

Dear Couple,

Congratulations on your upcoming wedding! The most sacred part of your wedding day is the ceremony. And although wedding ceremonies vary among different religions, cultures and preferences, they usually include the exchange of vows, the presentation of rings, and an official pronouncement by a wedding officiant. These sample ceremonies give you an idea of the ceremonies that I have done in the past, and hopefully get you thinking about what type of ceremony you would like to have. Throughout this process, you are more than welcome to meet with me, either in person, over the phone, or via Skype, as many times as you need to so that we can perfectly tailor your wedding ceremony. As an interfaith minister, I am comfortable working with all religious affiliations, as well as with those who do not adhere to any religious beliefs. I will appreciate and respect your needs, beliefs, and practices, and would love to help you create a unique and personal wedding that reflects who you are as a couple.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Nies

Ceremony Sample #1

Welcome Statement

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B] welcome you, their family and friends. Each of you has given something of yourself to their lives. It is fitting, then that you share in this celebration of their commitment to each other and to their lives joined in marriage.

Declaration of Intent

Do you, [Spouse A] come before this gathering to proclaim your love and devotion for [Spouse B]?
[Spouse A]: I do.

Do you, [Spouse B] come before this gathering to proclaim your love and devotion for [Spouse A]?
[Spouse B]: I do.

Remembrances and Acknowledgments

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B] have asked that we take a moment to honor the memory of those loved ones who could be here today only in spirit.

Poetry/Reading

And now, [Spouse A] and [Spouse B] would now like to invite [Spouse A]'s friend, [Name], to read On Marriage, from The Prophet, by Kahlil Gibran

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.

Ay, 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 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.

Declaration of Support

Collectively, you represent the families, friends, and traditions that have brought [Spouse A] and [Spouse B] to this point in their lives. Please affirm your support for this marriage by responding "Yes we do" to the following question: As part of the community that surrounds [Spouse A] and

[Spouse B] do you offer your love and support to strengthen their marriage and bless this family created by their union? Guests: “Yes we do!”

Marriage Address

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B], your marriage will, no doubt, be filled with surprises. Some will be welcome, while others will be a test to the strength and flexibility of your bond. Your life will present many opportunities to refine and deepen your love and to explore the profound depths of your being. May you be compassionate with each other and nurture yourselves, each other, and this union with love and care. May your love create a safe haven for you both on the journey that lies ahead of you. Lead with your hearts and take the time to do simple things that will nurture your love.

Deeply listen to each other, to your dreams and to your frustrations. Be playful in finding new ways to give your love to each other every day. Let your love be an inspiration to others. May your love be so abundant that you have plenty to share with each other and your friends and family, as well. It is your love that has brought us here today. May it grow deeper and sweeter with each passing year.

Vows

[Spouse A], please pass your flowers to your [sister].

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B], please join hands. [Spouse A], please repeat this vow after me: “I, [Spouse A], take you, [Spouse B], as my friend and love, beside me and apart from me, in laughter and in tears, in conflict and in tranquility, asking that you be no other than yourself, loving what I know of you, trusting what I do not know yet, in all the ways that life may find us.”

[Spouse B], please repeat this vow after me: “I, [Spouse B], take you, [Spouse A], as my friend and love, beside me and apart from me, in laughter and in tears, in conflict and in tranquility, asking that you be no other than yourself, loving what I know of you, trusting what I do not know yet, in all the ways that life may find us.”

Ring Ceremony

You have chosen to exchange rings as a symbol of your love. Rings are adornment, carefully chosen for their beauty and simplicity. They quietly sit on our fingers, reminding us of the power of love and the pledge of the wearer to his or her partner to be faithful and true, and to nurture their love so it will last a lifetime.

[Spouse A], please repeat after me: “I give you this ring as a sign that I choose you to be my partner and my best friend today, tomorrow, and always.” [Spouse A] places the ring on [Spouse B]’s finger.

[Spouse B], please repeat after me: “I give you this ring as a sign that I choose you to be my partner and my best friend today, tomorrow, and always.” [Spouse B] places the ring on [Spouse A]’s finger.

Unity Ceremony: Sand Ceremony

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B], through the exchange of your vows and the giving of your rings, you have committed to share the rest of your lives with each other. Today, we symbolize your relationship and your marriage through the pouring of these two individual glasses of sand into a third, single container.

[Spouse A], your glass represents you -- all that you were, all that you are, and all that you will ever be. And [Spouse B], your glass represents you -- all that you were and all that you are, and all that you will ever be. [[Spouse A] and [Spouse B] simultaneously pour their individual containers of sand into the third container.]

Just as these grains of sand can never be separated and poured again into their individual glasses, so too will your marriage be -- united as one for all of your days.

Final Prayer/Blessing

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B], our best wishes go forward from this day with you. We wish for you a fulfilling life, rich in caring and in happiness. We wish for you a gentle and peaceful life that nurtures and comforts you. We wish for you a noble life, which reflects your honesty, kindness, and integrity. We wish for you an adventurous life, exploring the fullness of your own, and each other's true selves. [Spouse A] and [Spouse B], there is a wonderful life ahead of you. Live it fully. Love life's changes and its choices. Let life amaze you and bring you joy.

Pronouncement

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B], you have exchanged vows and rings, and have consented to marriage in the presence of your family and friends. By the power vested in me by the State of Oregon, I now pronounce you [husband/wife and wife/husband, or married]. You may celebrate your commitment with a kiss.

I am honored to present Mr./Mrs. and Mr./Mrs. [Name].

Ceremony Sample #2

Welcome Statement

Welcome Family & Friends!

If you ask most couples that have a strong, abiding love what they most like about their partners, usually they will say that they don't have to pretend to be anything other than who they truly are in one another's company. They are able to express themselves without fear of being judged or rejected. There is room in the relationship for both of them to be unique individuals. They are free to surrender to the possibility of profound intimacy -- to be known and loved without condition.

Poetry/Reading

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B] would now like to invite [Spouse A]'s sister, [Name], to read "Why Marriage?" by Mari Nichols

Because to the depths of me, I long to love one person,
With all my heart, my soul, my mind, my body...
Because I need a forever friend to trust with the intimacies of me,
Who won't hold them against me,
Who loves me when I'm unlikable,
Who sees the small child in me, and
Who looks for the divine potential of me...
Because I need to cuddle in the warmth of the night
With someone who thanks God for me,
With someone I feel blessed to hold...
Because marriage means opportunity
To grow in love in friendship...
Because marriage is a discipline
To be added to a list of achievements...
Because marriages do not fail, people fail
When they enter into marriage
Expecting another to make them whole...
Because, knowing this,
I promise myself to take full responsibility
For my spiritual, mental and physical wholeness
I create me,
I take half of the responsibility for my marriage
Together we create our marriage...
Because with this understanding

Declaration of Support

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B], today we come together to celebrate the love you have found with each other. By being here with you, each of us is declaring our support for your decision to join together in marriage.

[To the guests] As families and friends, you form the community of support that surrounds [Spouse A] and [Spouse B]. Each of you, by your presence here today, is being called upon to uphold them in honoring and loving each other. Always stand beside them, never between them. Offer them your kindness and loving hearts, and honor this marriage into which they have come to be joined today.

Marriage Address

Marriage is a magnificent opportunity to share one's life with another and to enjoy the adventures inherent in this most intimate of human relationships. Today, we gather here to rejoice with, and for [Spouse A] and [Spouse B] as they embark on this voyage of discovery.

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B], from this day forward, [wedding date] will always have special meaning to you as the day you vowed to love and cherish each other in all ways, and for always. Each year when you come upon your anniversary, I encourage you to rededicate yourselves to the vows you make here today. Take stock of where you are in your marriage and how you are doing as marriage partners. Express your gratitude to each other for the ways that you have effectively loved and supported one another, and forgive yourselves and each other for any judgments that have come between you. Show each other that you can be trusted and counted on as a comfort when facing difficult times, and celebrate abundantly the success and joys life brings your way. Let your love lead the way and be more important than anything else. Then, your lives together will be filled with blessings and joy.

Vows

[Spouse A], please pass your flowers to [maid of honor].

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B], please face one another and join hands. [Spouse A], please repeat after me: "I, [Spouse A], take you, [Spouse B] to be my husband/wife, my lover, and my best friend. I am choosing to share with you all of life's blessings: the joys and sorrows, the successes and disappointments. [Spouse B], I will love you and cherish you always. I promise you this with my heart and soul for all the days of my life."

[Spouse B], please repeat after me: "I, [Spouse B], take you, [Spouse A] to be my husband/wife, my lover, and my best friend. I am choosing to share with you all of life's blessings: the joys and sorrows, the successes and disappointments. [Spouse A], I will love you and cherish you always. I promise you this with my heart and soul for all the days of my life."

Ring Ceremony

You have chosen to exchange rings as a symbol of your unity. [Spouse A], please repeat this promise to [Spouse B]: "[Spouse B]; when I met you, I realized how much we could share together. You have renewed my life. Today I join that life with yours. Take this ring as a symbol of our love." [Spouse A] places the ring on [Spouse B]'s finger.

[Spouse B], please repeat this promise to [Spouse A]: "[Spouse A]; when I met you, I realized how much we could share together. You have renewed my life. Today I join that life with yours. Take this ring as a symbol of our love." [Spouse B] places the ring on [Spouse A]'s finger.

Final Prayer/Blessing

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B], as the two of you come into this marriage, I would ask that you always remember to cherish each other as special and unique individuals. Respect the thoughts, ideas and suggestions of one another. Be able to forgive, do not hold grudges, and live each day so that you may share it together - as from this day forward you shall be each other's home, comfort and refuge. Your marriage shall be strengthened by your love and respect for each other. Just as two threads woven in opposite directions will form a most beautiful tapestry, so too can your two lives merge together to make a beautiful marriage.

It will take many things to make your relationship work. Above all, it will take love. This is the core of your marriage and why you are here today. It will take trust, so that you know in your hearts that you truly want the best for each other. It will take dedication, so that you stay open to one another, and to learn and grow together. It will take faith, so that you may go forward together without knowing exactly what the future brings. And it will take commitment; so that you may hold true to the journey you promise to share together.

Unity Ceremony: Breaking of the Glass

The breaking of the glass is a joyous ceremony. There are many different explanations for it, but today, the fragile glass suggests the frailty of human relationships. After [Spouse A/B] breaks the glass, I invite everyone to shout the Hebrew words "Mazel Tov," which mean "good luck" and "congratulations." The glass is broken to protect this marriage with the implied prayer: "May your bond of love be as difficult to break, as it would be to put together the pieces of this glass."

[[Spouse A/B] breaks the glass and everyone yells "Mazel Tov!"]

Pronouncement

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B], you have promised your love for each other by the exchange of your vows, by the joining of your hands, and by the giving and the receiving of your rings. I now declare you to be [husband/wife and husband/wife, or married].

It is my privilege to present to you Mr./Mrs. and Mr./Mrs. [Name]

Ceremony Sample #3

Invocation/Opening Prayer

Let us come into the quiet of prayer.

Beloved and eternal God, we are here to celebrate the marriage of [Spouse A] and [Spouse B]. We pray that they may each find a depth of kindness, caring, and joy through this union that will serve as a safe haven for them as they journey through their lives together. We also pray that together they may build a life that brings them balance, health, and great learning as they venture through the trials and triumphs to come. May they strengthen their bond of love and find a gentle peacefulness in being together, hand and hand. Amen.

Welcome Statement

Friends and relatives, we have come here today at the invitation of [Spouse A] and [Spouse B] to share in the joy of their wedding. This outward celebration that we shall see and hear is an expression of the inner love and devotion they have in their hearts toward one another.

Always remember, [Spouse A] and [Spouse B], that your marriage must stand, not by the authority of the state, but rather by the strength and power of the faith and love you have in, and for one another.

Remembrances and Acknowledgments

At this time, we would like to honor the memory of [Spouse A]'s [maternal grandparents], and [Spouse B]'s [father], who are here today in our hearts, and whose love surrounds us today, and every day.

Poetry/Reading

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B] would now like to invite [Spouse B]'s brother, [Name], to read An Apache Blessing.

Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be shelter for the other.

Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be warmth to the other.

Now there will be no loneliness, for each of you will be companion to the other.

Now you are two persons, but there is only one life before you.

May beauty surround you both in the journey ahead and through all the years.

May happiness be your companion and your days together be good and long upon the earth.

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, difficulties 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 life, 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.

Declaration of Support

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B] would like to acknowledge their parents, whose love, support, and nurturing are such an essential part of who they are today. They thank you for being their first teachers on the power and possibilities of love. May you take pride in the fact that the seeds of love that you have planted in [Spouse A] and [Spouse B] will flourish in the formation of this new family today. Let us all remember, today and always, that there is nothing more important than loving one another.

Marriage Address

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B], demonstrate your love for yourselves and for each other through kindness and understanding. Stretch your love large enough to embrace whatever life brings to you. Let it fill you, surround you, comfort, and protect you. Let your hearts be truly safe at home with each other. Be generous in expressing your love. Be open to receive love from each other. Be flexible and forgiving with each other. Let your relationship be a catalyst that transforms you into the expression of your highest selves.

The quality of your marriage is up to you. Both of you as individuals, and together as a couple, will choose what kind of marriage you will create, promote, and allow through your thoughts, feelings, and actions each day. May you always honor the sanctity of your union and thus be blessed beyond your wildest dreams.

Your Story

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B] met nearly 12 years ago at the grand opening of Julie's, a bar in New York City. They had VIP passes, but as [Spouse A] put it, apparently so did everyone else. [Spouse B] remembers that it was so crowded, they were wedged together and first introduced themselves more out of necessity. But, soon after that introduction, [Spouse A] and [Spouse B] learned that they had mutual friends, and, over the next two years began what [Spouse A] describes as a wonderful friendship.

In time, that friendship grew to become something more, and one night, [Spouse B] invited [Spouse A] to join her and her colleagues for dinner at Peter's Restaurant. When [Spouse B] returned from a trip to the restroom, she found [Spouse A] and her friends dancing up a storm to Barry White. And it was at that point that [Spouse B] smiled and knew.

Now, [Spouse B] originally planned to propose to [Spouse A] on a pier near Hampton Bays, but when they found themselves surrounded by a family of nearly 20 out fishing, [Spouse B] decided to instead propose on the deck of her sister's house. And, getting down on one knee, she reaffirmed her love for [Spouse A] and said, "I would be honored if you would officially share the rest of your life with me."

When [Spouse B] was asked what her hopes for the future are, she answered “Life with [Spouse A]!” And when [Spouse A] was asked the same question, she answered, “For [Spouse B] to grow old with me; as the best is yet to be.”

[Spouse B], [Spouse A] loves your life together, and she loves that you love her, because she knows that’s not always easy. She loves that family is important to you. She loves that you know what she is thinking, or trying to say, without [Spouse A] having to say it. She loves that you know when she’s having a conversation with herself, and you ask “How’s that going?” And she loves that you have chosen her as a partner to go through life with.

In you [Spouse A], [Spouse B] has found the kindest person she has ever met, who gives of herself to everyone, including [Spouse B], and gains pure joy in knowing that she has made someone smile, or has made something a little easier on someone, or has given someone something seemingly trivial, yet so very thoughtful.

To [Spouse B], marriage is the sharing of life’s journey as one soul. And though these two have been committed to each other since long before today, they are so excited to begin their journey as a married couple. It is so important to [Spouse B] and [Spouse A] that you are all here today to share in their joy. You have all been [Spouse B]’s and [Spouse A]’s supporters, confidants, and protectors – you have loved them for who they each are individually, and who they are together as a couple. And for that, they wish to thank you.

Vows

Now, [Spouse B], will you please pass your flowers to your [sister]. [Spouse A] and [Spouse B], please join hands.

Do you, [Spouse A], take [Spouse B], to be your wife/husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do you part?

[Spouse A]: “I do.”

Do you, [Spouse B], take [Spouse A], to be your wife/husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do you part?

[Spouse B]: “I do.”

Ring Ceremony

Having such love in your hearts for one another, you two have chosen to exchange rings as a sign of the promises you are making to one another today. As you wear these rings, whether you are together or apart, for even just a moment, may these rings be a constant reminder of your love for one another.

[Spouse B], please take the ring and place it upon the third finger of [Spouse A]'s left hand, and holding his/her hand in yours, please repeat this promise to [Spouse A], saying after me: "With this ring, I seal my promise to be your faithful and loving husband/wife."

[To Witness B] Do you have [Spouse B]'s ring? Please give [Spouse B]'s ring to [Spouse A].

[Spouse A], please take the ring and place it upon the third finger of [Spouse B]'s left hand, and holding his/her hand in yours please repeat this promise to [Spouse B], saying after me: "With this ring, I seal my promise, to be your faithful and loving husband/wife."

Final Prayer/Blessing

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B], on behalf of your loved ones who are here today, I would like to mention some of the things we wish for you: First, we wish for you a love that is rich, deep, and powerful enough to inspire others and to support you both in bringing forth the best that is within you. May you lavishly love one another and love being loved by one another today, tomorrow, and always. Second, we wish for you the kind of home that will be a sanctuary for you both, a place of peace, freedom, vitality, growth, and humor. And in this home, we hope that you are blessed with a healthy and happy family. Finally, we wish that at the end of your lives, you will be able to look back and smile upon the life that you have shared together -- pleased, satisfied, and fulfilled beyond your wildest dreams.

Pronouncement

[Spouse A] and [Spouse B], you have come here today before us, and before God, and have expressed your desire to become husband/wife and husband/wife. You have shown your love and affection by joining hands, and have made promises of faith and devotion, each to the other, and have sealed these promises by the giving and the receiving of your rings.

It is, therefore, my privilege, by the authority granted to me by the State of Oregon, to pronounce that you are [husband/wife and husband/wife, or married]. [Spouse A], you may kiss your husband/wife, and [Spouse B], you may kiss your husband/wife.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my privilege to introduce to you, for the first time as a married couple, [Spouse A] and [Spouse B].