

Readings for Wedding Ceremonies

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Selected Bible Passages

Genesis 1:26-28

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Genesis 2:7-10, 15-24

⁷ then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. ⁸ And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers.

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” ¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” ¹⁹ Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”

Proverbs 3:3-6

³ Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you;
bind them around your neck;
write them on the tablet of your heart.

⁴ So you will find favor and good success
in the sight of God and man.

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.

⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.

Song of Solomon 2:10-14

¹⁰ My beloved speaks and says to me:

“Arise, my love, my beautiful one,
and come away,

¹¹ for behold, the winter is past;
the rain is over and gone.

¹² The flowers appear on the earth,
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.

¹³ The fig tree ripens its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.

Arise, my love, my beautiful one,
and come away.

¹⁴ O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the crannies of the cliff,

let me see your face,
let me hear your voice,

for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely.

Song of Solomon 8:6-7

⁶ Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm,
for love is strong as death,
jealousy is fierce as the grave.

Its flashes are flashes of fire,
the very flame of the Lord.

⁷ Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.

If a man offered for love
all the wealth of his house,
he would be utterly despised.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor:

¹⁰ If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.

But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.

¹¹ Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? ¹² Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Matthew 7:24-27

²⁴ “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

Matthew 19:4-6

⁴ He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Matthew 22:35-40

³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Mark 10:6-9

⁶ But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ⁷ ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife,’ ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. ³ When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” ⁴ And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” ⁵ His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

⁶ Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. ⁹ When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” ¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

John 15:9-17

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. ¹² “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants,^[a] for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

Romans 12:9-18

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

1 Corinthians 13

The Whole Chapter (English Standard Version)

13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Excerpts and Other Translations

The Message

⁴ Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, Doesn't have a swelled head, ⁵ Doesn't force itself on others, Isn't always "me first," Doesn't fly off the handle, Doesn't keep score of the sins of others, ⁶ Doesn't revel when others grovel, Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, ⁷ Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end.

¹³ But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.

New Century Version

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. ⁵ Love is not rude, is not selfish, and does not get upset with others. Love does not count up wrongs that have been done. ⁶ Love is not happy

with evil but is happy with the truth. 7 Love patiently accepts all things. It always trusts, always hopes, and always remains strong.

13 So these three things continue forever: faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love.

New Living Translation

4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5 or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. 6 It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

13 There are three things that will endure – faith, hope, and love – and the greatest of these is love.

2 Corinthians 5:14-17

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. ¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Philippians 2:1-4

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Philippians 4:4-9

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have

learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Colossians 3: 12-17

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

1 John 4:7-16

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

Revelation 19:5-9

⁵ And from the throne came a voice saying,

“Praise our God,
all you his servants,
you who fear him,
small and great.”

⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

“Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;
⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure”—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹ And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”

Traditional Readings

“If” by Larry S Chengges

If you can always be as close
And as happy as today
Yet be secure enough to grow
And change along the way
If you can keep for you alone
Your love as man and wife
Yet find the time to share your joy
With others in your life
If you can be as one
And walk through marriage hand in hand,
Yet still support the goals and dreams
That each of you had planned
If you can dare to always go
Your separate ways together
Then all the wonder of today
Will stay with you forever.

“Blessing of the Hands” revised by Rev. Daniel L. Harris

(best to be read just before the exchange of rings)

“These are the hands of your best friend, young and strong and full of love for you, that are holding yours on your wedding day, as you promise to love each other today, tomorrow, and forever. These are the hands that will work alongside yours, as together you build your future. These are the hands that will passionately love you and cherish you through the years, and with the slightest touch, will comfort you like no other. These are the hands that will hold you when fear or grief fills your mind. These are the hands that will countless times wipe the tears from your

eyes; tears of sorrow, and as in today, tears of joy. These are the hands that will tenderly hold your children, the hands that will help you to hold your family as one. These are the hands that will give you strength when you need it. And lastly, these are the hands that even when wrinkled and aged, will still be reaching for yours, still giving you the same unspoken tenderness with just a touch.”

“Time In a Bottle” by Jim Croce

“If I could save time in a bottle, the first thing that I'd like to do, is to save every day ‘till eternity passes away, just to spend them with you. If I could make days last forever; if words could make wishes come true; I'd save every day like a treasure and then, again, I would spend them with you. If I had a box just for wishes, and dreams that had never come true; the box would be empty, except for the memory of how they were answered by you. But there never seems to be enough time to do the things you want to do, once you find them. I've looked around enough to know that you're the one I want to go through time with.”

“A Gift from the Sea” by Anne Morrow Lindbergh

One recognizes the truth of Saint Exupery's line: Love does not consist in gazing at each other. But in looking outward together in the same direction. For in fact, man and woman are not only looking outward in the same direction, they are working outward. Here one forms ties, roots, a firm base... Here one makes oneself part of the community of men, of human society. Here the bonds of marriage are formed. For marriage, which is always spoken of as a bond, becomes actually, in this stage, many bonds, many strands, of different texture and strength, making up a web that is taut and firm. The web is fashioned of love. Yes, but many kinds of love: romantic love first, then a slow-growing devotion and, playing through these, a constantly rippling companionship. It is made of loyalties, and interdependencies, and shared experiences. It is woven of memories of meetings and conflicts; of triumphs and disappointments. It is a web of communication, a common language, and the acceptance of lack of language too, a knowledge of likes and dislikes, of habits and reactions, both physical and mental. It is a web of instincts and intuitions, and known and unknown exchanges. The web of marriage is made by propinquity, in the day to day living side by side, looking outward and working outward in the same direction. It is woven in space and in time of the substance of life itself.

“I Love You” by Roy Croft

“I love you, not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am 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 the 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, weak things that you can’t help dimly seeing there, and for drawing out, into the light, all the beautiful belongings that no one else had looked quite far enough to find. I love you, because you are helping me to make of the lumber of my life, not a tavern, but a temple. Out of the works of my every day, not a reproach, but a song. I love you, because you have done more than any creed could have done to make me good, and more than any fate could have done to make me happy. You have done it without a touch, without a word, without a sign. You have done it by being yourself. Perhaps that is what being a friend means, after all.”

An Excerpt From “The Alchemist” by Paulo Coelho

When he looked into her dark eyes, and saw that her lips were poised between a laugh and silence, he learned the most important part of the language that all the world spoke – the language that everyone on earth was capable of understanding in their heart. It was love. Something older than humanity, more ancient than the desert. Something that exerted the same force whenever two pairs of eyes met, as theirs had here...

It was the pure Language of the World. It required no explanation, just as the universe needs none as it travels through endless time. What the boy felt at that moment was that he was in the presence of the only woman in his life, and that, with no need for words, she recognized the same thing. He was more certain of it than of anything in the world.

...When two such people encounter each other, and their eyes meet, the past and the future become unimportant. There is only that moment, and the incredible certainty that everything under the sun had been written by one hand only. It is the hand that evokes love, and creates a twin soul for every person in the world. Without such love, one’s dreams would have no meaning.

“Benediction of the Apaches”

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.
Now you are two bodies,
But there is only one Life before you.
Go now to your dwelling place,
To enter into the days of your togetherness.
And may your days be good and long upon the earth"

Excerpt From "The Art of a Good Marriage" by Wilferd Arlan Peterson

"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 having a mutual sense of values, and common objectives.
It is standing together and facing the world.
It is forming a circle 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 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."

"Why Marriage" by Dena Acolatse

"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, the possibilities are limitless."

“Foundations Of Marriage” by Regina Hill

"Love, trust, and forgiveness are the foundations of marriage. In marriage, many days will bring happiness, while other days may be sad. But together, two hearts can overcome everything... In marriage, all of the moments won't be exciting or romantic, and sometimes worries and anxiety will be overwhelming. But together, two hearts that accept will find comfort together. Recollections of past joys, pains, and shared feelings will be the glue that holds everything together during even the worst and most insecure moments. Reaching out to each other as a friend, and becoming the confidant and companion that the other one needs, is the true magic and beauty of any two people together. It's inspiring in each other a dream or a feeling, and having faith in each other and not giving up... even when all the odds say to quit. It's allowing each other to be vulnerable, to be himself or herself, even when the opinions or thoughts aren't in total agreement or exactly what you'd like them to be. It's getting involved and showing interest in each other, really listening and being available, the way any best friend should be. Exactly three things need to be remembered in a marriage if it is to be a mutual bond of sharing, caring, and loving throughout life: love, trust, and forgiveness."

Traditional Irish Blessing

May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.

May God be with you and bless you;
May you see your children's children.
May you be poor in misfortune,
Rich in blessings,
May you know nothing but happiness
From this day forward.

May the road rise to meet you
May the wind be always at your back
May the warm rays of sun fall upon your home
And may the hand of a friend always be near.

May green be the grass you walk on,
May blue be the skies above you,
May pure be the joys that surround you,
May true be the hearts that love you.

“Blessing For a Marriage” by James Dillet Freeman

“May your marriage bring you all the exquisite excitements a marriage should bring, and may life grant you also 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 mountain 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 one another, 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 that 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 loving one another.”

“Marriage Joins Two People in the Circle of Its Love” by Edmund O’Neill

“Marriage is a commitment to life, to the best that two people can find and bring out in each other. It offers opportunities for sharing and growth that no other human relationship can equal; a 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. 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 love through the seasons of life. When two people pledge to love and care for each other in marriage, they create a spirit unique to 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, which takes a lifetime to fulfill.”

“Love Is Friendship Caught Fire” by Laura Hendricks

"Love is friendship caught fire; it is quiet, mutual confidence, sharing and forgiving. It is loyalty through good and bad times. It settles for less than perfection, and makes allowances for human weaknesses. Love is content with the present, hopes for the future, and does not brood over the past. It is the day-in and day-out chronicles of irritations, problems, compromises, small disappointments, big victories, and working toward common goals. If you have love in your life, it can make up for a great many things you lack. If you do not have it, no matter what else there is, it is not enough."

“A History of Love” by Diane Ackerman

“Love. What a small word we use for an idea so immense and powerful. It has altered the flow of history, calmed monsters, kindled works of art, cheered the forlorn, turned tough guys to mush, consoled the enslaved, driven strong women mad, glorified the humble, fueled national scandals, bankrupted robber barons, and made mincemeat of kings. How can love’s spaciousness be conveyed in the narrow confines of one syllable? Love is an ancient delirium, a desire older than civilization, with taproots spreading into deep and mysterious days. The heart is a living museum. In each of its galleries, no matter how narrow or dimly lit, preserved forever like wondrous diatoms, are our moments of loving, and being loved.”

"On Love" by Thomas a Kempis

“Love is a mighty power, a great and complete good. Love alone lightens every burden, and makes rough places smooth. It bears every hardship as though it were nothing, and renders all bitterness sweet and acceptable. Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven or earth; for love is born of God. Love flies, runs and leaps for joy. It is free and unrestrained. Love knows no limits, but ardently transcends all bounds. Love feels no burden, takes no account of toil, attempts things beyond its strength. Love sees nothing as impossible, for it feels able to achieve all things. It is strange and effective, while those who lack love faint and fail. Love is not fickle and sentimental, nor is it intent on vanities. Like a living flame and a burning torch, it surges upward and surely surmounts every obstacle.”

From “The Irrational Season” by Madeleine L'Engle

"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 itself is 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."

Excerpts from "The Prophet" by Khalil Gibran

"On Love"

"Then said the student Almitra, Speak to us of love. And he raised his head and looked upon the people, and there fell a stillness upon them. And with a great voice he said: When love beckons to you, follow him, though his ways are hard and steep. And when his wings enfold you yield to him, though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you. And when he speaks to you believe in him, though his voice may shatter your dreams as the north wind lays waste the garden. For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning. Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your tenderest branches that quiver in the sun, so shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their clinging to the earth."

"On Marriage"

"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. 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."

"On Children" by Khalil Gibran

"And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said, 'Speak to us of Children.' And he said, 'Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through

you, but not from you. And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you. You may give them your love, but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies, but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you. For life goes not backward, nor tarries with yesterday. You are the bows from which your children, as living arrows, are sent forth. The Archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far. Let your bending in the Archer's hand be for gladness, for even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow that is stable."

"You Were Born Together" by Khalil Gibran

"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 spades 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 the lute are alone though they quiver with the same music. Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping. For only the land 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 Invitation" by Oriah Mountain Dreamer

"It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for, and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing. It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dreams, for the adventure of being alive. It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals, or have become shriveled and closed from fear of further pain. I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide or fade it or fix it. I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own; if you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, be realistic, or to remember the limitations of being a human. It doesn't interest me if the story you're telling me is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself; if you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul. I

want to know if you can be faithful and therefore be trustworthy. I want to know if you can see the beauty even when it is not pretty everyday, and if you can source your life from its presence. I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, and still stand on the edge of a lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, "Yes!" It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up after the night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone, and do what needs to be done for the children. It doesn't interest me who you are, or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me and not shrink back. It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied. I want to know what sustains you from the inside when all else falls away. I want to know if you can be alone with yourself, and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments."

“Put Another Log on The Fire,” by Shel Silverstein

"Put another log on the fire.
Cook me up some bacon and some beans.
And go out to the car and change the tire.
Wash my socks and sew my old blue jeans.
Come on, baby, you can fill my pipe
And then go fetch my slippers.
And boil me up another pot of tea.
Then put another log on the fire babe,
And come & tell me why you're leaving me.

Now don't I let you wash the car on Sunday?
And don't I warn you when you're gettin' fat?
Ain't I a-gonna take you fishin' with me someday?
Well, a man can't love a woman more than that.
And ain't I always nice to your kid sister?
Don't I take her driving every night?
So, sit here at my feet cuz I like you when you're sweet,
And you know it ain't feminine to fight.

So, put another log on the fire.
Cook me up some bacon and some beans.
And go out to the car and change the tire.
Wash my socks and sew my old blue jeans.
Come on, baby, you can fill my pipe
And then go fetch my slippers.
And boil me up another pot of tea.
Then put another log on the fire babe,
And come & tell me why you're leaving me."

From "The Hungering Dark" by Frederick Buechner

"Matrimony is called holy, because this brave and fateful promise of a man and a woman, to love and honor and serve each other through thick and thin, looks beyond itself to more fateful promises still, and speaks mightily of what human life at its most human and most alive and most holy must always be. Every wedding is a dream, and every word that is spoken there means more than it says, and every gesture - the clasping of hands, the giving of rings - is rich with mystery. And so it [is that] we hope with every bride and groom, that the love they bear one another, and the joy they take in one another, may help them grow in love for this whole world where their final joy lies."

"I Am Love"

"Some say I can fly on the wind, yet I haven't any wings. Some have found me floating on the open sea, yet I cannot swim. Some have felt my warmth on cold nights, yet I have no flame. And though you cannot see me, I lay between two lovers at the hearth of fireplaces. I am the twinkle in your child's eyes. I am hidden in the lines of your mother's face. I am your father's shield as he guards your home. And yet... Some say I am stronger than steel, yet I am as fragile as a tear. Some have never searched for me, yet I am around them always. Some say I die with loss, yet I am endless. And though you cannot hear me, I dance on the laughter of children. I am woven into the whispers of passion. I am in the blessings of Grandmothers. I embrace the cries of newborn babies. And yet... Some say I am a flower, yet I am also the seed. Some have little faith in me, yet I will always believe in them. Some say I cannot cure the ill, yet I nourish the soul. And though you cannot touch me, I am the gentle hand of the kind. I am the fingertips that caress your cheek at night. I am the hug of a child. I am love."

"Looking For Your Face" by Rumi

"From the beginning of my life I have been looking for your face, but today I have seen it. Today I have seen the charm, the beauty, the unfathomable grace of the face that I was looking for. Today I have found you, and those who laughed and scorned me yesterday are sorry that they were not looking as I did. I am bewildered by the magnificence of your beauty, and wish to see you with a hundred eyes. My heart has burned with passion and has searched forever for this wondrous beauty that I now behold. I am ashamed to call this love human, and afraid of

God to call it divine. Your fragrant breath, like the morning breeze, has come to the stillness of the garden. You have breathed new life into me. I have become your sunshine, and also your shadow. My soul is screaming in ecstasy. Every fiber of my being is in love with you. Your effulgence has lit a fire in my heart, and you have made radiant for me the earth and sky. My arrow of love has arrived at the target. I am in the house of mercy, and my heart is a place of prayer.”

"Friendship" by 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) and (Groom) 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.”

“The Magic of Love,” by Helen Steiner Rice

“Love is like magic, and it always will be,
For love still remains life's sweet mystery.
Love works in ways that are wondrous and strange,
And there's nothing in life that love cannot change!
Love can transform the most commonplace
Into beauty and splendor and sweetness and grace.
Love is unselfish, understanding and kind,
For it sees with its heart, and not with its mind.
Love is the answer that everyone seeks;
Love is the language that every heart speaks.
Love can't be bought, it is priceless and free.
Love, like pure magic, is life's sweet mystery!!”

“Sonnet XLIII,” from “Sonnets from the Portuguese,” by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

"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."

"Sooner or Later" (anonymous)

"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 favorite 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."

"Hug O' War" by Shel Silverstein

"I will not play at tug o' war. I'd rather play at hug o' war, where everyone hugs instead of tugs, where everyone giggles, and rolls on the rug, where everyone kisses, and everyone grins, and everyone cuddles, and everyone wins."

"Sonnet 17" by Pablo Neruda

"I don't love you as if you were the salt-rose, topaz or arrow of carnations that propagate fire: I love you as certain dark things are loved, secretly, between the shadow and the soul. I love you as the plant that doesn't bloom, and carries hidden within itself the light of those flowers, and thanks to your love, darkly in my body lives the dense fragrance that rises from the earth. I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where, I love you simply, without problems or pride: I love you in this way because I know no other way of loving but this, in which there is no I or you; so intimate that your hand upon my chest is my hand, so intimate that when I fall asleep it is your eyes that close."

"The Promise" by Heather Berry

"Within this blessed union of souls, where two hearts intertwine to become one, there lies a promise. Perfectly born, divinely created, and intimately shared, it is a place where the hope and majesty of beginnings

reside. Where all things are made possible by the astounding love shared by two spirits. As you hold each other's hands in this promise, and eagerly look into the future in each other's eyes, may your unconditional love and devotion take you to places where you've both only dreamed. Where you'll dwell for a lifetime of happiness, sheltered in the warmth of each other's arms."

"Desiderata" by Max Erhmann (1927)

"Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant, they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter; for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let not this blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is as perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore, be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams; it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy."

Excerpt from "Any Husband or Wife" by Carole Haynes

"Let us be guests in one another's house, with a deferential "No" and courteous "Yes." Let us take care to hide our foolish moods behind a certain show of cheerfulness. Let us avoid all sullen silences. We should find fresh and sprightly things to say. I must be fearful lest you find me dull, and you must dread to bore me any way. Let us knock gently at each other's heart, glad of a chance to look within—and yet let us remember that to force one's way is the unpardoned breach of etiquette. So we shall be host and hostess, until all need for entertainment ends.

We shall be lovers when the last door shuts. But what is better still, we shall be friends."

"Sonnet 18" by William Shakespeare

"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou own'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade
Which in eternal lines to time thou grow'st
So long as men can breathe and eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee."

"Sonnet 116" by 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.
Oh no, it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering barque
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 prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved."

"The Merchant of Venice," Act 4, Scene 1 (spoken by Portia), by William Shakespeare

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;

His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, [Jew,]
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That, in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy."

From "The Hymn of the Universe" by Teilhard de Chardin

"Only love can bring individual beings to their perfect completion, as individuals, by uniting them one with another, because only love takes possession of them and unites them by what lies deepest within them. This is simply a fact of our everyday experience. For indeed at what moment do lovers come into the most complete possession of themselves if not when they say that they are lost in one another? And is not love all the time achieving - in couples, in teams, all around us - the magical and reputedly contradictory feat of personalizing through totalizing? And why should not what is thus daily achieved on a small scale be repeated one day on world-wide dimensions?

Humanity, the spirit of the earth, the synthesis of individuals and peoples, the paradoxical conciliation of the element with the whole, of the one with the many: all these are regarded as utopian fantasies, yet they are biologically necessary; and if we would see them made flesh in the world what more need we do than imagine our power to love growing and broadening, till it can embrace the totality of human beings and of the earth?"

I Will Be Here by Steven Curtis Chapman

Tomorrow morning, if you wake up
And the sun Does not appear
I will be here
If in the dark, we lose sight of love
Hold my hand and have no fear
Because I will be here
I will be here when you feel like being quiet
When you need to speak your mind
I will listen
And I will be here when the laughter turns to crying

Through the winning, losing, and trying
We'll be together, because I will be here
Tomorrow morning, if you wake up
And the future is unclear
I will be here
As sure as seasons are made for change
Our lifetimes are made for years
So, I will be here
I will be here so you can cry on my shoulder
When the mirror tells us we're older
I will hold you
And I will be here to watch you grow in beauty
And tell you all the things you are to me, I will be here
I will be true to the promise I have made
To you and to the one who gave you to me
I will be here
And just as sure as seasons are made for change
Our lifetimes are made for years
So, I will be here
We'll be together, I will be here