

Wedding Scripture, by moment in the ceremony

Most wedding readings were not written about weddings, and that is fine; the original setting is usually what makes the reading strong. This sheet is arranged by where each passage belongs in a ceremony, with one line on where it comes from, so the couple hears it as it was meant. Tell them in one sentence before the rehearsal. It changes how the room listens.

OPENING AND GATHERING

Psalm 118:24

“This is the day that Yahweh has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it!”

This is the day. The decision to be glad is made before the day proves itself.

Psalm 34:1-3

“I will bless Yahweh at all times. His praise will always be in my mouth. My soul shall boast in Yahweh. The humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh magnify Yahweh with me. Let’s exalt his name together.”

“Let us exalt his name together.” For a couple who want the first thing they do married to be worship.

LOVE AND COMMITMENT

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

“Love is patient and is kind. Love doesn’t envy. Love doesn’t brag, is not proud, doesn’t behave itself inappropriately, doesn’t seek its own way, is not provoked, takes no account of evil; doesn’t rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will be done away with. Where there are various languages, they will cease. Where there is knowledge, it will be done away with.”

Written to a church that was fighting, as a description of what they were failing to be. It works at a wedding because it defines love as behavior under pressure, not feeling under candlelight.

Ruth 1:16-17

“Ruth said, “Don’t urge me to leave you, and to return from following you, for where you go, I will go; and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May Yahweh do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me.”

“Where you go, I will go.” Said by a widowed daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law, not a bride. Still the best statement of chosen loyalty in the Bible; the couple should know who said it.

Song of Solomon 8:6-7

“Set me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm; for love is strong as death. Jealousy is as cruel as Sheol. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a very flame of Yahweh. Many waters can’t quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man would give all the wealth of his house for love, he would be utterly scorned.”

Love as strong as death, unquenchable by many waters. The Bible’s one book of love poetry, read plainly.

MARRIAGE AND COMPANIONSHIP

Genesis 2:18-24

“Yahweh God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper comparable to him.” Out of the ground Yahweh God formed every animal of the field, and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. Whatever the man called every living creature became its name. The man gave names to all livestock, and to the birds of the sky, and to every animal of the field; but for man there was not found a helper comparable to him. Yahweh God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. As the man slept, he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Yahweh God made a woman from the rib which he had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She will be called ‘woman,’ because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother, and will join with his wife, and they will be one flesh.”

The first wedding, and the line Jesus later quotes: two become one flesh. “It is not good for the man to be alone” is the Bible’s first “not good.”

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls, and doesn’t have another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have warmth; but how can one keep warm alone? If a man prevails against one who is alone, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

Two are better than one; a cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Practical and unsentimental.

Colossians 3:12-14

“Put on therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, humility, and perseverance; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, if any man has a complaint against any; even as Christ forgave you, so you also do. Above all these things, walk in love, which is the bond of perfection.”

Compassion, kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness, and above all love. A list a marriage can be measured against on a Tuesday.

BLESSING THE COUPLE

Numbers 6:24-26

“Yahweh bless you, and keep you. Yahweh make his face to shine on you, and be gracious to you. Yahweh lift up his face toward you, and give you peace.”

The blessing Aaron was told to say over the people, word for word. Nobody has ever minded receiving it.

Ephesians 4:2-3

“with all lowliness and humility, with patience, bearing with one another in love, being eager to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love. Written about a church; describes a kitchen just as well.

CLOSING AND BENEDICTION

Romans 12:9-13

“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil. Cling to that which is good. In love of the brothers be tenderly affectionate to one another; in honor preferring one another; not lagging in diligence; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; enduring in troubles; continuing steadfastly in prayer; contributing to the needs of the saints; given to hospitality.”

Sincere love, honoring one another above yourselves, patient in trouble. For the years after the honeymoon.

Micah 6:8

“He has shown you, O man, what is good. What does Yahweh require of you, but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly. Nine words for a life together.

FOR A WEDDING CARD

Ecclesiastes 4:12

“If a man prevails against one who is alone, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

One line, and everyone knows it.

1 John 4:7

“Beloved, let’s love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves has been born of God, and knows God.”

“Let us love one another, for love is of God.” Short and it grounds the marriage in something larger.

Proverbs 3:3

“Don’t let kindness and truth forsake you. Bind them around your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart.”

Kindness and truth. Write them on your heart. Six words.

Numbers 6:24

“Yahweh bless you, and keep you.”

The first line of the blessing, if the card is small.

WHAT TO SAY

- Before the rehearsal, tell the couple where each reading comes from, in one sentence.
- If the room includes many beliefs, Ecclesiastes 4 and Ruth 1 ask nothing of the listener.
- For a second marriage, Isaiah 43:18–19 and Lamentations 3:22–23 acknowledge a past without dwelling on it.

HOW TO USE THIS

Two readings, not four. One about love, one about the long haul. If you use 1 Corinthians 13, say what it is: a rebuke that became the most beautiful description of love ever written. The couple will remember that.