

# Popular Ceremony Readings

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# Poems

## Love's Coming

Quietly as rosebuds  
Talk to the thin air,  
Love came so lightly,  
I knew not he was there.

Quietly as lovers  
Creep at the middle moon,  
Softly as players tremble  
in the tears of a tune;

Quietly as lilies  
Their faint vows declare  
Came the shy pilgrim:  
I knew not he was there.

Quietly as tears fall  
On a warm sin,  
Softly as griefs call  
In a violin;

Without hail or tempest,  
Blue sword of flame.  
Love came so lightly  
I knew not that he came.

***By John Shaw Neilson***

## **The Wedding Vow (Author Unknown)**

You are not the air that I breathe,  
You are the sweet scent that drifts upon it  
You are not the food that I need,  
You are the nourishment of my soul

You are not my will to survive  
You are my reason for living  
It is with you that I experience the wonders of the world  
It is with you that I triumph over the challenges in my path

It is your partnership that will lead me  
to the fulfillment of my dreams  
It is your friendship that guides me  
as I learn and grow

It is your patience and wisdom  
that calms my restless nature  
It is through you that I know my true self  
I do not take you for granted, I cherish you

I do not need you, I choose you  
I choose you today in witness of all the people who love us  
I choose you tomorrow in the privacy of our hearts  
I choose you in strength and weakness

I choose you in health and in sickness  
I choose you in joy and sorrow  
I will choose you, over all others,  
every day for all the days of my life

## **From The Art Of Marriage (William A Petersen)**

A good marriage must be created.  
In the 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 each day,  
It is never going to sleep angry.

It is having a mutual sense of values and objectives.  
It is standing together and facing the world.  
It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family.  
It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways.

It is having the capacity to forgive and forget.  
It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each person can grow.  
It is a common search for the good and the beautiful.  
It is not only marrying the right person  
It is being the right partner.

## **From The Art Of Marriage (William A Petersen)**

A good marriage must be created.  
In the 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 expecting the husband to wear a halo  
or the wife to have the wings of an angel.  
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 obligation is reciprocal.

It is not only marrying the right partner,  
it is BEING the right partner.

This is "The Art of Marriage".

## **What is Love? - (Walter Rinder)**

Love is just not looking at each other and saying "You're wonderful".

There are times when we are anything but wonderful.

Love is looking out in the same direction.

It is linking our strength to pull a common load.

It is pushing together towards the far horizons, hand in hand.

Love is knowing that when our strength falters, we can borrow the strength of  
someone who cares.

Love is a strange awareness that our sorrows will be shared and made lighter by  
sharing;

That joys will be enriched and multiplied by the joy of another.

Love is knowing someone else cares that we are not alone in life.

## **Annie's Song (John Denver)**

You fill up me senses like a night in a forest  
Like the mountains in springtime, like a walk in the rain  
Like a storm in the desert, like a sleepy blue ocean  
You fill up my senses come fill me again.

Come let me love you, let me give my life to you  
Let me drown in your laughter, let me die in your arms  
Let me lay down beside you, let me always be with you

Come let me love you, come love me again.

## Reading for a Second Marriage (Author Unknown)

Everywhere I look I see a world unlike before;  
as if the earth was made today,  
and now must be explored.  
The scent of flowers waft  
throughout the air for many miles.

I can't remember it smelling so sweet.  
It has been quite a while.  
The trees around me seem to bend  
their boughs as I walk by.  
How wonderful, this newfound love  
of each and every life.

All around the bluebirds fly.  
They seem to follow my lead.  
Right beside me, my new love walks.  
There's nothing else I need.  
He breathes in deep, then looks at me  
and breaks into a smile.

"It's nicer now," He says to me.  
"I think I'll stay a while."  
As we start our lives anew, I thank the Creator for the  
second chance to live with love,  
and to share my love with you.

## **Destinies Love (Saffiya)**

A fortunate meeting defined by fate and revealed by destiny  
an enchanting moment beyond the realm of reason  
cunningly disguised in direst circumstances  
whose touch is visible only to poetic souls

It chooses its own time and place  
evermore pretentious of purpose,  
Crossing its hollowed path is futile  
even frustrating to willing victims  
'cause it doesn't bend its will to ones' desire

Teasing a consoled mind to go astray  
that's always a part of the plan;  
Yet it likewise reassures us to hold on ...  
to believe in destiny  
and to let fate guide us on our journey

We are all willing victims to its wicked ploy  
battling confusion, doubt, love and pain  
with a fragile sword  
'tis we hang on to a flicker of hope,  
'cause we believe in destiny  
and so it is, that I find this to be  
the best explanation why I believe in you...

## **Your Song (Charles Ghigna)**

Your song sings always in me  
even when you are silent,  
even when you are away.

To me there is no sound  
as soft as you,  
no voice on earth  
that gives my feet  
such wings,  
no whispered prayer  
filled with so much promise.

Your voice is the pillow  
on which I rest my heart,  
the blanket with which

I warm my dreams,  
the bed in which my soul  
learns its nightly lesson  
of everlasting love.

## **Devoted**

My heart can be your home.  
My soul can be your refuge.  
You can turn to me when you are weak.  
You can call to me when the way is not clear.

I will be your promise, your prayer, and I  
will always be there.  
Constant, complete.  
Run to me, reach out for me and I will love  
you in a unique and tender way.

Bring your love to me.  
Share your love with me.  
Sing your love to me, and I will give you  
peace, ease and comfort.

## **Today**

Today I marry my friend,  
the one I laugh and cry with,  
the one I have learned from and shared with.

This one I have chosen to support,  
encourage and give myself to,  
through all the days given us to share.  
Today I marry the one I love.

*Anon*

**Touch the Air Softly** (*William Jay Smith*)

Now touch the air softly, step gently, one, two ...  
I'll love you 'til roses are robin's egg blue;  
I'll love you 'til gravel is eaten for bread,  
And lemons are orange, and lavender's red.

Now touch the air softly, swing gently the broom.  
I'll love you 'til windows are all of a room;  
And the table is laid, And the table is bare,  
And the ceiling reposes on bottomless air.

I'll love you 'til heaven rips the stars from his coat,  
And the moon rows away in a glass-bottomed boat;  
And Orion steps down like a river below,  
And earth is ablaze, and oceans aglow.

So touch the air softly, and swing the broom high.  
We will dust the grey mountains, and sweep the blue sky:  
And I'll love you as long as the furrow the plough,  
As however is ever, and ever is now.

## **Oath of Friendship**

I want to be your friend  
For ever and ever without break or decay.  
When the hills are all flat  
And the rivers are all dry,

When it lightens and thunders in winter,  
When it rains and snows in summer,  
When Heaven and Earth mingle  
Not til then will I part from you.

***Anon - China, 1st Century BC***

## **The Key to Love**

The key to love is understanding ...  
The ability to comprehend not only the spoken word,  
but those unspoken gestures,  
the little things that say so much by themselves.

The key to love is forgiveness ....  
to accept each others faults and pardon mistakes,  
without forgetting, but with remembering  
what you learn from them.

The key to love is inside us all ...  
It takes time and patience to unlock all the ingredients  
that will take you to its threshold;  
it is the continual learning process that demands a lot of work ... but the rewards are  
more than worth the effort ...  
and that is the key to love.

*Anon*

# Prose

## **Marriage Reading (Martin Weitz)**

If life has meaning to us at all, it possesses it because of love. It is that which enshrines and ennobles our human experience.

It is the basis for the peace of family and the peace of the peoples of the earth. the greatest gift bestowed upon humans is the gift not of demanding, but of giving love between two persons.

## **Thoughts In a Garden (R. Gerhardt)**

(for a garden wedding)

This is a special place, a place where people have brought beautiful living plants, here to establish them, to nurture and care for them, that they may forever surround us with the beauty we now see. And into this place where we stand, you have brought something beautiful -- the relationship that is becoming your marriage.

Here you are declaring it and pledging it, promising to establish and nurture it. We are aware of the special beauty between the two of you, just as we are aware of the special beauty of this place. We are with you now in this appropriate place to celebrate your relationship as it is and as it is yet to be, and in doing so, we ask only that you remember how your life together will have the same seasons and needs as this garden.

There will be growth like spring and loss like fall; there will be giving as the blossoming flower, and rest as the seed beneath the snow. All the seasons will be yours, but remember, too, that gardens are not just happenings.

The more wonderful the garden, the more skilled the gardener. So you will have to care deeply for the life that is yours together, and nurture it. You will have to appreciate your differences and cultivate them. You will have to take care of yourself, if for no other reason than out of love for the other. And you will need the support of family and friends to reach full growth. As you caringly chose this place to declare your marriage, so remember its lessons for your life together, through the seasons that are yours to share. And may those seasons bring you a full harvest of joy and happiness.

### **Untitled (Source Unknown)**

Love is not some accident we fall into. Falling in love should be suspect. But if we GROW in love, then there is the possibility that our tomorrows will be even more joyous, more tender, and caressing, more devoted to life flowing through us: tomorrows more full of the thrill of life even as each day is better than yesterday.

Love has the capacity for that magic. Perhaps only love has such capacity.

### **Untitled (George Eliot)**

What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined together- to strengthen each other in all labor, to minister to each other in all sorrow, to share with each other in all gladness, to be one with each other in the silent, unspoken memories?

**Untitled (Gilda Radner, Actress and Comedienne)**

I wanted a perfect ending. Now I've learned, the hard way, that some poems don't rhyme, and some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle, and end.

Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what's going to happen next. Delicious ambiguity.

### **From How to Save Your Own Life (Erica Jong)**

Do you want me to tell you something really subversive? Love is everything it's cracked up to be. That's why people are so cynical about it. . . . It really is worth fighting for, being brave for, risking everything for. And the trouble is, if you don't risk anything, you risk even more.

**Untitled (Thomas à Kempis, German monk and mystic)**

Love feels no burden, regards not labors, strives toward more than it attains, argues not of impossibility, since it believes that it may and can do all things. Therefore it avails for all things, and fulfils and accomplishes much where one not a lover falls and lies helpless.

**Untitled (William Parrish) from the movie, "Meet Joe Black"**

Love is passion, obsession, someone you can't live without. If you don't start with that, what are you going to end up with? Fall head over heels. I say find someone you can love like crazy and who'll love you the same way back. And how do you find him? Forget your head and listen to your heart. I'm not hearing any heart.

Run the risk, if you get hurt, you'll come back. Because, the truth is there is no sense living your life without this. To make the journey and not fall deeply in love - well, you haven't lived a life at all. You have to try. Because if you haven't tried, you haven't lived.

**Untitled (from “The Mirror Has Two Faces”)**

We all want to fall in love. Why? Because that experience makes us feel completely alive. Where every sense is heightened, every emotion is magnified, our everyday reality is shattered and we are flying into the heavens. It may only last a moment, an hour, an afternoon. But that doesn't diminish its value.

Because we are left with memories that we treasure for the rest of our lives.

### Untitled (Judy Bielicki)

It is often said that it is love that makes the world go round. However, without doubt, it is friendship which keeps our spinning existence on an even keel.

True friendship provides so many of the essentials for a happy life - it is the foundation on which to build an enduring relationship, it is the mortar which bonds us together in harmony, and it is the calm, warm protection we sometimes need when the world outside seems cold and chaotic.

True friendship holds a mirror to our foibles and failings, without destroying our sense of worthiness. True friendship nurtures our hopes, supports us in our disappointments, and encourages us to grow to our best potential.

*{Bride's Name}* and *{Groom's Name}* came together as friends. Today, they pledge to each other not only their love, but also the strength, warmth and, most importantly, the fun of true friendship.

## **Sooner or Later**

Sooner or later we begin to understand that love is more than verses on valentines, and romance in the movies. We begin to know that love is here and now, real and true, the most important thing in our lives. For love is the creator of our favourite memories and the foundation of our fondest dreams.

Love is a promise that is always kept, a fortune that can never be spent, a seed that can flourish in even the most unlikely of places. And this radiance that never fades, this mysterious and magical joy, is the greatest treasure of all - one known only by those who love.

*Anon*

# Religious Readings & Blessings

## 1 Corinthians 13

I may be able to speak the languages of men and even of angels, but if I have no love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell.

I may have the gift of inspired preaching; I may have all knowledge and understand all secrets; I may have all the faith needed to move mountains - but if I have no love, I am nothing. I may give away everything I have, and even give up my body to be burnt -but if I have no love, this does me no good.

Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail.

Love is eternal.

There are inspired messages, but they are temporary; there are gifts of speaking in strange tongues but they will cease. There is knowledge, but it will pass.

For our gifts of knowledge and inspired messages are only partial; But when what is perfect comes, then what is partial will disappear.

When I was a child, my speech, my feelings, and thinking were those of a child; Now that I am a man, I have no more use for childish ways.

What we see now is like a dim image in a mirror; Then we shall see face to face. What I know now is only partial; Then it will be complete - as complete as God's knowledge of me.

Meanwhile these three remain; faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is 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 wrong doing, but rejoices in truth.  
Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.  
And now faith, hope, and love abide,  
and the greatest of these is love.

### **Variant 1**

Love is patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud.  
Love is never haughty or selfish or rude.  
Love does not demand it's own way. Love is not irritable or touchy.  
Love does not hold grudges and will hardly notice when others do it wrong.  
Love is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out.

### **Variant 2**

Love is patient, Love is kind.  
It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.  
It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered,  
It keeps no record of wrongs.  
Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.  
It always protects always trusts, always hopes, always preserves

### **Isaiah 61:10-62,3**

I am overwhelmed with joy in the Lord my God! For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a bridegroom in his wedding suit or a bride with her jewels. The Sovereign Lord will show his justice to the nations of the world. Everyone will praise him! His righteousness will be like a garden in early spring, filled with young plants springing up everywhere.

The Lord will hold you in his hands for all to see—a splendid crown in the hands of God.

### **1 John 4:7-12**

Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is born of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God—for God is love.

God showed how much he loved us by sending his only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love has been brought to full expression through us.

### **John 15:9-17**

I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey me, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father and remain in his love. I have told you this so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! I command you to love each other in the same way that I love you.

And here is how to measure it—the greatest love is shown when people lay down their lives for their friends. You are my friends if you obey me. I no longer call you servants, because a master doesn't confide in his servants. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.

You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. I command you to love each other.

### **Colossians 3:12-19**

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved,  
clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility,  
gentleness and patience.  
Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one  
another.

Forgive as the Lord forgave you.  
And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them  
all together in perfect unity.  
Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,  
since as members of one body you were called to peace.

And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you  
teach and admonish one another with all wisdom,  
and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with  
gratitude in your hearts to God.

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed,  
do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus,  
giving thanks to God the Father through him.

### **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, they are warm; but how can one be warm alone?

And though a man  
might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him.

### **Ephesians 5:21-33**

Submit yourselves one to another as the fear of God. Wives, show reverence for your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church and He is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wife, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkles or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

So ought men to love their wives as their own body; He that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hateth his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

This mystery is a profound one and I am saying this as it refers to Christ and the Church; however, let husband love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respect her husband.

### **Mark 10:6-9**

But God's plan was seen from the beginning of creation, for 'He made them male and female.' 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, let no one separate them, for God has joined them together.

### **Psalms 100**

My child, never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart, for they will give you a long and satisfying life. Never let loyalty and kindness get away from you! Wear them like a necklace; write them deep within your heart.

Then you will find favour with both God and people, and you will gain a good reputation.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths.

### **Psalm 128:1-4**

Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands; happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house, thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.

### **Song of Solomon 7:10-12 Growing in Love**

I am my beloveds, and his desire is toward me. Come, my beloved,  
let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.  
Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish,  
whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth:  
there will I give thee my loves.

### **Song of Solomon 8:6-7 Love is as Strong as Death**

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm:  
for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave:  
the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.  
Many waters cannot quench love; neither can the floods drown it: if a man  
would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be  
condemned.

### **Genesis 1:28**

And God blessed them, and God said unto them,  
Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.

### **Genesis 2:18-24**

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help mate for him. And out of the ground, the Lord God formed every beast in the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

And Adam gave names to all the cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help mate for him. And the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God has taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and the flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

### **Genesis 2:20-25**

And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help mate for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and as he slept: he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.