

Welcoming

We are gathered here today to celebrate one of life's greatest moments. This is a special time of celebration that the two of you will long remember and we are privileged to share today's wonderful occasion with you. We are here, not only to witness your commitment to each other, but also to wish you both every happiness in your future life together as husband and wife.

Marriage is a supreme sharing, perhaps the greatest and most challenging adventure in the most intimate of human relationships. It is the joyful uniting of two individuals whose care and affection and understanding have flowered into a deep and abiding love. Those who take its vows have their lives blended together into one, as the waters of two rivers are joined when they come together to form an even greater one.

Marriage is not a place to hide from the world. It is a safe place to grow and become wiser. It is a place to evolve into better people; so that you can go out in the world and make a difference by spreading the joy and wisdom that you have found with each other.

Marriage is the beginning of a new life, a chance at fulfilling long-held dreams, and an opportunity for great personal and spiritual growth. Marriage continues to live as a promise of a beautiful dream come true. As long as individuals are drawn together by that dream, marriage will be a natural unfolding of that relationship.

No ceremony can create your marriage. Only you can do that-through love, patience, dedication, perseverance-through talking and listening and trying to understand-through helping and supporting and believing in each other-through learning to forgive, learning to respect and appreciate your differences, and learning to make the important things matter and to let go of the rest. What this ceremony can do is to witness and affirm the choice you have made to begin a new life today as husband and wife.

Parental Honoring (*Optional*)

At this time, I would like to acknowledge our Bride and Groom's parents on this wonderful occasion. The unconditional gifts of love and support that you have continually offered have inspired them to become who they are, and they thank you, from the bottom of their hearts, for guiding them to this celebration of love. As you have watched and guided them and encouraged them to be the people they are today, so have you been there when they found each other. And it is fitting that today they are here before you, as they have always been, to ask you to witness their joining. They ask that you will still be there in difficult times and joyous ones and to give them your guidance. Without you, this day would not be possible.

Sky Lantern (*Optional*)

The sky lantern has come to represent the releasing of one's deepest fears and desires. It is a symbolic cleansing, a letting go of everything that troubles you. It is also the beginning of a new, enlightened you, with the light illuminating the path of knowledge and righteousness.

May light always surround you, hope kindle and rebound you.
May your hurts turn to healing, your heart embrace feeling.
May wounds become wisdom, every kindness a prism.
May laughter infect you, your passion resurrect you.
May goodness inspire your deepest desires.
Through all that you reach for, may your arms never tire.

Silent Blessing (*Optional*)

There are several family members and friends that we would like to remember today. We will now take a moment, closing our eyes and bringing to mind those loved ones who could not be here today.

Though they are absent physically, we welcome them through our thoughts and share in their loving presence.

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." It is cultivating flexibility, understanding, and a sense of humor. It is having a mutual sense of values and common

objectives, standing together and facing the world. It is forming a circle of love that gathers the whole family. It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating your love for each other in many thoughtful ways. Happiness in marriage is doing things for each other in the spirit of love and having the capacity to forgive and forget. It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow. It is not only marrying the right partner, it is being the right partner.

A successful marriage is not something that just happens. It takes work, it takes patience, and it takes time. It takes a commitment from both of you... a commitment to do whatever it takes to make your relationship thrive and not just simply survive.

Candle Lighting Ceremony (*Optional*)

In committing to one another today, in the spirit of being born new to one another, you kindle each other's divine light and promise always to see that light in one another-to nurture and tend that divine flame in your partner as best you can each day-especially at the times it may be hardest to see, and the times your partner may doubt or forget the existence of that light within him-or herself.

We will now ask the mother of the bride and groom to come forward to light each side candle. As you bring your individual flames together to symbolically form the new and greater flame of your marriage, never forget that the light of your union is made up of your unique, individual expressions.

The candle you lit together symbolizes your marriage, your willingness to surrender to something greater than yourselves. May the light of your marriage be a beacon in the night, a safe harbor from the storms of life. May your future be made infinitely brighter by the light and the love that you share.

The Hands Ceremony (*Optional*)

Please face each other and take each other's hands, so that you may see the gift that they are to you.

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 along side 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 give you support and encouragement to chase down your dreams.

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

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

These are the hands that will lift your chin and brush your cheek as they raise your face to look into eyes that are filled with overwhelming love for you.

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.

Sand Ceremony (Optional)

Today you join your separate lives together.

Before you met, your lives were on separate roads, each going in different directions and leading to different destinations. But somewhere along the way you met, fell in love, and today you find yourselves standing together at the entrance of a new path that will forever join your once separate journeys into one.

Before each of you there is a container of sand. Each represents the separate journeys you once were on, as well as your own sets of friends and families that once were apart. In a moment I will ask that you both blend your individual containers of sand together ... representing the coming together of your friends and family, through your marriage, into one. And as the sand is blended into one container, your once solitary journeys will now be one of companionship, as you walk a single path together into your future.

I now ask that you blend your containers of sand together. (*the sand is now poured*)

As the sand has blended together, your lives are now joined, your separate journeys through life are now one. Your friends and family are as one as well, for now you will share those who are in your lives and will walk hand-in-hand along the path of your marriage - united and strong as husband and wife, as inseparable as these grains of sand."

Wedding Vows

(Option 1) – “Personalized” Wedding Vows

(Option 2) - Traditional “I do” Vows

Do you take this woman for your lawful wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health as long as we both shall live. If so, please answer, **I do**.

Do you take this man for your lawful wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health as long as we both shall live. If so, please answer, **I do**.

(Option 3) - Traditional “Repeat After Me” Vows

Groom:

I choose you, to be my wife, my partner in life and my one true love. I will cherish our friendship and love you today, tomorrow, and forever.

Bride:

I choose you, to be my husband, my partner in life and my one true love. I will cherish our friendship and love you today, tomorrow, and forever.

Ring Ceremony

Let the seamless circle of these rings become the symbol of your endless love and unending faithfulness. Your wedding rings are most special because they say that even in your uniqueness you have chosen to be bonded, to allow the presence of another human being to enhance who you are. As you wear them through time, they will reflect not only who you are but also the union you are making, the fact that throughout the rest of your lives each of you will be imprinted by the other, yet as yourself remain.

God, bless these rings and the two who exchange them. Fill them with your Holy Presence. Keep them safe in the circle of Your protection and love.

Groom, place the ring on Bride's finger and repeat after me:
"With this ring, I pledge my love and life to you."

Bride, place the ring on Groom's finger and repeat after me:
"With this ring, I pledge my love and life to you."

Wear these rings as the enclosing bond of reverence and trust. Fulfill the circle of love that now makes you one.

Minister's Blessing (*Optional*)

You now have the opportunity for expressing through your union and partnership, God's glory, love and healing. How could this be? Through devotion and service to each other. Through patience, kindness, total acceptance of each other. You will be tempted, as time goes by, to take for granted the love which today seems so precious and dear. To speak to and treat each other in ways that do not reflect the highest good in both of you. Resist it. Promise to always see the goodness in your partner, even when it's especially difficult. God will provide you the way, if you are willing. He is the key to your success as a married couple. Call on Him devotedly and consistently to guide your thinking and bless your home. May this marriage be to you a heavenly sanctuary. God bless you.

Conclusion

As the two of you come into this marriage uniting you as husband and wife, and as you this day affirm your faith and love for one another, I would ask that you always remember to cherish each other as special and unique individuals, that you respect the thoughts, ideas and suggestions of one another. Be able to forgive, do not hold grudges, and live each day that you may share it together – as from this day forward you shall be each other's home, comfort and refuge, your marriage strengthened by your love and respect.

May the love that has brought you together,
Continue to grow and enrich your lives.
May you meet with courage the problems that arise to challenge you,
And may your relationship always be one of love and trust.

May the happiness you share today be with you always,
And may every word you have pledged here be a living truth in your lives.

Pronouncement

The two of you are now joined in one unbroken circle. Wherever you go, may you always return to one another in your togetherness. May you two find in each other the love for which all men and women long. May you grow in understanding and in compassion. May the home that you establish be such a place of sanctuary that all who visit will find there a friend.

You have openly declared your wishes to be united in marriage, and in the presence of these witnesses have pledged love to each other, and have confirmed the same by joining hands, exchanging rings and declaring your vows, It is greatest joy and privilege to declare you husband and wife. "You may now kiss the bride."