comforted by your love for each other.

Breaking the glass

A broken glass cannot be mended, likewise, marriage is irrevocable. It is a transforming experience that leaves individuals forever changed. Breaking this glass represents the beginning of your new life, from the lives you once knew. This glass will represent the hope and strength that brought you together. If you remember the breaking of this glass, you will always be able to see your love for each other.

"Mazel Tov!"

Benediction

1.) The Life of Love, by Kahlil Gibran

Let us go into the field, my beloved,
For the time of harvest approaches,
And the sun's eyes are ripening the grain.

Let us tend the fruits of the earth,
As the spirit nourishes the grains of joy,
From the seeds of love, sowed deep in our hearts.

Let us fill our bins with the products of nature
As life fills so abundantly the domains of our hearts
With her endless bounty.

Let us make the flowers our bed and the sky our blanket,
And rest our heads together upon pillows of soft hay.

Let us relax after the day's toil
And listen to the provoking mummer of the brook.

2.) Good Wishes for Those We Love

May you love only that which is good.
May you seek and attain that good.
May you learn to be gentle.
May you keep tame that which rages with us all.
May you respect yourselves.

May you never once be used up.
May you wish happiness for all.
May you envy none.
May you win no victory that harms either yourselves or others.
May you know good people all the days of your lives.
May you follow in their footsteps.
May you give sympathy to all
 and by your actions lessen the tides of human sorrow.
May you add to the sum of human happiness.
May you come to know that which is eternal.
May it ever abide with you.

3.) Apache Wedding Blessing

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 for you;
Now there is no more loneliness.
Now you are two persons,
 but there is one life before you;
Go now to your dwelling place,
 to enter into the days of your togetherness,
And may your days be good, and long, upon the earth.
Amen

(Couple turns to face the guests)

_____ says:
"Ladies and Gentlemen:
May I present Mr. & Ms. ____ and ____ ____!"

Songs

Traditional - Adapted by Emmy Howard & Jim Markham

I gave my love a song that has no tune,
I gave my love a lily that always blooms,
I gave my love a palace that has no door,
I gave my love an ocean that has no shore.

How can there be a song that has not tune,
How can there be a lily that always blooms,
How can there be a palace that has no door,
How can there be an ocean that has no shore?

My laughter is the song that has no tune,
My trust it is the lily that always blooms,
My heart it is the palace that has no door,
My love it is the ocean that has no shore.

Other song options:

Autumn Fields by William James Kirkpatrick
In My Life by John Lennon & Paul McCartney
Centering Home by Molly Scott
Ave Maria
The Wedding Song by Paul Stookey
Follow Me John Denver
Sweet Sir Galihad Joan Baez
Time in a Bottle by Jim Croce
Give Yourself to Love by Kate Wolfe
Catch the Wind by Donovan Leitch
The First Time Ever I Say Your Face by Ewan MacColl
If Ever I Would Leave You by Lwerner and Loewe
The Wedding Cantata by Daniel Pinkham
The Riddle Song Anonymous