

The Prophet on Marriage
Khalil Gibran

Then Almitra spoke again and said
"And what of Marriage, master?"
And he answered saying:
You were born together, and together you shall be 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 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 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.



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Some ideas for
non-Biblical readings
for your ceremony



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If you are planning to be married in the Church of England the service must include at least one reading from the Bible, though other readings that have a special significance to the couple may also be used. Civil Weddings and Civil Partnership Ceremonies in the UK do not generally permit the use of religious texts during the ceremony. Here is a short selection of some of the most popular non-Biblical readings that couples might choose for their wedding. The minister who is presiding at the wedding will be able to advise you about appropriate readings from the Bible, but a selection of suitable Bible readings can be found on the internet at: www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/marriage/readingspsalms

Marriage Joins Two People In The Circle Of Its Love Edmund O'Neill (b.1929)

Marriage is a commitment to life, the best that two people can find and bring out in each other. It offers opportunities for sharing and growth that no other relationship can equal. It is a physical and an emotional joining that is promised for a lifetime.

Within the circle of its love, marriage encompasses all of life's most important relationships. A wife and a husband are each other's best friend, confidant, lover, teacher, listener, and critic. And there may come times when one partner is heartbroken or ailing, and the love of the other may resemble the tender caring of a parent for a child.

Marriage deepens and enriches every facet of life. Happiness is fuller, memories are fresher, commitment is stronger, even anger is felt more strongly, and passes away more quickly.

Marriage understands and forgives the mistakes life is unable to avoid. It encourages and nurtures new life, new experiences, and new ways of expressing a love that is deeper than life.

When two people pledge their love and care for each other in marriage, they create a spirit unique unto themselves which binds them closer than any spoken or written words. Marriage is a promise, a potential made in the hearts of two people who love each other and takes a lifetime to fulfil.

from Captain Corelli's Mandolin Louis de Bernieres

Doctor Iannis counsels his daughter:

Love is a temporary madness. It erupts like an earthquake and then subsides. And when it subsides you have to make a decision. You have to work out whether your roots have become so entwined together that it is inconceivable that you should ever part. Because this is what love is. Love is not breathlessness, it is not excitement, it is not the promulgation of promises of eternal passion, [it is not the desire to mate every second minute of the day, it is not lying awake at night imagining that he is kissing every cranny of your body. No, don't blush, I am telling you some truths.] That is just being "in love" which any fool can do. Love itself is what is left over when being in love has burned away, and this is both an art and a fortunate accident. Your mother and I had it, we had roots that grew towards each other underground, and when all the pretty blossom had fallen from our branches we found that we were one tree and not two.

from Gift From The Sea Anne Morrow Lindbergh (b.1906)

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 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. Relationships 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.

Never Marry But For Love
William Penn (1644-1718)

Never marry but for love; but see that thou lovest what is lovely.
He that minds a body and not a soul
has not the better part of that relationship,
and will consequently lack the noblest comfort of a married life.

Between a man and his wife nothing ought to rule but love.
As love ought to bring them together,
so it is the best way to keep them well together.

A husband and wife that love one another
show their children that they should do so too.
Others visibly lose their authority in their families
by their contempt of one another,
and teach their children to be unnatural by their own examples.

Let not enjoyment lessen, but augment, affection;
it being the basest of passions to like when we have not,
what we slight when we possess.

Here it is we ought to search out our pleasure,
where the field is large and full of variety, and of an enduring nature;
sickness, poverty or disgrace being not able to shake it
because it is not under the moving influences of worldly contingencies.

Nothing can be more entire and without reserve;
nothing more zealous, affectionate and sincere;
nothing more contented than such a couple,
nor greater temporal felicity than to be one of them.

Sonnet From The Portuguese XLIII
Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)

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 candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the 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.

Sonnet 116: Let Me Not To The Marriage Of True Minds
William Shakespeare

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

from The Art of Marriage
Wilfred Arlan Peterson

Happiness in marriage is not something that just happens. A good marriage must be created. In marriage the little things are the big things. It is never being too old to hold hands. It is remembering to say "I love you" at least once a day. It is never going to sleep angry. It is at no time taking the other for granted; the courtship should not end with the honeymoon, it should continue through all the years. It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives. It is standing together facing the world. It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family. It is doing things for each other, not in the attitude of duty or sacrifice, but in the spirit of joy. It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways. It is not looking for perfection in each other. It is cultivating flexibility, patience, understanding and a sense of humour. It is having the capacity to forgive and forget. It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow. 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.

Marriage Advice
Jane Wells (1886)

Let your love be stronger than your hate or anger.
Learn the wisdom of compromise,
for it is better to bend a little than to break.
Believe the best rather than the worst.
People have a way of living up or down to your opinion of them.
Remember that true friendship is the basis for any lasting relationship.
The person you choose to marry is deserving of the courtesies
and kindnesses you bestow on your friends.

Please hand this down to your children and your children's children.

An Apache Wedding Prayer
(unknown)

Now you will feel no rain,
For each of you will be shelter to the other.
Now you will feel no cold,
For each of you will be warmth to the other.
Now there is no more loneliness for you,
For each of you will be companion to the other.

Treat yourselves and each other with respect,
and remind yourselves often of what brought you together.
Give the highest priority to the tenderness, gentleness and kindness
that your connection deserves.
When frustration, difficulty and fear assail your relationship;
as they threaten all relationships at one time or another,
remember to focus on what is right between you,
not only the part which seems wrong.
In this way, you can ride out the storms
when clouds hide the face of the sun in your lives,
remembering that even if you lose sight of it for a moment,
the sun is still there.
And if each of you takes responsibility
for the quality of your life together,
it will be marked by abundance and delight.

Go now to your dwelling place,
to enter into the days of your life together.
And may your days be good and long upon the earth.