

A WEDDING CEREMONY

Dear friends, we have met on this solemn occasion for the purpose of uniting this woman and this man in marriage. You know, of course, that we cannot do this by ourselves.

When the Bible says, "What therefore God has joined together..." it implies that marriage is something in which God participates.

Let us pray that it may be so (tonight) (today).

In asking me, a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, to receive your vows and to perform this ceremony, you make God a part of your marriage. Your vows then, are more than a pledge to each other. They are more than a contract under the laws of this State. Your vows are vows unto God, sacred and eternal.

, God's Holy Word says "Husbands, love your wives." That love is to be pure, tender, kind and constant, a love even unto death.

I charge you that with an affection like this you are to guard and cherish this life now entrusted to you.

, God's Word also says "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband." It is yours then to make his life happy with your sympathy, gentle understanding, constant care and kindness. I charge you to do all that you can to insure the happiness and usefulness of his life.

May I state the Christian ideal of marriage in a few brief words? Marriage is the most intimate and personal of all human relationships, next to our relationship to Christ himself.

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Traditionally, marriage ceremonies have tried to say that each should love, honor, and cherish each other until death parts you. To the modern generation we would say that marriage means intimacy, openness, tenderness, respect, appreciation, self-giving and at times self-sacrifice for each other's welfare and happiness. This is true love, both in a romantic and in a Christian sense.

What I am saying is that you two are about to pledge yourselves to helping each other become complete and mature persons, and to achieving maximum self-fulfilment. Love for another person is wishing for that person the highest happiness, security, and achievement in this life and in the next.

The path of married love is not always smooth. When differences arise, and faults appear and excellencies seem to fade, I charge you both then to remember the dreams and visions of your sweetheart days. I charge you to cherish your love and your vows of love, that life may bring you all the glories that God intended should be found in a successful and happy home and family.

May I remind you, in all humility, of the Christian ideal of one woman for one man for life. I say "in all humility" because the actual practice of modern marriage does not always live up to that ideal. Many marriages do go on the rocks. People, being human, do not seem to be able to attain the standard of Christ and his church. Of this we are truly sorry. But let it be noted by each of you and by all who witness this agreement, that we make no provision whatever for dissolving this union, under any circumstances short of death. What GOD hath joined together, man cannot, in any way, put asunder except by sin and tragedy.

In the name of the Lord Jesus, who blessed the marriage at Cana, I charge you each separately and both together to always make God a part of your marriage. Let Him be a member of your household, a guest at every table, a listener to every conversation, a partner in every undertaking and a comfort in every problem.

This security, permanency, and stability of which I speak means that any children born to this union will have security. They will know that their parents have freely chosen each other and can be depended on to love and remain with each other. It means, too, that two adults know their own minds and have chosen to make this relationship one in which each can fulfill himself as a human being and can, at the same time, feel loved and accepted in all of his uniqueness.

Now that we stand here before God and in the presence of these witnesses, let us realize that we are about to enter into, not merely a human contract, but into a relationship which is sanctioned by the Bible, proved valuable in the history of human beings, and in line with our deepest understanding of human personality and human needs.

In the Bible it says, "A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife."

The same, of course, applies to the wife. This means that both the bride and the groom are attaching themselves to each other with a depth that will be stronger than all other ties.

I assume, then, that all involved in these relationships understand that these two are building a new home, making this new relationship primary, and that no one denies this understanding of the Christian concept of marriage.

If any one knows any reason why these two, and _____, cannot enter into a sound Christian marriage, let him speak now or forever hold his peace.

We shall proceed with the solemnization of this marriage.

IF THE BRIDE IS TO BE GIVEN AWAY, the minister says:

"Who gives this woman in marriage?

(The father or father substitute says: "I do" or

"Her mother and I do.")

(The bride takes the groom's arm and they move

closer to the minister before the altar.)

If you two voluntarily and freely enter into this marriage and know of no reason why you should not, you will now present yourselves before this people to speak your vows. (They step forward)

I would like to read to you one of the outstanding passages in the Bible on the relationship you are about to enter.

(Reads Ephesians 5:22-33 from the Bible)

If you are willing thus to enter into a Christian marriage contract between yourselves and God, you will signify by uniting your right hands.

(They join hands)

(Saying to the man): _____, in taking this woman whose hand you hold to be your wife, do you commit yourself to her happiness and self-fulfillment as a person, and to her usefulness to the world in which we live; and do you promise with God's help to be her faithful husband, to forsake all others and hold yourself unto her alone, to love and serve her as Christ commands, and to stand by her in sickness and health, and through adversity and prosperity as long as you both shall live, so help you God?

(The groom answers "I do.")

(THEN THE MINISTER ASKS THE THE SAME THING OF THE BRIDE)

, in taking this man who holds your hand to be your husband, do you commit yourself to his happiness and self-fulfillment as a person, and to his usefulness to the world in which we live; and do you promise with God's help to be his faithful wife, to forsake all others and hold yourself unto him alone, to love and serve him as Christ commands, and to stand by him in sickness and health, and through adversity and prosperity as long as you both shall live, so help you God?

(The bride answers "I do.")

(They release their hands)

Now that you have taken these vows, there is an additional part of this solemn and significant moment, the giving and receiving of the rings. The ring symbolizes your love for each other which has no end.

(The minister, after receiving the ring from the best man, instructs the groom to place the ring on the third finger of the bride's hand and hold it in place as he repeats after him the following:

With this ring I pledge my love to you...
and receive you as my loving wife...

With this ring I promise to be true to you...
until death shall part us...

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord..."

(The minister says, "Amen," and reaches for the ring (if there is one) which the bride gives to the groom. He instructs the bride to place it on the third finger of the groom's left hand and hold it in place as she repeats the vows.)

With this ring I pledge my love to you...
and receive you as my loving husband...;

With this ring I promise to be true to you...
until death shall part us...

in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."

(The minister says, "Amen," and proceeds with the following words:

As the couple stands holding hands:

In the Book of Ruth we read the appropriate words, of "Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where 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." This is to say, in a strange and mysterious way, that you two are now become one, a union of loyalty and love.

(OR HE MAY SAY:)

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

OR:

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

Let us pray for God's blessing: (couple may kneel)

Our Father, here are two of your children who have felt love and attraction to each other. In humility they acknowledge their limitations. Make them big enough to be more concerned for each other's happiness than for their own. We who have gathered here to solemnize this occasion pray for them the very best of your rich blessings.

Our joys are doubled since the happiness of one is the happiness of the other. Our burdens are halved when we share them, we divide the load.

Bless this husband. Bless him as a provider of nourishment and raiment and sustain him in all to the pressures of his battle for bread. May his strength be his wife's protection, his character be her boast and her pride, and may he so live that she will find in him the haven for which the heart of woman truly longs.

Bless this loving wife. Give her tenderness that will make her great, a deep sense of understanding and a great faith in Thee. Give her that inner beauty of soul that never fades, that eternal youth that is found in holding fast the things that never age.

Teach them that marriage is not living merely for each other; it is two uniting and joining hands to serve Thee. Give them a great spiritual purpose in life. May they seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the other things shall be added unto them.

May they not expect that perfection of each other that belongs alone to Thee. May they minimize each other's weaknesses, be swift to praise and magnify each other's points of comeliness and strength, and see each other through a lover's kind and patient eyes.

Bless them and develop their characters as they walk life's pathway together. Give them enough tears to keep them tender, enough hurts to keep them humane, enough of failure to keep their hands clenched tightly in Thine, and enough success to make them sure they walk with God.

May they never take each other's love for granted, but always experience that breathless wonder that exclaims, "Out of all this world you have chosen me."

When life is done and the sun is setting, may they be found then as now hand in hand, still thanking God for each other. May they serve Thee happily, faithfully, together, until at last one shall lay the other into the arms of God. This we ask through Jesus Christ, the Great Lover of Our Souls. Amen.

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N. Jesus asbrud and M. forfaleit to each, having add af
committed yourself to each other in openness, loved
and permanency, and having prayed for the blessing
of Almighty God, and having sealed these vows to
by the giving and receiving of rings, I pronounce
in the presence of these people that you are now
man and wife according to the witness of ~~of~~ these of
gospel and the law of the state. ~~if bairt fliv ore dert~~

Let all men take care in the sight of God and ~~etit~~
that this holy covenant shall ever remain saered.
The Word of God says, "What therefore God has joined
together, let no man put asunder."

(The minister lifts his hand for the benediction.)

Now unto him who is able to keep you from
falling and to present you without blemish before ~~not~~
the presence of his glory with rejoicing, ~~to~~ avres of
to the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ ~~trou~~
our Lord, bedglory, majesty, dominion and authority,
before all time and now and forever. AMEN.

(The couple stands and the minister in a low tone
of voice says, "Now you may kiss each other.")
After the kiss, he shakes hands with the bride
and says, "Best wishes," and with the groom saying,
"Congratulations." The recessional begins
immediately.

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