



Wedding Ceremony Preparation

Opening Music

Processional

Welcome

Words of welcome. I'll create this for you based on our conversation of the following questions:

1. Who is present at the ceremony and why?
2. Is there anyone who you wish could be there but won't?
3. What is significant about the place/timing/style of this wedding?

Invocation

A moment to center ourselves and honor the specialness of this ritual. It can be a prayer, meditation, moment of silence, lighting of a candle.....

Things to consider: What helps you feel something is sacred? What names for the sacred speak to you?

Spirit of love,

Bless this joyful gathering as we prepare to witness the marriage vows of _____ and _____.

We are grateful for the many blessings that have brought them to this moment.

And we sing praise and thanksgiving for the sustaining love of family and friends that supports them in peace and celebration.

May we be inspired by their commitment, nourished by their hope and sustained by the joy and love that is present among us today. —*Amen*

[or]

Let us pause to acknowledge the love that is present today. Love that has drawn two people together to make a commitment to walk together into the future. Love that has gathered each of us to witness their commitment and to honor their decision. Love that brings joy into our hearts as we open to life's possibilities.

[or]

“Wedding Prayer” by Robert Louis Stevenson

Lord, behold our family here assembled.
We thank you for this place in which we dwell,

For the love that unites us,
For the peace accorded us this day,
For the hope with which we expect the morrow,
For the health, the work, the food,
And the bright skies that make our lives delightful;
For our friends in all parts of the earth.
Amen

[or]

In every way we can, may we allow our deepest self to appear for this special moment. May we take full responsibility for our own life, in all its infinite dimensions. May we commit ourselves to embrace all of life, including our deepest fears and shadows, so that they can be transformed into light. May we affirm our willingness to keep our hearts open, even in the midst of transition.

Consent

Confirming intention of couple.

_____, do you come freely and of your own accord to proclaim your love and commitment to _____? If so, please answer: I do.

_____, do you desire to join your life with _____ through the bond of marriage for the rest of your lives? If so, please say "I do."

May also be addressed to parents or entire community.

Who supports this couple in their marriage? "_____'s father and mother support this marriage"

Does the family of _____ offer your blessings and promise to do all in your power and love to uphold these two persons in their marriage. If so, please answer: "We do."

Will all of you witnessing these promises do all in your power and love to uphold these two persons in their marriage. If so, please answer: "We will."

Do you who know and care for _____ and _____ give them your blessing now as they enter into this new relationship, and do you aspire in the days and years ahead to give them your deepest love, understanding, and support during both good times and bad? If so, say, "We do."

Offering/Music/Poetry

An opportunity for others to be involved. I offer just a few examples of readings here. For a variety of readings from many traditions, I recommend Into the Garden: A Wedding Anthology, edited by Richard Hass. You may also have friends and family share their own words.

Aelred of Rievaulx, [1110-1157]

It is no small consolation in this life to have someone
who can unite with you in an intimate affection
and the embrace of a holy love,
someone in whom your spirit can rest,
to whom you can pour out your soul,
to whose pleasant exchanges, as to soothing songs you can fly in sorrow □
with whose spiritual kisses, as with remedial salve,
you may draw out all the weariness of your restless anxieties.
Someone who can shed tears with you in your worries,
be happy with you when things go well,
search out with you the answers to your problems,
whom with ties of charity you can lead into the depths of your heart; □
where the sweetness of the Spirit flows between you,
where you can so join yourself and cleave to your beloved
that soul mingles with soul and two become one.

from the film *Shall We Dance?*

All these promises that we make and we break,
why is it, do you think, that people get married? □
Because we need a witness to our lives.
There's a billion people on this planet.
I mean, what does any one life mean?
But in a marriage you've promised to care about everything:
the good things,
the bad things,
the terrible things,
the mundane things,
all of it all the time, every day.
You're saying, "Your life will not go unnoticed
because I will notice it,
your life will not go unwitnessed
because I will be your witness."
You can quote me on that if you like.

Why Marriage? By Mari Nichols

Because to the depths of me, I long to love one person,
With all my heart, my soul, my mind, my body...

Because I need a forever friend to trust with the intimacies of me,
Who won't hold them against me,
Who loves me when I'm unlikable,
Who sees the small child in me, and
Who looks for the divine potential of me...

Because I need to cuddle in the warmth of the night
With someone who thanks God for me,
With someone I feel blessed to hold...

Because marriage means opportunity
To grow in love in friendship...

Because marriage is a discipline
To be added to a list of achievements...

Because marriages do not fail, people fail
When they enter into a marriage
Expecting another to make them whole...

Because, knowing this,
I promise myself to take full responsibility
For my spiritual, mental, and physical wholeness
I create me,
I take half the responsibility for my marriage
Together, we create our marriage...

Because with this understanding
The possibilities are endless.

“Love” by Roy Croft

I love you,
Not only for what you are,
But for what I am
When I am with you.
I love you,
Not only for what
You have made of yourself,
But for what
You are making of me.

I love you
For the part of me
That you bring out;

I love you
For putting your hand
Into my heaped-up heart
And passing over
All the foolish, weak things
That you can't help
Dimly seeing there,

And for drawing out
Into the light
All the beautiful belongings
That no one else had looked
Quite far enough to find.

I love you because you
Are helping me to make
Of the lumber of my life
Not a tavern
But a temple;
Out of the works
Of my every day

Not a reproach
But a song.

I love you
Because you have done
More than any creed
Could have done
To make me good,
And more than any fate
Could have done
To make me happy.

You have done it
Without a touch,
Without a word,
Without a sign.
You have done it
By being yourself.

....

Shakespeare's Sonnet 116

Let me not to the marriage of true mind
admit impediments. Love is not love
that 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 wandering 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 even to the edge of doom.

If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Charge to the Couple

Inspirational sermon reflecting your hopes and your relationship. I will create this for you based on our conversation addressing the following questions:

4. How did you fall in love (not just how you met, but how your love relationship developed.)
5. Apart from physical chemistry, what do you like most about your fiancé(e)?
6. What difference has it made for you to be together? It might be helpful to think in terms of "before we met..." or "since we've been together...."
7. What is different about being married versus living together?
8. How would you describe a good marriage?

It is very helpful in the preparation of this piece that you share anecdotes and specifics from your life experience together. These specifics will NOT be included but they will help flavor and deepen the words.

The Vows

Vows are the core of the wedding ceremony. They represent the promise you are making to each other. Vows can be traditional or unique. You may create your own or use vows that have been used for centuries. Here are a few examples.

I, ___take you, ___, to be my husband/wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live.

___, I take you to be my husband/wife, to laugh with you in joy; to grieve with you in sorrow; to grow with you in love; serving humankind in peace and hope; for as long as we both shall live.

___, I want to live with you just as you are. I choose you above all others to share my life with me. I want to love you for yourself in the hope you will become all that you can be. I promise to honor this pledge as long as life and faith endure.

____, I take you as my spouse. 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 own fulfillment as an individual, and our growth together as a couple, through all the changes in our lives.

____, I take you as my spouse. I choose you above all others, to share my life with me. I want to live you just as you are, to laugh with you in joy, to grieve with you in sorrow, to grow with you in love. 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, and I promise to seek peace for ourselves, for our children, and for the world around us. I give myself as I am and as I will be for as long as we both shall live.

____, I take you to be my spouse. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

____, I stand beside you today because I choose you above all others. I promise to keep laughing with you and learning with you. I promise to love and cherish you, and to nurture your spirit as I nurture my own. I promise to keep whispering to you late at night, nose to nose. I promise to remind you often of the things I love about you. I promise to speak truthfully to you, and to learn to hold my tongue. I promise to share my feminine spirit with you, so that we grow closer as we get older. I promise to honor the poet in us both. I promise to be faithful to you, and to respect our marriage for as long as I live.

Exchange of Rings

Introduction

These rings are of gold: So may your love for each other be the most precious possession of your lives. Each ring forms a circle: May it symbolize the never-ending loyalty and honor that shall encompass your new relationship.

The circle is a symbol of the sun and the earth and the universe, of wholeness and perfection and peace. May the rings you give and receive this day be symbols of the endless love and unity into which you enter as husband and wife.

Just as these rings are together in my hand, _____ and _____ have pledged to be together as partners in life. Just as these rings are in the shape of a circle that has no end, may they be symbols of a love that knows no end and abides forever.

The wedding ring is a public declaration of commitment. It is an ever visible symbol that these two persons are connected together in love and life.

_____ and _____, these rings symbolize your marriage bond, may their meaning sink into your hearts and bind your lives together by devotion and faithfulness to one another.

Exchange

"With the giving of this ring, I thee wed."....."And receiving it,
I thee wed."

"I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow,
and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you."

"With this ring, I marry you."

"With this ring, I thee wed."

"With this ring I marry you and join my life with yours."

"_____ I give you this ring as a symbol of my love. As it encircles your finger, may it remind you always that you are surrounded by my enduring love." "I will wear it proudly. Whenever I look at it, I will remember this joyous day and the vows we've made."

Other Rituals

A moment for other rituals – unity candle, drinking from the same cup, handfasting, encircling the altar, sword ceremony, handholding, jumping the broom, planting a tree.

The Blessing

The blessing can take many shapes or forms. The officiant may offer a few words or you may include your guests in spoken or silent well-wishes.

May all blessings attend you,
May joy pervade your life together, and
May your home be forever a place of peace and true fulfillment.
May the spirit of Love abide with you and deepen in you with each passing year.

[or]

Spirit of love, look with favor upon the world, and on this day, look with favor especially upon _____ and _____ as they are joined in marriage.

Give them wisdom and devotion in the ordering of their life together, that each may be to each other a companion in joy, a strength in time of need, a counselor in perplexity, and a comfort in sorrow.

Let them always strive to better themselves and their relationship, and always be as grateful for each other as they are today. .

Ensure that laughter shall always be a part of their lives, bringing joy to themselves and to those around them.

Give them grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their fault, and to seek forgiveness.

Grant that all married persons and partners who have witnessed these vows may find their lives strengthened and their loyalties confirmed.

Make their life together be a sign of love to those around them, in the hope that that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness may heal guilt, and joy may conquer despair.

Give them such fulfillment in their mutual affection that they may reach out in love and concern for others.

[or]

The Serenity Prayer

God grant _____ and _____ the serenity
to accept the things they cannot change;
courage to change the things they can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as they would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
if they surrender to His Will;
That they may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
Forever in the next.
Amen.

[or]

May there be Peace in your Minds
May there be Peace in your Hearts
May there be Peace in your Lives
May your Ancestors know Peace
May you know Peace
May your children unto seven generations know Peace
May there be Peace on Earth

The Pronouncement

“As _____ and _____ have declared their marriage commitment with their words and have symbolized their connection to one another with the exchange of rings, and that this commitment has been witnessed by this gathering, I joyfully pronounce them...”

Husband and wife *[or]* Joined in marriage.

Recessional