

# **THE WEDDING & HOLY UNION RESOURCE PACKET**

**Salem United Church of Christ  
Columbia, PA  
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# OUTLINE FOR WEDDING CEREMONIES

PRELUDE

PROCESSIONAL

WELCOME

PRAYER

MUSICAL SELECTION

READING

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

DECLARATION OF INTENT

PLEDGE OF SUPPORT

READING

MUSICAL SELECTION

EXCHANGE OF VOWS

UNITY CANDLE OR OTHER SYMBOL

EXCHANGE OF RINGS

ANNOUNCEMENT OF MARRIAGE

BLESSING

PRESENTATION

RECESSIONAL

POSTLUDE

## WELCOME

*The Welcome is a couple's opportunity (through the officiant's words) to greet those who have come for the ceremony, and to set the tone of the ceremony and say what this moment means to the couple.*

### (A)

Friends, we have come together in the presence of God to witness the marriage/union of *Name* and *Name*, to surround them with our prayers, and to share in their joy. We are here to rejoice, with them and for them, in the new life they now undertake together. As *N* and *N* commit themselves to each other today, we remember that all love and all life come from God who first loved us. So we enter this celebration confident that God is present with us in this time and space.

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### (D)

Love is a living thing, waiting within each one of us for an awakening touch. In this ceremony we celebrate love come to life for *Name* and *Name*. May this love grow sure and strong. We rejoice in its presence among us.

### (B)

### (B)

It is one of life's richest surprises when the accidental meeting of two life paths leads them to proceed together along the common path of husband and wife [or] as partners, and it is one of life's finest experiences when a casual relationship grows into a permanent bond of love. This meeting and this growth bring us together today.

### (E)

"What greater thing is there for two persons than to feel that they are joined together to strengthen each other in all labor, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent, unspeakable memories?"  
(George Eliot)

### (C)

We are gathered here to join *Name* and *Name* in marriage/to unite *Name* and *Name*. It is fitting and appropriate that you, the families and friends of *N* and *N* be here to witness and to participate in their union/wedding, for the ideals, the understanding, and the mutual respect which they bring to their marriage have their roots in the love, friendship, and guidance you have given them. Marriage makes us aware of the changes wrought by time, but the new relationship will continue to draw much of its beauty and meaning from the intimate associations of the past.

(William R. Fortner)

**(F)**

We have come here today to create a space – a space where love can be celebrated, a space where passion can be honored, a space where commitment can be affirmed. We have come together to share this time – a time of recognizing friendships old and new, a time to gather strength for our journey, a time to celebrate a couple's love. For each of us, there has been a separate journey which has brought us to this point. The love of *Name* and *Name* brings our separate journeys together for a wonderful occasion.

(Courage To Love)

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**(I)**

It is fitting to speak briefly about love. We live in a world of joy and fear and search for meaning and strength in the seeming disorder. We discover the truest guideline to our journey when we realize love in all its magnitudes. Love is the eternal force of life. Love is the force that allows us to face fear and uncertainty with courage.

**(G)**

*Name* and *Name* we have come together to celebrate your union [or] wedding; to share in the joy and promise of your decision. In marriage, two persons turn to each other in search of a greater fulfillment than either can achieve alone. Marriage is a going-forth, a step into the future; it is risking what we are, for the sake of what we yet can be. In giving oneself and sharing with another the mysterious process of growth takes place. In loyalty and devotion bestowed upon another, that which is eternal in life emerges and is known. You two who have stood apart and now stand together, have come to declare your love and are now to be united in marriage.

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**(J)**

Friends, *Name* and *Name* have invited us here today to share in the celebration of their partnership [or] their marriage. We are here not to mark the start of a relationship, but to recognize the bond that already exists.

**(H)**

This is a joyous occasion. We are gathered this day/evening in the midst of all the majestic forces of the universe, in the presence of God and these witnesses to join together *Name* and *Name* in marriage, which is a union flowing out of the very nature of our being, created and blessed by the nature of God who is love. It is, therefore, not to be entered into lightly or unadvisedly, but reverently, intelligently, joyfully and in the knowledge that love is both humankind's highest achievement and life's most precious gift. Into this holy estate these two come now to be joined, by a ceremony, which to be true, must be but a symbol of something inner and real – a sacred union of hearts and lives, which religion may bless and the State make legal, but which neither can create or dissolve. You, *N* and *N* only, may do that.

## DECLARATION OF INTENT

*The Declaration of Intent is a couple's moment to say, "Yes, I really want to do this."  
It is followed by the Pledge of Support in which the family and/or friends  
say to the couple, "We support this commitment in your relationship."*

**(A)**

*Name and Name, before God and this congregation, I ask you now to affirm your willingness to enter this covenant of marriage [or] covenant, and to share all the joys and sorrows of this relationship, whatever the future may hold. N, are you ready to enter into this marriage, and will you love N faithfully as long as you both shall live? (I am and I will, with the help of God.)*

**(B)**

**(B)**

*Do you, Name, take Name to be no other than her/himself, loving what you know of her/him, trusting all that you don't yet know? Do you take her/him in laughter and in tears, in health and in illness, in success and in failure, in conflict and in tranquility, in doubt and in trust, as your husband/wife/partner, your friend, your equal? (I do.)*

**(C)**

**(C)**

*Name and Name, is it your intention to enter into a solemn covenant with each other in love and trust? (It is.) Do you offer your lives together for God's blessing? (We do.) Will you be to each other a companion in joy and a comfort in times of trouble; and will you give each other opportunity for love to deepen? (We will, with God's help.)*

*(Courage To Love)*

## PLEDGE OF SUPPORT

*This is a time for family and/or friends/witnesses to offer support.*

**(A)**

To the family and friends of *Name* and *Name*: you are here because you have nurtured and encouraged these two along their journeys. You have been important parts of their lives, and today, *N* and *N* ask once again for your support and blessing. Do you offer your prayerful blessing and loving support to this marriage? *(I do.)*

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**(D)**

*To the parents:*  
As your son[s] and/or daughter[s] find partners and found the homes of the next generation, each family is enlarged. Do you, who have nurtured these two, give your blessing to their union and their home *(We do.)*  
Do you offer your loving support and encouragement? *(We do.)*

**(B)**

**(B)**

Who gives this woman to be married with this man?

[or]

Who supports these two individuals in their commitment to one another?

[or]

Who pledges the good will of the families for this couple? *(Parent[s] or Families: I/We do.)*

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**(E)**

Do you who gather here offer your blessings on this union? *(We do.)*

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**(F)**

Will you who witness these pledges do your utmost to uphold this marriage [or] union? *(We will.)*

**(C)**

**(C)**

Would the families please come forward and form a circle around *Name* and *Name*? The vows *N* and *N* have made affect not just each of them, but everyone around them. It is a union not just of two individuals but of two families. Will you support, celebrate, and witness *N* and *N*'s relationship? Will you strive with them as they strive to live together in mutuality and love, as they work toward making their dreams a reality? *(We will.)*

(Courage To Love)

## EXCHANGE OF VOWS

*Vows are the couple's promises to one another for their relationship.  
The vows may be followed by a response from families and friends.*

*The pastor may say:*

*Name and Name*, the vows that you are about to exchange serve as a verbal representation of the love you have promised to each other. Will you please speak your covenant to one another, before those who have gathered and before God who encourages you in love?

[or]

*Name and Name*, the vows that you are about to exchange serve as a verbal representation of the love you have promised to each other. It is not the words you speak today which will unite you together as one, but the inner sense of love and commitment each of you feels within your soul. No other human ties are as tender, no other vows more sacred than those you now assume.

*Couple exchanges their chosen vows; some options follow.*

**(A)**

*Name*, I want to live with you just as you are. I choose you above all others to share the future with me, and that is the best evidence there can be that I love you. I love you for yourself with the freedom to be all that you wish to become. I promise to honor this pledge as long as love and life endure.

**(B)**

**(B)**

I, *Name*, take thee, *Name*, to be my wedded wife/husband; to have and to hold from this day forward,  
for better, for worse,  
for richer, for poorer,  
in sickness and in health,  
to love and to cherish  
till death do us part.  
With my whole heart and with complete devotion, I pledge you my love.

**(C)**

**(C)**

*Name*, I have chosen you as my partner. I love you and I delight in you. I promise to share my life with you in tenderness and passion, holding to you in good times and bad, in anger and forgiveness, in pain and in hope. Forgive me when I fail; support me when I am weak. Please go on trust me, as I grow in love and trust you.

**(D)**

Will you take *Name* as a gift of God? Will you protect and conserve the love between you and do everything in your power to ensure that your relationship will endure? Will you care for *Name*, encounter him/her with honesty and respect and stand by him/her for better or for worse, in sickness and in health? And will you renew your relationship through the strength of forgiveness again and again?  
(Yes, I will.)

[or]

I accept you as a gift from God. I will protect and conserve the love between us and do anything in my power to ensure that our relationship may continue. I will always be responsible for you and will encounter you with honesty and respect and stand by you for better or for worse, in sickness and in health. I will renew our relationship through the strength of forgiveness again and again.

(Courage To Love)

**(E)**

**(E)**

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

**(G)**

In the presence of God and God's people, I, *Name*, declare my love for you, *Name*, and seek God's blessing on our relationship. I will continue to love you, care for you, and consider your needs, in good times and through periods of difficulty; I will rejoice when you are happy and grieve when you suffer; I will share your interests and hopes for the future; I will try to understand you even when I do not agree with you; I will help you to be your true self – the person God wishes you to be. In all this I ask God's help, now and in the days to come.

(Courage To Love)

**(F)**

*Name*, I take you to be my partner/wife/husband. Together to love, to work and to share, to grow and to understand, to discover a deeper and fuller life. I will love you, comfort you, honor and keep you, so long as we both shall live.

**(H)**

I, *Name*, take you, *Name*, to have and to hold from this day forth. I will love, honor and cherish you at all times, throughout all the days of our years.

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**(I)**

*Name*, I take you to be my partner/wife/husband. Together to love, to work and to share, to grow and to understand, to discover a deeper, fuller life.

**(J)**

Day by day I promise  
to love and to honor you,  
to treasure you  
and to respect you,  
to walk with you  
side by side  
in joy and sorrow.  
Day by day I promise  
to hold you in my arms,  
to grow with you in truth,  
to laugh with you  
to cry with you,  
to be with you and  
to love you  
with all that I am and  
all that I shall become.  
This I promise you from  
the depth of my heart,  
my mind and my soul –  
for all our lives together.

**(K)**

**(K)**

You are so beautiful/  
handsome to me.  
You are my life, my light,  
my hope, my joy.  
You are my food,  
my drink, my music  
and my song.  
You are my warmth,  
my shelter, my passion  
and my rest.  
You are my world.  
And I am yours.  
Your friend, your lover  
and your soul mate.  
So let the whole world  
hear and know  
that I love you.  
And I vow that my love  
will bring you joy.  
(Courage To Love)

**(L)**

I, *Name*, take you, *Name*,  
to have and to hold from  
this day forth. I will love,  
honor and cherish you at  
all times, throughout all  
the days of our years.



*Optional responses from family and/or friends following the vows:*

**(A)**

Marriage is the promise of hope between two people, who honor each other as individuals, and who wish to unite their lives and share the future together. In their vows, *Name* and *Name* have dedicated themselves to the happiness and well-being of each other, in a union of mutual caring and responsibility. *N* and *N* have chosen you, their family and friends, to be here on this day as joyful witnesses, trusting that their lives will be strengthened and enriched by the support you give.

Family members, will you accept *N* and *N* into your families, as one of your own? *(We will.)*

Friends, will you celebrate with *N* and *N*, encourage them, and remind them of this day? *(We will.)*

Each of you, will you support *N* and *N* in their relationship, standing beside them in rough times, yet never standing between them? *(We will.)*

**(B)**

**(B)**

To all family and friends who have gathered here: You have come from diverse parts of *Name* and *Name's* lives, brought together today as one community to support and celebrate the commitment they have made. Will you support, celebrate, and witness *N* and *N's* relationship in the days and years ahead?

Will you strive with them as they strive to live together in mutuality and love, as they work toward making their dreams a reality? *(We will.)*

**(C)**

**(C)**

In the name of all that is loving; in the name of all that is holy and just; in the name of all that moves towards freedom; we honor the promises you have made.

## EXCHANGE OF RINGS

*The exchange of rings is not simply a giving and receiving of jewelry; rings symbolize the vows of a couple – they seal the promise, and remind all of that promise in the days and years to come.*

**(A)**

*Pastor:* Just as God gives us signs of divine love and faithfulness from generation to generation, likewise in marriage a couple gives a sign of their love to each other. These rings are the symbol of your unity, the visible sign that your lives are now joined in one unbroken circle. By the grace of God, wherever you go, you will always return to this circle and to your shared life together.

*Couple to each other:*  
*Name,* I give you this ring as a sign of my love and faithfulness.

[or]

With this ring, I marry you, and pledge my faithful love.

**(B)**

**(B)**

*Pastor:* The circle is the symbol of the sun and the earth and the universe, of wholeness and perfection and peace. The rings that you give and receive this day are the symbols of endless love and of the covenant that you have spoken to one another.

*Couple to each other:*  
*Name,* I give you this ring as a symbol of my love, and as a reminder that together the possibilities are endless.

[or]

With this ring, I marry you, and to you I will be true, so long as we both shall live.

[or]

I bless you with this ring. It is a sign of our love. May we be held together within its circle in joy, faithfulness and trust.

**(C)**

*Pastor:* May your ring be always the symbol or the unbroken circle of love. Love freely given has no beginning and no end. Love freely given has no giver and no receiver. You are each the giver and each the receiver. May your ring always call to mind the freedom and the power of this love.  
(Rudolph W. Nemser)

*Couple to each other:*  
*Name,* here is a symbol of my love, freely given, for always.

[or]

*Name,* I take you as my partner/wife/husband. Accept this ring as a sign of my love for the years ahead. We shall share together the portion of trouble and sorrow that life may grant us. And we shall rejoice together in what may be our measure of plenty and goodness, affection and peace.

**(D)**

*Pastor:* The ring, a circle, is one of nature's simplest forms. It is the symbol of the sun and the earth. It is a symbol of perfection and of peace. In these rings is the symbol of your unity; your lives are now joined in one unbroken circle. Wherever you go, you will always return to your shared life together.

*Couple to each other:*  
I give you this ring as a symbol of my devotion and love; and with all my heart I promise to you all that I am. With this ring, I marry you and join my life to yours.

[or]

I give you this ring as a sign that I have chosen you above all others to share life's journey. May we be encircled by one another's love all the days of our lives.

**(E)**

**(E)**

*Pastor:* In the turning of the earth and the cycle of the seasons; in the dance of sun, moon and stars; on the great wheel of life which knows no end nor even its beginning; so the circle of love encompasses all, promises all, gives birth to all, and protects all.

*Couple to each other:*  
I give you this ring:  
because I love you,  
because I always want  
to be with you, because  
I place my life in your  
hands, because I will  
hold you for ever.

[or]

Whenever you hold this ring, know that I shall always come home to you, and my heart will be brimming over with love for you.

(Courage To Love)

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF MARRIAGE

*The announcement (or declaration) of marriage says officially, "You are married!"*

**(A)**

*Name* and *Name*,  
because you have promised each other your love and commitment, and with the blessing of God's love and the support of this gathered community, I now pronounce you husband and wife [or] I now declare that you are joined in holy union.

**(B)**

**(B)**

Inasmuch as *Name* and *Name* have grown in knowledge and love of one another; because they have agreed in their desire to go forward in life together, to seek an ever richer, deepening relationship; and because they have pledged themselves to meet sorrow and joy as one family; we rejoice to recognize them as husband and wife [or] as partners [or] as wives [or] as husbands.

**(C)**

**(C)**

We have gathered today in friendship and joy to celebrate the love which has brought you two together, and the love which unites us all. May you provide comfort to one another in times of sorrow, and may your joy together be wide and deep. With great affection, we pronounce you to be husband and wife [or] to be one.

## RESOURCE OF READINGS FOR WEDDINGS & HOLY UNIONS

### READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE

#### Ruth 1:16-17

And Ruth said, "Do not ask me to leave you or discourage me from going with you! Where you go, I will go. Where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die; there I will be buried. May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!"

#### Song of Solomon 8:6-7 (also called Song of Songs)

Set me as a seal upon your heart,  
as a seal upon your arm;  
for love is as strong as death,  
passion fierce as the grave.  
Its flashes are flashes of fire,  
a raging flame.  
Many waters cannot quench love,  
neither can floods drown it.  
If one offered for love  
all the wealth of his house,  
it would be utterly scorned.

#### Romans 12:9-13 (adapted)

Let your love be without falsehood, avoid anything which could be the source of evil, but be passionate about increasing what is good. Regard each other with the eyes of the heart, full of admiration and respect. Do not put off from one day to the next what has been left unsaid or undone. Entrust yourselves fully to the Spirit of God which carries you through life safely.

Be glad in hope, remain patient in times of trial, and do not cease to seek what really matters. Be there for each other not just in familiar circles but be open for all whom you meet and open your fellowship even to strangers.

(Courage To Love)

### 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

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. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

### Philippians 2:1-5 (adapted)

Let me invite you to dare to live with each other in the wisdom of Christ: regale each other with love; trust the spirit which has led you to each other; regard each other with eyes of love which judges everything with mercy.

Be of one mind in those things which matter; do not compete with each other; join up together and be a source of strength for each other. Do nothing seeking your own reward or your own glory, but be humble and make sure that the other one can be a person in their own right. Do not care for what is for your own good but for what opens up a future for others. Let me invite you to let your lives together be guided by the wisdom of Jesus Christ.

(Courage To Love)

### 1 Peter 4:8b-11 (adapted)

Nothing is more important than that your love for each other shall remain alive. For love covers all failures. She finds a way across every abyss. She is the inexhaustible source of forgiveness.

Be open and free for everything you encounter; open your doors and your hearts without many words. And stand up for each other with all your strength, everyone with their own gifts which God has given them. Let one empower the other with all their talents so that your many gifts may not be hidden and enrich all of you.

(Courage To Love)

### 1 John 4:7-8, 18; 3:18

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. Let us love, not only in word or speech, but in truth and action.

## READINGS FROM LITERATURE

### *Gift from the Sea, by Anne Morrow Lindbergh*

A good relationship has a pattern like a dance and is built on some of the same rules. The partners do not need to hold on tightly, because they move confidently in the same pattern, intricate but gay and swift and free, like a country dance. To touch heavily would be to arrest the pattern and freeze the movement, to check the endlessly changing beauty of its unfolding. There is no place here for the possessive clutch, the clinging arm, the heavy hand; only the barest touch in passing. Now arm in arm, now face to face, now back to back - it does not matter which. Because they know they are partners moving to the same rhythm, creating a pattern together, and being invisibly nourished by it. The joy of such a pattern is not only the joy of creation or the joy of participation, it is also the joy of living in the moment. Lightness of touch and living in the moment are intertwined.

### *The Prophet, by Kahlil Gibran*

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 of you be alone.  
Even as the strings of a lute are along though they quiver with the same music.  
Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.  
For only the hand of live 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.  
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.

### *Journey to the Heart: Daily Meditations on the Path to Finding Your Soul*

Love is an energy – an active, living force that runs its threads through all of life, through all of the universe. But we can't control love. It is not its nature to be controlled... We can open our hearts and let love run through us. We can open our hearts and receive love.

Love is a powerful living force that permeates the universe and funnels through us. We don't lead it; it leads and guides us.

*Bread for the Journey, by Henri Nouwen*

Many human relationships are like the interlocking fingers of two hands...Human relationships are meant to be like two hands folded together. They can move away from each other while still touching with the fingertips. They can create space between themselves, a little tent, a home, a safe place to be.

True relationships among people point to God. They are like prayers in the world. Sometimes the hands that pray are fully touching, sometimes there is distance between them. They always move to and from each other, but they never lose touch. They keep praying to the One who brought them together.

*The Awakened Heart, by Gerald May*

There is a desire within each of us, in the deep center of ourselves that we call our heart. We were born with it, it is never completely satisfied, and it never dies. We are often unaware of it, but it is always awake. It is the human desire for love. Every person in this earth yearns to love, to be loved, to know love. Our true identity, our reason for being, is to be found in this desire...

Love is the 'why' of life: why we are functioning at all, what we want to be efficient for... I am convinced it [love] is the fundamental energy of the human spirit, the fuel on which we run, the wellspring of our vitality. And grace, which is the flowing, creative activity of love itself, is what makes all goodness possible. Love should come first; it should be the beginning of and the reason for everything.

*Gift from the Sea, 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. It 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 the 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 or expecting, 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 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, and continually visited and abandoned by the tides. One must accept the security of the winged life, of the ebb and flow, of intermittency.

*Heloise and Abelard: A New Biography, by James Burge*

"Physicists say often that the moon does not shine without the sun, and that when deprived of this light, it is robbed of all benefit of heat and brightness and presents to humans a dark ashen sphere." (Abelard)

*Beyond Words Daily Readings in the ABC's of Faith, by Frederick 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 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. If they don't have children, they each become the other's child.

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 individuals become more richly themselves together than the chances are either of them could ever have managed to become alone.

*The Velveteen Rabbit, by Margery Williams*

"What's real?" asked the rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick out handle?"

"Real isn't how you're made," said the Skin Horse. "It is a thing that happens to you when a child 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, or bit by bit?" asked the Rabbit.

"It doesn't happen all at once. You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily or have sharp edges or have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are real, most of your hair has been loved off, your eyes drop out, and you get loose in the 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."

*The Good Life: Truths That Last in Times of Need, by Peter Gomes*

Duty without love breeds weariness;  
duty with love breeds constancy.

Responsibility without love breeds unconcern;  
responsibility with love breeds concern.

Righteousness without love breeds hardness;  
righteousness with love breeds reliability.

Education without love breeds contrariness;  
education with love breeds patience.

Wisdom without love breeds rifts;  
wisdom with love breeds understanding.

Friendliness without love breeds hypocrisy;  
friendliness with love breeds grace.

Order without love breeds pettiness;  
order with love breeds generosity.

Knowledge without love breeds dogmatism;  
knowledge with love breeds trustworthiness.

Power without love breeds violence;  
power with love breeds readiness to help.

Honour without love breeds arrogance;  
honour with love breeds modesty.

Possessions without love breed avarice;  
possessions with love breed generosity.

Faith without love breeds fanaticism;  
faith with love breeds peacemaking."

*The Art of Marriage, by Wilferd Arlan Peterson*

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 never 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 the 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 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 obligation is reciprocal.

It is not only marrying the right partner, it is *being* the right partner.

*From A Natural History of Love, by Diane Ackerman*

Love. What a small word we use for an idea so immense and powerful. It has altered the flow of history, calmed monsters, kindled works of art, cheered the forlorn, turned tough guys to mush, consoled the enslaved, driven strong women mad, glorified the humble, fueled national scandals, bankrupted robber barons, and made mincemeat of kings. How can love's spaciousness be conveyed in the narrow confines of one syllable? Love is an ancient delirium, a desire older than civilization, with taproots spreading into deep and mysterious days. The heart is a living museum. In each of its galleries – no matter how narrow or dimly lit, preserved forever like wondrous diatoms – are our moments of loving and being loved.

## READINGS FROM POETRY

### How Do I Love Thee? by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.  
I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;  
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.  
I love with a passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.

### Your Body, by W. L. Wallace

Your body is a book that I would read,  
With your permission,  
As I invite you to read mine.  
Part of the reading will be with my eyes  
But most of it will, like reading Braille –  
Be with my fingers and my body.  
I do not seek to read your body by myself  
As if it were some object  
But to read it in mutual dialogue  
Of playful reverence.  
Together we shall explore with wonder  
The line and mass,  
Texture and colour  
Of our sculptured complexity  
And delineated simplicity.  
In the exploration  
Our spirits shall intertwine  
Our life forces merge  
Until with abandon  
We shall dance within  
God's unfenced  
Eternity.

When We Let Spirit Lead Us, by Alice Walker

When we let Spirit  
Lead us  
It is impossible  
To know  
Where  
We are being led.  
All we know  
All we can believe  
All we can hope  
Is that  
We are going  
Home  
That wherever  
Spirit  
Takes us  
Is where  
We  
Live.

from A Celebration of Love by W. L. Wallace

I have had  
many beautiful encounters  
with love  
in my life –

Sometimes it has been the love of nature  
Sometimes it has been the tenderness  
of another person  
Sometimes love has been a passion for justice

Sometimes love has been creating,  
sometimes pain and sorrow,  
sometimes dream and fulfillment,  
sometimes common-sense practicality.

But at all times,  
love has nurtured me  
enlivened me  
fulfilled me  
wooed me  
and drawn me on

into the oneness  
of God  
divine lover  
creator  
liberator  
the source of all our loving.

And now  
in the knowledge  
that no love is ever wasted  
and that all love  
becomes part of God's love  
I thankfully celebrate  
all the loving  
that God  
has graciously  
allowed me to partake  
create  
or enhance.

Call to Wedding Celebration

By Abigail Hastings (adapted)

For thousands of years people have gathered under a grove of trees  
or an expanse of sky beside an altar of marble  
or beneath a cloth of blessing to bear witness to such a beautifully simple act  
of intention and promise

For thousands of years people have looked on as those they love make known their  
choice:  
this choice of love and life and future

For thousands of years people have risked the catch in their throats the quickening  
heart the dampening eyes to sense the pivot of a moment where all that has come  
before yields to the possibilities ahead:  
the deeper trails yet to hike;  
moist dark earth turning for new vegetable seeds;  
the pleasure of tossing the dinner salad greens;  
or teaching new tricks to an eager-to-learn and uncommonly happy dog

and for us, for those of us gathered here, as vivid to us now as this time is,  
when the fullness of each becomes the splendor of the together,  
the lives we here witness and celebrate  
are most piercingly imprinted in the record of our joys  
by the way they look at each other  
by the light that fills that fleeting but luxurious exchange from the depths of one's being

it is that look, and that compass of knowing and being known,  
of loving and being loved,  
that illumines all that we hope for in this day and in the days to come.

Welcome to this celebration of two people finding  
and of us, lucky us, finding ourselves here in the privilege of finding ourselves in the  
midst of the best that life has to offer,  
the very best of what life has to offer.  
Welcome, one and all, to the celebration.