

Selected Wedding Readings

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Section A – Jewish & Christian Scripture Readings & Reflections

1) Song of Songs: 2:8-14, 16a; 8:6-7a

The voice of my beloved!

Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills.

My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.

Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows,
looking through the lattice.

My beloved speaks and says to me:

“Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away;

for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.

The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.

The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.

Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff,

let me see your face, let me hear your voice;

for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.

My beloved is mine and I am his.

Set me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm;

For stern as death is love, relentless as the nether-world is devotion;
its flames are a blazing fire.

Deep waters cannot quench love, nor floods sweep it away.

2) John 15: 9-12

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love,

just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.

I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you,
and that your joy may be complete.

“This is my commandment,

that you love one another as I have loved you.

3) From the First Letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but have not love,
 I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge,
 and if I have all faith, so as to move mountains,
 but do not have love, I am nothing.
 If I give away all my possessions, and hand over my body so that I may boast,
 but do not have love, I gain nothing.
 Love is patient; love is kind;
 love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.
 It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;
 it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.
 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
 Love never ends.
 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child;
 when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.
 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face.
 Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.
 Now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

4) From the Letter to the Colossians 3. 12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,
 clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.
 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another,
 forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
 Above all, clothe yourselves with love,
 which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
 to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.
 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly;
 teach and admonish one another in all wisdom;
 and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.
 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
 giving thanks to God the Father through him.

5) Phillipians 4: 4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.
 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.
 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication
 with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
 will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just,
 whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable,

if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise,
think about these things.

Keep on doing the things

that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me,
and the God of peace will be with you.

6) *Romans 1: 9-18*

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good;

love one another with mutual affection;

outdo one another in showing honor.

Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.

Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Live in harmony with one another;

do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly;

do not claim to be wiser than you are.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil,

but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.

If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

7) *"Words at a Quaker Wedding" From Friends Journal*

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 which by the grace of God we can convert into strengths;

and by the finding of those strengths and beauties in each other

which we hardly dared suspect were there.

But these are the rewards of unfolding years; years, not weeks or months.

The glory of a great marriage lies in the surprises

which loving support, acceptance, and graceful forgiveness can bring forth.

8) From “Daily Readings in the ABC’s of Faith” by Fredereich Buechner

They say they will love, comfort, honor each other to the end of their days.
 They say they will cherish each other and be faithful to each other always.
 They say they will do these things not just when they feel like it,
 but even – for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health –
 when they don’t feel like it at all.
 In other words, the vows they will make could hardly be more extravagant.
 They give away their freedom. They take on themselves each other’s burdens.
 They bind their lives together...
 The question is, what do they get in return? They get each other in return...
 There will always be the other to talk to, to listen to...
 There is still someone to get through the night with,
 to wake into the new day beside.
 If they have children, they can give them, as well as each other, roots and wings...
 They both still have their lives apart as well as a life together.
 They both still have their separate ways to find.
 But a marriage made in heaven is one where two people
 become more richly themselves together than the chances are either of them
 could have ever managed to become alone.

9) “On Love” by Thomas a Kempis (adapted)

Love is a mighty power, a great and complete good.
 Love alone lightens every burden, and makes rough places smooth.
 It bears every hardship
 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.

Section B – Readings from other Spiritual/Religious Traditions

10) From "Instructions For Life in the New Millennium"

By His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

Take into account that great love and great achievements involve great risk,
And that a loving atmosphere in your home is the foundation for your life.
Be gentle with the earth, Be gentle with one another.
When disagreements come, remember always to protect the spirit of your union.
When you realize you've made a mistake,
Take immediate steps to correct it.
Remember that the best relationship is one
In which your love for each other
Exceeds your need for each other.
So, love yourselves, love one another
Love all that is your life together,
And everything else will follow.

11) "On Marriage" By Kahlil Gibran

Then Almitra spoke again and said, And what of Marriage, master?

And he answered saying:

You were born together, and together you shall be forever more.
You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days.
Aye, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.
But let there be spaces in your togetherness.
And let the winds of 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 our 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.

12) “Namaste” by Ram Dass

I honor the place in you where the entire universe dwells,
 I honor the place in you of love, of light, of truth, of peace.
 I honor the place within you
 where if you are in that place in you
 and I am in that place in me,
 there is only one of us.

13) “The Gift” by Hafiz, a 14th Century Sufi Master (Adapted)

Our union is like this:
 You feel cold
 So I reach for a blanket to cover our shivering feet.
 A hunger comes into your body
 So I run to my garden and start digging potatoes.
 You ask for a few words of comfort and guidance,
 I quickly kneel at your side offering you
 This whole book – my whole life as a gift.
 You ache with loneliness one night
 so much you weep.
 And I say,
 Here’s a rope
 Tie it around me,
 I will be your companion for life.

14) “The Call of Love” by Rumi

Each moment from all sides rushes to us the call to love.
 We are running to contemplate its vast green field.
 Do you want to come with us?
 This is not the time to stay at home,
 but to go out and give yourself to the rose garden.
 The dawn of joy has arisen,
 and this is the moment of vision.

Section C – Fiction: Poetry and Stories

15) “I love you” by Roy Croft

I love you.
 Not only for what you are, but for what I am with 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.

16) An excerpt from “Captain Corelli’s Mandolin” by Louis de Bernieres

Love is a temporary madness; it erupts like volcanoes and then subsides.
 And when it subsides you have to make a decision.
 You have to work out whether your roots have so entwined together
 that it is inconceivable that you should ever part.
 Because this is what love is.
 Love is not breathlessness, it is not excitement,
 it is not the promulgation of eternal passion.
 That is just being in love, which any fool can do.
 Love itself is what is left over when being in love has burned away,
 and this is both an art and a fortunate accident.
 Those that truly love have roots that grow towards each other underground,
 and when all the pretty blossoms have fallen from their branches,
 they find that they are one tree and not two.

17) “Late Fragment” by Ray Carver

And did you get what you wanted from this life, even so?
 I did.
 And what did you want?
 To call myself beloved.
 To feel myself beloved on earth.

18) "At Last" by Laura Strickland

I love that each day
 I wake up to a world that has you in it
 And that I've been blessed
 With a life that took a path
 That lead me straight to you

I've never been as happy or at peace as I am
 since you've become a part of my life

There was a time
 When I thought I'd never find
 This place in my life
 This calm, peaceful feeling
 That true love has given me

After all the bridges I've crossed
 And all the paths I've taken
 After all the journey's
 And all the let downs

At last
 I took the right path,
 I crossed the right bridge
 And my journey has ended

At Last
 I found my heart
 My best friend, my one true love
 At last, I found you

19) "A Walled Garden" by Anonymous

'Your marriage,' he said,
 'should have within it a secret, a protected place open to you alone.
 Imagine it to be a walled garden.
 Entered by a door to which only you have the key.
 Within this garden you will cease to be
 a mother, father, employee, homemaker
 or any other roles which you fulfill in daily life.
 Here you are yourselves, two people who love each other,
 here you can concentrate on one another's needs.
 So take my hand and let us go back to our garden,
 the time we spend together is not wasted
 but invested in our future and the nurture of our love.'

20) "I carry your heart with me" By E. E. Cummings

i carry your heart with me
 (i carry it in my heart)
 i am never without it
 (anywhere i go you go, my dear;
 and whatever is done by only me is your doing, my darling)
 i fear no fate (for you are my fate, my sweet)
 i want no world (for beautiful you are my world, my true)
 and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant
 and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows
 (here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud
 and the sky of the sky of a tree called life;
 which grows higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)
 and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart
 i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)

21) "Somewhere I have never travelled" by E.E. Cummings

Somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond
 Any experience, your eyes have their silence:
 In your most frail gesture are things which enclose me,
 Or which I cannot touch because they are too near

Your slightest look easily will unclose me
 Though I have closed myself as fingers,
 You open always petal by petal myself as Spring opens
 (touching skillfully, mysteriously) her first rose

Nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals
 The power of your intense fragility: whose texture
 Compels me with the colour of its countries,
 Rendering death and forever with each breathing

(I do not know what it is about you that closes
 And opens; only something in me understands
 The voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)
 Nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands

22) From Bob Marley

He's not perfect. You aren't either, and the two of you will never be perfect.
 But if he can make you laugh at least once, causes you to think twice,
 and if he admits to being human and making mistakes,
 hold onto him and give him the most you can.
 He isn't going to quote poetry,
 he's not thinking about you every moment,
 but he will give you a part of him that he knows you could break.
 Don't hurt him, don't change him,
 and don't expect for more than he can give.
 Don't analyze. Smile when he makes you happy,
 yell when he makes you mad,
 and miss him when he's not there.
 Love hard when there is love to be had.
 Because perfect guys don't exist,
 but there's always one guy that is perfect for you.

23) "A Marriage" by Michael Blumenthal

You are holding up a ceiling
 with both arms.
 It is very heavy, but you must hold it up,
 or else it will fall down on you.
 Your arms are tired, terribly tired,
 and, as the day goes on,
 it feels as if either your arms or the ceiling
 will soon collapse.

But then, unexpectedly,
 something wonderful happens:
 Someone, a man or a woman,
 walks into the room
 and holds their arms up
 to the ceiling beside you.

So you finally get
 to take down your arms.
 You feel the relief of respite,
 the blood flowing back to your fingers and arms.
 And when your partner's arms tire,
 you hold up your own to relieve him again.

And it can go on like this
 for many years
 without the house falling.

24) *"Falling in love is like owning a dog," by Taylor Mali*

First of all, it's a big responsibility,
especially in a city like New York.
So think long and hard before deciding on love.
On the other hand, love gives you a sense of security:
when you're walking down the street late at night
and you have a leash on love
ain't no one going to mess with you.
Because crooks and muggers think love is unpredictable.
Who knows what love could do in its own defense?
On cold winter nights, love is warm.
It lies between you and lives and breathes
and makes funny noises.
Love wakes you up all hours of the night with its needs.
It needs to be fed so it will grow and stay healthy.
Love doesn't like being left alone for long.
But come home and love is always happy to see you.
It may break a few things accidentally in its passion for life,
but you can never be mad at love for long.
Is love good all the time? No! No!
Love can be bad. Bad, love, bad! Very bad love.
Love makes messes.
Love leaves you little surprises here and there.
Love needs lots of cleaning up after.
Sometimes you just want to get love fixed.
Sometimes you want to roll up a piece of newspaper
and swat love on the nose,
not so much to cause pain,
just to let love know Don't you ever do that again!
Sometimes love just wants to go for a nice long walk.
Because love loves exercise.
It runs you around the block and leaves you panting.
It pulls you in several different directions at once,
or winds around and around you
until you're all wound up and can't move.
But love makes you meet people wherever you go.
People who have nothing in common but love
stop and talk to each other on the street.
Throw things away and love will bring them back,
again, and again, and again.
But most of all, love needs love, lots of it.
And in return, love loves you and never stops.

25) "Song of the Open Road" by Walt Whitman

Listen, I will be honest with you ...I do not offer the old smooth prizes
 But offer rough new prizes.
 These are the days that must happen to you:
 You shall not heap up what is called riches,
 You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or achieve.
 However sweet the laid up stores,
 However convenient the dwelling, you shall not remain there.
 However sheltered the port, However calm the waters, you shall not anchor there.
 However welcome the hospitality that welcomes you,
 you are permitted to receive it but a little while.
 Afoot and lighthearted, take to the open road
 Healthy, free, the world before you; The long brown path before you,
 Leading wherever you choose.
 Say only to one another: Comrade, I give you my hand!
 I give you my love more precious than money;
 I give you myself before preaching and law:
 Will you give me yourself? Will you come travel with me?
 Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

26) Love Sonnet 17 by Pablo Neruda

I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz,
 or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.
 I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,
 in secret, between the shadow and the soul.
 I love you as the plant that never blooms
 but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers;
 thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,
 risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.
 I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where.
 I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride;
 so I love you because I know no other way than this:
 where I does not exist, nor you,
 so close that your hand on my chest is my hand,
 so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep.

27) *The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho*

When he looked into her eyes, he learned the most important part of the language that all the world spoke — the language that everyone on earth was capable of understanding in their heart. It was love. Something older than humanity, more ancient than the desert. What the boy felt at that moment was that he was in the presence of the only woman in his life, and that, with no need for words, she recognized the same thing. Because when you know the language, it's easy to understand that someone in the world awaits you, whether it's in the middle of the desert or in some great city. And when two such people encounter each other, the past and the future become unimportant. There is only that moment, and the incredible certainty that everything under the sun has been written by one hand only. It is the hand that evokes love, and creates a twin soul for every person in the world. Without such love, one's dreams would have no meaning.

28) *Tin Wedding Whistle" by Ogden Nash*

Though you know it anyhow ; Listen to me, darling, now,
 Proving what I need not prove; How I know I love you, love.
 Near and far, near and far, I am happy where you are;
 Likewise I have never larnt how to be it where you aren't.
 Far and wide, far and wide, I can walk with you beside;
 Furthermore, I tell you what, I sit and sulk where you are not.
 Visitors remark my frown
 Where you're upstairs and I am down,
 Yes, and I'm afraid I pout
 When I'm indoors and you are out;
 But how contentedly I view any room containing you.
 In fact I care not where you be, Just as long as it's with me.
 In all your absences I glimpse
 Fire and flood and trolls and imps.
 Is your train a minute slothful?
 I goad the stationmaster wrothful.
 When with friends to bridge you drive
 I never know if you're alive,
 And when you linger late in shops I long to telephone the cops.
 Yet how worth the waiting for, To see you coming through the door.
 Somehow, I can be complacent Never but with you adjacent.
 Near and far, near and far, I am happy where you are;
 Likewise I have never larnt How to be it where you aren't.
 Then grudge me not my fond endeavor,
 To hold you in my sight forever;
 Let none, not even you, disparage
 Such valid reason for a marriage.

29) "Oh the Places You'll Go" (Adapted) by Dr. Suess

Congratulations! Today is your day.
 You're off to Great Places! You're off and away!
 You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes.
 You can steer yourself any direction you choose.
 You're on your own. And you know what you know.
 And YOU are the guy (the ones) who'll decide where to go.
 You'll look up and down streets. Look 'em over with care.
 About some you will say, "We don't choose to go there."
 With your head full of brains and your shoes full of feet,
 you're too smart to go down any not-so-good street.
 And you may not find any you'll want to go down.
 In that case, of course, you'll head straight out of town.
 It's opener there in the wide open air.
 Out there things can happen and frequently do
 to people as brainy and footsy as you.
 And then things start to happen,
 don't worry. Don't stew.
 Just go right along. You'll start happening too.
 OH! THE PLACES YOU'LL GO (TOGETHER)!

30) "MY LOVE" by Linda Lee Elrod

When I met you, I had no idea how much my life was about to be changed...
 but then, how could I have known?
 A love like ours happens once in a lifetime.
 You were a miracle to me, the one who was everything
 I had ever dreamed of, the one I thought existed only in my imagination.
 And when you came into my life,
 I realized that what I had always thought was happiness
 couldn't compare to the joy loving you brought me.
 You are a part of everything I think and do and feel,
 and with you by my side, I believe that anything is possible.
 (this day) gives me a chance to thank you for the miracle of you...
 You are and always will be, the love of my life.

31) An excerpt from "The Velveteen Rabbit" by Margery Williams

What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day,
when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender.
"Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?
"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse.
"It's a thing that happens to you.
When someone loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with,
But REALLY loves you, then you become Real."
"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.
"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful.
"When you are Real, you don't mind being hurt."
"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked,
"or bit by bit?"
"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse.
"You become. It takes a long time.
That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily,
Or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept.
Generally, by the time you are Real,
Most of your hair has been loved off,
And your eyes drop out
and you get loose in your joints and very shabby.
But these things don't matter at all,
Because once you are Real,
You can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."
"I suppose you are real?" said the Rabbit.
And then he wished he had not said it,
For he thought the Skin Horse might be sensitive.
But the skin horse only smiled.
Someone made me Real," he said.
"That was a great many years ago- but once you are Real
you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always."

Section D – Non-Fiction: Heartfelt Prose and Meditations

32) “Hands” (This reading can be done with or without a Hand Binding ritual)

Please join your right hands and then your left hands,
forming an infinity symbol, symbolizing a love that goes on forever.

These are the hands of your best friend, young and strong and full of love for you,
that are holding yours on your wedding day,
as you promise to love each other today, tomorrow, and forever.

These are the hands that will work alongside yours,
as together you build your future.

These are the hands that will passionately love you
and cherish you through the years,
and with the slightest touch, will comfort you like no other.

These are the hands that will hold you when fear or grief
temporarily comes your way.

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 tenderly hold your children.

These are the hands that will give you support and encouragement
to follow and fulfill your dreams.

These are the hands that will hold you tight as you face difficult times.

These are the hands that will give you strength when you need it.

And lastly, these are the hands that even when wrinkled and aged,
will still be reaching for yours,

still giving you the same unspoken tenderness with just a touch.

These are the hands of husband and wife/your beloved.

33) “Wedded Love is a Friendship that has Caught Fire” (Anonymous)

Wedded love is a friendship that has caught fire.

It is quiet understanding, mutual confidence, sharing and forgiving.

It is loyalty through good and bad.

It settles for less than perfection, and makes allowances for human weakness.

Love is content with the present.

It hopes for the future and it doesn't brood over the past.

It's the day-in and day-out chronicle 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 don't have it, no matter what else there is, it is not enough.

34) An excerpt from "The Bridge Across Forever" by Richard Bach

A soul mate is someone who has locks to fit our keys and keys to fit our locks.
 When we feel safe enough to open the locks,
 our truest selves can 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 are pretending to be.
 Each unveils the best part of each other.
 No matter what else is going wrong around us,
 with that person we're safe in our own paradise.
 Our soul mate is someone who shares our deepest longings, our sense of direction.
 Our soul mate is the one who makes life come to life.

35) "The Art of Marriage" by Wilfred Harrison

Happiness in marriage is not something that just happens.
 A good marriage must be created.
 In the art of marriage the little things are the 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 at no time 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 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 commitment is reciprocal.
 It is not only marrying the right partner,
 it is being the right partner.
 It is discovering what marriage can be, at its best.

36) An excerpt from "The Union" by R. Fulghum

You have known each other from the first glance of acquaintance to this point of commitment. At some point, you decided to marry. From that moment of yes to this moment of yes, indeed, you have been making promises and agreements in an informal way. All those conversations that were held riding in a car or over a meal or during long walks – all those sentences that began with "When we're married" and continued with "I will and you will and we will" – those late night talks that included "someday" and "somehow" and "maybe" – and all those promises that are unspoken matters of the heart. All these common things, and more, are the real process of a wedding. The symbolic vows that you are about to make are a way of saying to one another, "You know all those things we've promised and hoped and dreamed – well, I meant it all, every word." Look at one another and remember this moment in time. (PAUSE) Before this moment you have been many things to one another – acquaintance, friend, companion, lover, dancing partner, and even teacher, for you have learned much from one another in these last few years. Now you shall say a few words that take you across a threshold of life, and things will never quite be the same between you. For after these vows, you shall say to the world, this – is my husband, this – is my wife.

37) "Marriage Joins Two People in the Circle of Its Love" by Edmund O'Neill

Marriage is a commitment to life, to the best that two people can find and bring out in each other. It offers opportunities for sharing and growth that no other human relationship can equal; a 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. 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 love through the seasons of life. When two people pledge to love and care for each other in marriage, they create a spirit unique to 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, which takes a lifetime to fulfill.

38) From "The Oyster" in Gifts from the Sea by Anne Morrow Lindburgh

Love does not consist only of gazing at each other
 (one perfect sunrise gazing at another)
 but in looking outward together in the same direction.
 For, in fact man and woman are not only looking outward in the same direction;
 they are working outward.
 Here one forms ties, roots, a firm base.
 And here the bonds of marriage are formed.
 For marriage, which is always spoken of as a bond,
 becomes actually, in this stage, many bonds, many strands,
 of different texture and strength, making up a web that is taut and firm.
 The web is fashioned of love.
 Yes, many kinds of love: romantic love first,
 then a slow growing devotion and playing these through,
 a constantly rippling companionship.
 It is made of loyalties, and interdependencies, and shared experiences.
 It is woven of memories of meetings and conflicts;
 of triumphs and disappointments.
 It is a knowledge of likes and dislikes,
 of habits and reactions, both physical and mental.
 It is a web of instincts and intuitions,
 and known and unknown exchanges.
 The web of marriage is made by propinquity,
 in the day to day living side by side,
 looking outward and working outward in the same direction.
 It is woven in space and in time of the substance of life itself.

39) From Justice Kennedy's Supreme Court Ruling on same-sex marriage

"No union is more profound than marriage,
 for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family.
 In forming a marital union, two people become something greater than once they
 were. As some of the petitioners in these cases demonstrate,
 marriage embodies a love that may endure even past death.
 It would misunderstand these men and women
 to say they disrespect the idea of marriage.
 Their plea is that they do respect it, respect it so deeply
 that they seek to find its fulfillment for themselves.
 Their hope is not to be condemned to live in loneliness,
 excluded from one of civilization's oldest institutions.
 They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law.
 The Constitution grants them that right.
 The judgment of the Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit is reversed.
 It is so ordered.

40) *"Foundations Of Marriage" by Regina Hill*

Love, trust, and forgiveness are the foundations of marriage.
In marriage, many days will bring happiness, while other days may be sad.
But together, two hearts can overcome everything...
In marriage, all of the moments won't be exciting or romantic,
and sometimes worries and anxiety will be overwhelming.
But together, two hearts that accept will find comfort together.
Recollections of past joys, pains, and shared feelings will be the glue that holds
everything together during even the worst and most insecure moments.
Reaching out to each other as a friend, and becoming the confidant and companion
that the other one needs, is the true magic and beauty of any two people together.
It's inspiring in each other a dream or a feeling,
and having faith in each other and not giving up...even when all the odds say to quit.
It's allowing each other to be vulnerable, to be himself or herself,
even when the opinions or thoughts aren't in total agreement
or exactly what you'd like them to be.
It's getting involved and showing interest in each other,
really listening and being available, the way any best friend should be.
Exactly three things need to be remembered in a marriage
if it is to be a mutual bond of sharing, caring, and loving throughout life:
love, trust, and forgiveness.