

The Celebration of Marriage

A Guide for Weddings and Services of Union in the Liberal Religious Tradition

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The Wedding Ceremony

Since freedom is a basic principle underlying the beliefs and practices of Unitarian Universalists, we encourage the creation of ceremonies that are as meaningful as possible to the participants. The marriage service is one of the most important of these. Unlike other ceremonies such as those at birth and death, in marriage the principal participants are able to be actively involved. Because they are asked to make a lifetime commitment, they should be involved in creating a ceremony symbolizing that commitment. The couple is encouraged to develop a ceremony that meets their own needs. We are a welcoming congregation, and accommodate all couples. The materials presented here are intended to help in the creation of a unique ceremony.

There is no intention to suggest that a ceremony must be non-traditional to be meaningful. Indeed, some people find great value in the ancient words and phrases that have meant much to previous generations. The important thing is not to be too "different", or "way out", or "traditional", or "old-fashioned", but to be honest and sincere and to develop the kind of service with which the couple feels comfortable. Each couple should feel free to personalize their ceremony, including friends and relatives as readers, and ceremonies from other traditions.

A typical ceremony might include the following elements. Most of these elements are optional, but the parts required by the *Marriage Act* are marked as such..

- A. Opening Words and Introduction
- B. Recognition of the Gathered Company
- C. Affirmation of Intentions (**Required**)
- D. Charge to the Couple
- E. Betrothal
- F. Exchange of Vows (**Required**)
- G. Exchange of Rings
- H. [Signing of the Registry and License] (may be later, before Closing Words)
- I. Pronouncement (**Required**)
- J. Closing Words or Benediction

We also include appendices that describe other optional elements of the ceremony.

- K. Candle Ceremony
- L. Ceremony of the Wine Cup or Loving Cup
- M. Prayer or Meditation
- N. Additional Readings

Comments on the parts of the service are included at the beginning of each section. Several examples are given. You may use any of these examples, or write your own words for any section.

A. Opening Words and Introduction

The introductory words set the tone for the ceremony and usually say something about the nature of marriage that is in keeping with the beliefs of the couple. It is a statement about the occasion, its importance, its significance to society as well as the people involved.

A-1

Welcome, to all of you who have gathered today to share in this ceremony with _____ and _____. The words which will be spoken here today are sacred, although these words are not what joins these two. Indeed, it is not I who is joining these two today at all, nor is it this ceremony.

We are not here to mark the start of a relationship; we are here to recognize a bond that already exists. _____ and _____ have joined themselves together, and we have gathered so that they might bear witness before us of the oneness that has grown up between them. Here, they will affirm this oneness and this dedication formally and publicly, as they have already affirmed it to each other. As they now exist as one in their own eyes; so may they exist in yours. This union has already occurred in the giving and receiving of their love and in the myriad ways in which they have entwined their lives together.

We are here to witness their statement of love and commitment. This is an act as ancient as the human race, and as new as each morning, for it speaks of the past and of the future, of the life of the individual and the existence of the community.

Marriage is a going forth, a giving up of one way in search of a greater fulfillment than either can achieve alone, risking what they are for what they might be. _____ and _____ come now to declare their love and solemnize their commitment. Today we celebrate their faith in the continuance of that growth as they come to be united in marriage.

A-2

We are gathered here to join this man and this woman /this couple in marriage. This is an act as

ancient as the history of the human race and as new as each morning, for it speaks of the past and of the future, of life of the individual and the existence of the community.

Because marriage is concerned with the most fundamental of human relationships, it must not be regarded lightly. Those who enter into this relationship shall cherish for each other a mutual esteem and love, bear each others' infirmities and weaknesses, comfort each other in sickness, trouble and sorrow, encourage each other in trials of the spirit, and live together as the heirs of life.

Because the family/couple is the foundation of human fellowship, marriage is not to be entered into by any unadvisedly, but with devotion and discretion. Love and loyalty will avail as the foundation of a happy and enduring home, and if the solemn vows you are about to make are kept with honour and integrity, your life will be full of peace and joy, and the home you are establishing will be one of warmth and understanding.

A-3

_____ and _____ are here today, with their family and friends, to declare publicly their love for one another, and to be joined in marriage. This is much more than a social and civil occasion, because it is the declaration of their hearts, built upon experience, and enriched by their love. With love it is possible to live a life together, each seeking and encouraging the joy, the comfort, the health, and the enrichment of the other, all of which will divide sorrow and multiply satisfactions.

A-4

Friends, _____ and _____ have invited us here today to share in the celebration of their marriage. We come together not to mark the start of a relationship, but to recognize a bond that already exists. This marriage is one expression of many varieties of love. Love is one, though its expressions are infinite.

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 quest 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.

For the giving of yourself in love is difficult, for you must learn to give of your love without total submission of yourself. Therefore, in your giving, give your joy, your sadness, your interest, your understanding, your knowledge - all expressions that make up life. But in this giving, remember to preserve yourself - your integrity, your

individuality. This is the challenge of love within marriage.

B. Recognition of the Gathered Company

A service of union or a wedding is never solely about the two individuals who are joining their lives, but includes everyone who has played a role in the journey which has led the couple to this point of commitment. There are many ways in which couples may recognize parents, children, friends, and other loved ones. This section offers several ways to do this. Parents often accompany a bride down the aisle now rather than "giving her away" as in the past, but this is still possible.

You may also wish to have words of recognition for someone important who is unable to be present at the service.

B-1

The ideals, the understanding and the mutual respect which these two bring to their marriage have roots in the love, friendship and guidance with which you have provided them. Do you, then, grant these two your blessings and offer them your love and acceptance?

Reply: We do.

B-2

Mr and Mrs _____, and Mr and Mrs _____, *(or first names of parents)*,
_____ and _____ come out of

your family circles. They are living expressions of your love; they have been nurtured in your affections and guided by your personal counsel.

It is now their desire to broaden their family circles, maintaining the heritage with which you have provided them. They will explore new directions, but keep also the tried and tested lessons of their earlier years.

As you have brought _____ and _____ thus far in life, they ask for your affectionate blessings upon them, for the future they have chosen. Do you give this blessing?

Reply: We do.

B-3

As our (sons) and (daughters) find partners and found the home of the next generation, each family is enlarged. Do you, who have nurtured these two, bestow your blessings on their union and their family?

Reply: We do.

B-4

Each of you here present has been invited because you are a special person in the lives of _____ and _____. You have come to rejoice with them; to hear their vows, their hopes, their plans... to extend good wishes and to be reminded of the loves and commitments that are a part of your own lives. Will you, therefore, do all in your power to uphold these two in the marriage they are about to undertake?

All gathered: We will.

B-5

Who gives these two to be joined in marriage?

Parents respond: They give themselves, and we bless their choice.

When There Are Children:

B-6

_____, you are a part of this marriage. In becoming one family, your lives, like those of your parents, have become enriched. We hope that together all of you will find ways to comfort, help and challenge one another, and that you will make your home a place where all are encouraged to grow. Will you do your best?

Reply: I/We will.

C. Affirmation of Intentions

This element of the ceremony is important because it asks the couple to proclaim their desire for commitment, and it affirms for the entire assembly that the couple understands the step they are taking and is freely entering into commitment without reservation.

C-1

_____ and _____, you have invited us to witness the happiness you have found in each other. Are you ready to make the pledges through which you commit yourselves to each other in love?

Reply: We are.

C-2

_____ and _____, you have carefully considered the beauty of the obligations assumed when lives are wed. Are you now prepared to enter into this covenant of love/marriage?

Reply: We are.

C-3

_____ and _____, do you come in freedom and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage?

Reply: We do.

The Marriage Act requires that you acknowledge that there is no legal impediment to your marriage. Each person will be asked the following question:

_____, do you solemnly declare that there is no lawful cause why you may not be joined in marriage to _____?

Response: I do

D. Charge to the Couple

The Charge to the Couple is the moment set aside to address the magnitude and significance of the vows about to be taken. This segment needn't be brief; it is most important that this aspect of the ceremony reflect the many implications involved when two people commit to a lifetime of love. It is a time to reflect upon those implications. This adds depth and meaning to the service.

D-1

Remember, then, that your decision this day is your act of faith in one another. Your faith must not be a vain hope in what the other will do or will not do, might become or not become. Yours must be that deeper faith that you each will be acceptable in the other's eyes despite the changes of the years and the assaults of the world. Such faith requires that you honour yourself as well as attend to the needs of the other. Such faith requires that you learn to listen before you speak.

Such faith requires that you each be open to that divine spark within you, and be willing to be guided by the grace of its light. Your pledge to one another is a devotion in freedom, and not a license to control. Your covenant will endure the trials of time only as you keep to that sacred integrity. Finally, do not forget that a generous sense of humour and mirth is a great redeemer in times of trial and strain. It may keep you whole when all else seems lost.

D-2

I wish you all happiness, but my wishes cannot give it, nor can it come from outward circumstances. It can only come from yourselves, from the spirit within you.

You cannot choose what changes and chances may befall you in the coming years, but you can choose the spirit with which you will meet them. Let it be in the spirit of the noble vows in which you will plight your troth, each to the other. If you take these vows not as mere form, but as a bond of honour which you will keep with unswerving loyalty, then whatever may come, you will have inward happiness, which no pleasures of themselves can give, no sorrows take away. Then the whole of life which awaits you will be an abiding security to yourselves, and a welcome example to others.

Today your separate lives, with your own memories, hopes, temptations and trials, are merged into one. Bring into this new life, each for the sake of the other, the best you can be. Then the love you bear each other will be ever strengthened and enriched.

D-3

Your task is to talk, to listen and to grow;
To talk, because one must share of oneself to communicate with the other;
To listen because what the other has to say matters deeply;
To grow in dignity, each following along the paths that are his or her own to follow,
becoming all that each is capable of becoming,
while giving the other supporting love.
To grow in love; this is the crown of marriage,
To grow in the love of life, the love of growth, and the love of becoming;
The love which gives courage,
Which does not cling, but bestows freedom,
Which does not hold back, but makes bold for growth,
Which stands fast in disappointment and sorrow,
Which endures through frustration and pettiness,
Which seeks to keep the relationship open;
And which is confirmed by answering love.
You have set yourselves on this road,

You have chosen to walk it together;
Thus you will make a marriage.

D-4

Ultimately, there comes a time when a decision must be made. Ultimately, two people who love each other must ask themselves how much they hope for as their love grows and deepens, and how much risk they are willing to take. It is indeed a fearful gamble. Because it is the nature of love to create, a marriage is itself something which has to be created. To marry is the biggest risk in human relations that a person can take. If we commit ourselves to one person for life this is not, as many people think, a rejection of freedom; rather it demands the courage to move into all the risks of freedom, and the risk of love which is permanent; into that love which is not possession but participation. It takes a lifetime to learn another person. When love is not possession, but participation, then it is part of that co-creation which is our human calling.

E. Betrothal

Originally a separate ceremony, the betrothal is now incorporated into the wedding ceremony. The couple is asked by the chaplain to declare their intentions. While not a legal requirement, it is the part of the ceremony where a couple has the opportunity to include the traditional phrase, "I do."

E-1

_____, will you have this woman/man (or name) to be your wedded wife/husband/partner/spouse through all of the days of your life, to live together in constancy and devotion? Will you love her/him, comfort her/him, honour and cherish her/him, in sickness and in health, and will you love her/him as long as you both shall live?

Reply: I will

E-2

_____, do you take _____, to be your husband/wife/partner/wedded spouse through all of the days of your life, to love him/her and to cherish him/her, to help him/her and to honour him/her, and to give him/her understanding and comfort in whatever the future may bring in confidence that together you are responsible for your destiny?.

Reply: I do

E-3

_____ and _____, as you have come here freely to give yourselves in marriage, do you now promise that you will love and honour each other as husband and wife/wedded partners/spouses?

Reply: We do

E-4

_____ and _____, to create a life together with the blessing of God requires that you honour the divine in each other and in yourself; that you honour the many voices of the soul--the joys, the delights, the love, as well as the anger, the fear, the illness, and the unhealed wounds; that you not ask your life partner to be any less than the fully powerful, proud woman/man that she/he is; that you embrace her/him in her/his complexity--in her/his delights, in the fullness of her/his dreams, in her/his relationship with God. This is both God's blessing and charge to you; to live together with honour, courage, and honesty.

Are you prepared to accept this challenge?

Reply: Yes, we are.

F. Exchange of Vows

F-1

I, _____, choose you, _____, to be the wife/husband/partner of my days, to be the mother/father of my children, to be the companion of my house; I shall keep with you what share of trouble and sorrow our lives may lay upon us, and I shall share with you our store of goodness and plenty and love.

F-2

I, _____, take thee, _____, to be my wedded wife/husband/partner/spouse, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish and respect till death do us part.

F-3

I, _____, take you, _____, to be no other than yourself. Loving what I know of you, trusting what I do not yet know, with respect for your integrity and faith in your abiding love for me through all our years, and in all that life may bring us.

F-4

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/husband/partner/spouse from this day forward, to be my lover and my beloved, in times of joy, and in times of trial, in times of happiness and in times of sorrow, as we share our life together.

G. Exchange of Rings (You need to pick one from the first 3 and one from the second group since one is what the chaplain says and one is what you say when you give each other the rings)

The rings are symbols of commitment that each partner brings to the marriage. The chaplain takes the rings from the attendant and says:

G-1

The ring is the symbol of the unbroken circle of love. Love freely given has no beginning and no end. Love freely given has no giver and no receiver - for each is the giver and each is the receiver. May your ring(s) always call to mind the freedom and the power of this love.

G-2

The circle is the symbol of the sun and earth and universe. It is the symbol of holiness and perfection and peace. In this ring it is the symbol of unity, in which these two lives have joined in one unbroken circle, in which, wherever you go, you will always return to one another and to your togetherness.

G-3

The circle of the ring speaks of love freely given: it has no beginning and it has no end. The circle of the ring declares the unity and the oneness of your two lives, which shall contain your devotion beyond every journey, that you may always return again to your togetherness.

As the ring is placed on the finger, each party says:

G-4

_____, with this ring I marry you and I promise to be true for so long as we both shall live.

G-5

With this ring I thee wed.

G-6

_____, I offer this ring to wear upon your hand as a symbol of our unity.

G-7

I offer this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity for the years to come.

G-8

_____, with the giving of this ring, I thee wed.

_____, with the receiving of this ring, I thee wed.

G-9

I give you this ring as a symbol that I am bound to you always, in love.

G-10

As the sign from my heart that I desire to live with you from this day forward, and that you may remember forever that I have chosen you above all others, I give you this ring as a symbol of my love.

H. [Signing of the Registry and License] *(This may take place near the end of the service, before the Closing Words.)*

The couple, their witnesses and the chaplain sign the registry and license.

I. Pronouncement

The following reading may be included before the pronouncement:

I-1

No single event marks a marriage. A marriage is the freely chosen union of two individuals. It is both culmination and commencement of a lifetime of love. Through the statement of common spirit and the exchange of rings, you have done what in truth neither state nor church can do: you have joined yourselves in a shared destiny.

The pronouncement is the official recognition of the new union:

I-2

For as much as _____ and _____ have thus pledged themselves to each other in the presence of God and this company, I, _____, by virtue of the powers vested in me by the *Marriage Act*, do hereby pronounce you, _____ and _____ to be married. *May add: lawfully wedded spouses/ partners.*

May we who are here present, hold the inspiration of this hour alive in our hearts and memories, as _____ and _____ will hold it as a symbol of their love and commitment.

I-3

Inasmuch as _____ and _____ consent together in marriage, and have witnessed the same before this company, and thereto have pledged their faith, each to the other, and have declared the same by giving and receiving rings and by drinking from a common cup, I, _____, by virtue of the powers vested in me by the *Marriage Act*, do hereby pronounce you, _____ and _____ to be married. *May add: beloved wives or husbands each to the other; lawfully wedded spouses/partners.* Those whom love joins together, let none put asunder.

I-4

For as much as _____ and _____ have consented together in marriage, declaring their love for each other, I, _____, by virtue of the powers vested in me by the *Marriage Act*, do hereby pronounce you, _____ and _____ to be married. *May add: beloved wives or husbands each to the other; lawfully wedded spouses/partners.* May their days be long upon the earth and may they dwell in love and joy together.

I-5

Inasmuch as _____ and _____ have grown in knowledge and love of one another, seeking an even richer, deeper relationship, and because they have pledged to meet sorrow and joy as one family, we rejoice to recognize them, and I, _____, by virtue of the powers vested in me by the *Marriage Act*, do hereby pronounce you, _____ and _____ to be married. *May add: beloved wives or husbands each to the other; lawfully wedded spouses/partners.*

This is usually where the couple kiss. You may have wording like: “You may now kiss the bride”; “You may now share your first kiss as a married couple”; “You may now seal your bond with a kiss”...

J. Closing Words or Benediction

The benediction marks the end of the ceremony.

J-1

May the blessing that rests upon all who love, rest also upon you and fill you with all spiritual grace. May the bond that unites you ever be strengthened. May you so love and work together in the days that are to come that your lives shall be enriched and ennobled by a true and deepening comradeship of mind and heart.

J-2

And now, with a perfect and abiding confidence, with a trust and affection which knows no limitation, we send you forth upon your journey of life to laugh for joy, to suffer pain, to seek, to serve, to find. So be it.

J-3

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you;
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

J-4

_____ and _____, may you establish a home of warmth and understanding; may your lives be filled with peace and beauty; may you always exhibit to one another truth, sympathy and love, and may the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; may the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace this day and forever more.

J-5

May the spirit which has been in all the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition be also in us, that the deepest in us may seek the loftiest in the universe, and that we may dwell in love and joy with one another.

J-6

May the love in your hearts give you joy. May the greatness of life bring you peace.

May your days be good, and your lives be long upon the earth.

J-7

May all that is noble and lovely and true abide with you forever. Amen.

J-8

May the sun bring you new energy by day;
May the moon softly restore you by night;
May the rain wash away your worries
And the breezes blow new strength into your being,
And all the days of your life may you walk gently through the world and know its beauty.

Now you can feel no rain, for each of you will be shelter for the other.
Now there will be no more loneliness,
Now you are two persons, but there is only one life before you.
Go now to your dwelling to enter into the days of your life together,
And may your days be good and long upon the earth.
Traditional Apache

APPENDICES

K. Candle Ceremony

Living in a committed relationship changes us. We become more than we were before. We do not cease to be individuals, leading individual lives; but something new is created. It is not that we become one thing and are no longer two people. Rather it is that a new life, a life between us, begins to exist and grow as our relationship grows.

I invite _____ and _____, as representatives of _____'s and _____'s separate lives, to light two flames, from which _____ and _____ will light a common candle as a sign of the new life this union today creates.

L. Ceremony of the Wine Cup

This simple and meaningful ceremony, taken from Jewish tradition, can be included in any wedding ceremony or service of union, regardless of the heritage of the participants. If included, it is inserted between the Exchange of Rings and the Signing of the Registry.

L-1

The years of life are as a cup of wine, poured out for you to drink. The cup contains within it the sweet wine of happiness, joy, hope and delight. The same cup, at times, holds the bitter wine of disappointment, sorrow, grief and despair. Those who drink deeply of life invite the full range of experiences. This cup is symbolic of the pledges you have made to one another to share together the fullness of life. As you drink from this cup you acknowledge to one another that your lives, until this moment separate, have become one vessel into which all your sorrows and joys, all your hopes and fears, all your dreams and dreads will be poured, and from which you will find mutual sustenance. Many days you will sit at the same table and eat and drink together. Drink now, and may the cup of your life together be sweet and full to overflowing.

If the glass is broken, the following may be said:

L-2

Even as life moves on in its restless flow, we would not cling to the present moment, no matter how filled with joy. Your loyalty is to each other, to the many cups which you will fill to each other, not to the cups of yesterday.

OR:

This may be used instead of the Wine Cup Ceremony.

Celtic Loving Cup Ceremony

____ and _____, on this your wedding day, we celebrate the Celtic spirit of the *anam cara*. *Anam cara* is translated from the Gaelic as "soul friend." By entering in a partnership with your *anam cara*, you are joined in an ancient and eternal way with this person whom you most cherish. In everyone's life there is a great need for an *anam cara* and so I ask you to toast one another by repeating the following:

The Couple: *(repeating after the chaplain)* Today I recognize you, my *anam cara* and ask that you become a part of me, in sacred kinship.

With you I will share my innermost self, my mind and my heart.

With you, I have lost all fear and have found the greatest courage. I have learned to love and let myself be loved. With you, I have found a rhythm of grace and gracefulness.

With you my *anam cara*, I am understood, I am home.

Chaplain: And now, please drink to the love you have shared in the past *(Chaplain hands the couple the cup and each take a sip)* Drink to your love in the present, on this your wedding day *(Drink again)* And drink to your love in the future and forever more *(Drink again)*

The Celts believed that the way you view your future actually shapes it. I now ask everyone here in the room to take a moment to visualize a future for _____ and _____. As a group let us think of the happiness in store for these two. Let us put their joyous future out to the universe.

M. Prayer or Meditation

The words "Let us pray" or "Please join me in the spirit of prayer and meditation" may included before any prayer or meditation.

M-1

Eternal God, creative source of life, in the midst of which we live and move and have our being; in thy name are we met together, to witness and to bless the union of these two lives. May they be a blessing and a comfort, each to the other, sharers of each other's joys, consolers of each other's sorrows, helpers of each other, in all the chances and changes of the world. In perfect love and creative peace, may they keep themselves, fulfilling in their very

beings the laws of creative life. Amen.

M-2

We pray rich blessings upon _____ and _____ who in the presence of eternity and in the sight of this company have pledged unto each other all that mind and heart and hand can give.

May they ever remain faithful to the vows taken this day. In serenity of spirit may they learn to face with courage and patience whatever afflictions may be visited upon them or those whom they love.

For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health may the love which they have for one another grow in meaning and strength until its beauty is made manifest in a common devotion to all that is compassionate and life-giving.

Learning to serve one another in a partnership of love, may they learn to serve the highest ends of humanity itself and thus become witnesses to the sacredness of life in the midst of each common day. Amen.

M-3

Today we pray for the lives of _____ and _____ together. We pray for concord and creativity as well as for love and laughter. We pray for joy, that they may share it with others, and for their home, that it may be a temple for that which is beautiful and good and true. We pray for courage when there is pain, and for humility when fortune favours them.

As they share the richer experiences of life, so may their hearts and minds increase in understanding, and their bond become even stronger.

May _____ and _____ carry the past gracefully with them in all the years of their sojourn, and with an equal measure of hope ever face the future unafraid. Amen.

M-4

May the springtime's beauty remain in your marriage and in your home.

May there be warmth and gentleness, growing and courage, love and care.

May there be joy and song of life through all the days that lie ahead.

M-5

Loving and gracious God (Spirit of Life/ Love), we are grateful for your presence [or: We are grateful for the presence of Love in our lives, in our relationships, in the beauty of nature and in the love that moves through and between us. We are thankful for the safe arrival of family and friends. At this time we also want to bring to our minds and hearts those people who are not here to share in this celebration- family and friends who are unable to attend, and those departed from us. (especially.....). May their presence in spirit be strong among us today.

N. Additional Readings

N-1

We know little, but that we must trust in what is difficult is a certainty that will never abandon us; it is good to be solitary, for solitude is difficult; that something is difficult must be one more reason for us to do it.

It is also good to love, because love is difficult. For one human being to love another human being: that is perhaps the most difficult task that has ever been entrusted to us, the ultimate task, the final test and proof, the work for which all other work is merely preparation.

That is why young people, who are beginners in everything, are not yet capable of love; it is something they must learn. With their whole being, with all their forces, gathered around their solitary, anxious, upward-beating heart, they must learn to love. But learning time is always a long, secluded time, and therefore loving, for a long time ahead and far into life, is -- solitude, a heightened and deepened kind of aloneness for the person who loves.

Loving does not at first mean merging, surrendering, and uniting with another person (for what would a union be of two people who are unclarified, unfinished, and still incoherent?); it is a high inducement for the individual to ripen, to become something, to become world, to become world for the sake of another person... it is the ultimate, it is perhaps that for which human lives are barely large enough.

- Rilke's "Letters To A Young Poet"

N-2

May your marriage bring you all the exquisite excitements a marriage should bring.

May life grant patience, tolerance and understanding.

May you always need one another – not so much to fill your emptiness as to help you to know your fullness. A mountain needs a valley to be complete; the valley does not make the valley less but more; and the valley is more a valley because it has a mountain towering over it. So let it be with you and you.

May you need one another - but not out of weakness.

May you want each other - but not out of lack.

May you entice one another - but not compel one another.

May you embrace one another - but not encircle one another.

May you succeed in all important ways with one another,
and not fail in the little graces.

May you look for things to praise, often say, "I love you" and take no notice of small

faults. If you have quarrels that push you apart,

May both of you hope to have good sense enough to take the first step back.

May you enter into the mystery which is the awareness of one
another's presence - no more physical than spiritual; warm and
near when you are side by side; and warm and near when you are
in separate rooms or even distant cities.

May you have happiness, and may you find it making one another happy.

May you have love and may you find it in loving one another.

May the passing of time only enhance and accentuate this joyful sense of wonder
on the journey you are beginning today.

N-3

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

I love you not only for what you have made of yourself,

but for what you are making of me.

I love you for that 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, frivolous and weak things that you cannot help dimly seeing there, and
for drawing out into the light all the beautiful and radiant belongings that no one
else had looked quite far enough to find.

I love you for ignoring the possibilities of the fool and weakling in me, and for laying firm hold on the possibilities of good in me.

- Ray Croft

N-4

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends,..... (F)aith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

- 1 Corinthians 13 , 4 and 13

Or:

Love is slow to lose patience; it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive; it is neither anxious to impress, nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.

Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep an account of evil, or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good people when truth prevails.

Love knows no limit to its own endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen.

In this life, we have three great lasting qualities – faith in each other, hope, and love. But the greatest of them is love.

(1 Corinthians 13, tr. by J. B. Phillips)

N-5

You have come together, and together you shall be forevermore.
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 the 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 your 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.
- Kahlil Gibran, On Marriage

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