



Welcome and Prayer

On behalf of _____ and _____, it is my privilege to say a personal word of greeting and welcome. You are special in their hearts and in their lives, and they are honored that you have made the effort to be here and to share with them this joyous occasion.

Please join me in prayer: May our heavenly Father look down upon this event with his favor. May the Lord, Jesus Christ, be present and add his blessing. May the Holy Spirit attend and seal these vows in love. Amen.

This is one of the most joyous and significant days of your lives. You have had the excitement of dating, falling in love with one another, and being engaged. Now the day you have planned for, dreamed about and worked toward has finally arrived – YOUR WEDDING DAY. This day did not happen by chance. Luck had nothing to do with it. God directed you to the place and time in which you first met. To God be the glory and praise.

As there are two Testaments, the old and the new, bound as one volume making One book, the Holy Bible, so there are two lives that before today have been separate, but by the grace and sovereign will of God, they meet here to merge. **Genesis 2:24 says, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."**

May I ask, who brings this woman to be joined to this man in holy matrimony?

Response from father: **Her mother and I do.** *Bride kisses father and groom steps forward and brings his bride to the platform.*

Scriptural Message

It has been a great pleasure getting to know _____ and _____.

They have spent many moments together considering how to build their marriage on the foundation of God's Word. So what does God want marriage to be? In marriage, a man and a woman make a covenant to live together in a lifelong, exclusive relationship of love and faithfulness. We see in Genesis, God intended that one man and one woman become one flesh for one lifetime.

The Bible shows us that God instituted marriage when Eve was presented to Adam. It tells us that in marriage a man and a woman begin a new life together – a life even closer than a relationship between parents and children. But the verse doesn't present the whole picture of the purpose of marriage.

It is in the New Testament, God reveals the ultimate purpose for marriage that had been planned prior to the beginning of time. In Ephesians 5 Paul explains that glorious passage from Genesis.

31"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church."

Paul tells us there was a hidden truth in that verse in Genesis. He tells us what this profound truth is: **Marriage between a man and a woman is meant to reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church.**

That relationship between Christ and the Church is certainly profound and amazing. Christ came to earth as a man, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross for our sins, taking the punishment we so richly deserved, he is now in heaven interceding for us and will one day return to take us as his own. In the meantime the Church depends on him, serves him, and seeks to glorify him in all of life. So, although this truth about your marriage is something you can understand, it still ought to be profoundly mysterious and amazing, for it makes your marriage as holy a human relationship as one can imagine.

Many marriages struggle because they do not see their marriage as profound, mysterious or amazing. They only see themselves as two married people. It is all too common to have a marriage centered on

you, your spouse, your kids, your goals or anything else that people can try to live for that God did not intend.

As Christians, we have an incredible privilege of knowing the ultimate purpose for marriage. We can see that the purpose of marriage goes beyond personal fulfillment. The biblical purpose of marriage is not man-centered. It is God-centered. Your marriage is meant to point to the truth of the crucified and risen Savior who will return for his Bride, the church.

Please don't think of this as merely a helpful illustration or an interesting perspective. It's much more than that. This is the divine purpose of your marriage.

_____, for you this means that you are called to demonstrate the selfless love, care, and sacrifice that Jesus shows toward the church in how you relate to _____.

_____, this means that you are called to demonstrate the respect, submission, and devotion that the church shows toward Jesus in how you relate to _____.

That's the purpose of your marriage. By the grace of God, any Christian marriage can be transformed into a genuine reflection of Christ and the Church. This grace is obtained through your humbling of yourself and trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ. God is eager to pour out his grace to those who humbly acknowledge their need for his help. Couples who build their marriage on the foundation of faith in Christ can trust that He will lead them in their marriage. I encourage you to love God with your whole heart, and to love each other as God has commanded.

Explanation of Vows

_____ and _____, you are about to pledge the most sacred vows that one person makes with another. This ceremony is no contract developed between two persons, which could be considered conditional. This is a COVENANT, which is binding between you, your future mate and your God. This COVENANT is not conditional.

Therefore, as you stand before God and these witnesses, it is important that you give careful consideration to that which you are promising. You are accountable to your precious mate and to God for that which you pledge.

One of the promises is to honor your mate. This biblical word presents the idea of respect, esteem, and high regard. As you make your vows to each other, you are pledging to acknowledge and show respect for one another. Romans 12:10 says, "love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor." If you truly love each other, you will desire to honor each other.

Another promise is to love your mate. For two people like you, who are so deeply in love, these promises sound easy enough to keep. However, the only hope for your marriage is to love one another with the love that God gives his children – self-sacrificing, ever-enduring love, no matter what the circumstances.

This kind of love is perfectly displayed by our Lord Jesus Christ and best described in this passage:

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NIV) - ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails...

This love is not merely an emotion – it's a decision. You are choosing to love your mate, no matter what. You are not simply to tell one another that you love each other – you are to live it out. First John tells us, "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."

Another promise is to cherish your mate. You must learn to treat your mate as a special gift from God. _____ and _____, you must learn to value your relationship above every other earthly relationship. No other relationship does the Bible describe as a "one-flesh" union. You must learn to put one another first, before yourself, before your parents, before your friends, before your job,

before your leisure activities, before your caring for your own exhaustion and needs at the end of a hard day. You must serve each other as Christ served. Then and only then will you truly fulfill your vow "to cherish."

Exchange of Vows

_____ and _____, you have listened to the meaning of these vows you are about to make. These vows are as binding in adversity as they are in prosperity. They should be broken only by death. If you are prepared to make such a serious commitment, will you now turn, face one another, and join hands.

_____, *do you take _____, to be your wedded wife, to live together in the holy state of matrimony? Do you promise before God and these witnesses gathered today to honor her, to love her and to cherish her, forsaking all others, keeping yourself for her so long as you both shall live? [I DO]*

_____, *do you take _____, to be your wedded husband, to live together in the holy state of matrimony? Do you promise before God and these witnesses gathered today to honor him, to love him and to cherish him, forsaking all others, keeping yourself for him so long as you both shall live? [I DO]*

Exchange of Rings

You will now seal your vows by the giving and receiving of rings. In all ages and among all peoples, the ring has been a symbol of that which is measureless: and thus, in this holy hour, a symbol of your measureless and boundless devotion. It is a circle; it has neither beginning nor ending; so down to old age and to death and forever you are to keep this vow without violation, and the sign and the seal thereof will be this ring.

As a ceaseless reminder of this sacred committal, _____, place this ring on _____'s finger and repeat after me:

"I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, for richer, for poorer, for better, for worse, in sickness and in health, to protect you, to cleave to you and you only, with all my love and all my devotion, all my worldly goods with you I share, till death do us part, according to God's Holy

Ordinance, I pledge you my love, from this day forward, we shall be one."

_____, place this ring on _____'s finger and repeat after me:

"I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold, for richer, for poorer, for better, for worse, in sickness and in health, to submit to you, to cleave to you and you only, with all my love and all my devotion, till death do us part, according to God's Holy Ordinance, I pledge you my love, from this day forward, we shall be one."

The two of you doubtless will on occasion be separated from each other by time and/or distance. Those rings are going to be present with you always. May they serve as a simple, but significant reminder of the reality that the love which you two have for each other is indeed ever present with you.

Lighting of Unity Candle

Presentation of the Bride and Groom

_____ and _____, the rings have been exchanged. You have repeated your vows to each other. By doing so you have made your life-long commitments to a Christian marriage and home. **Matthew 19:5-6 says, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."** Let all persons present this day take care in the sight of God that this union shall ever remain sacred. So, as the two of you leave this altar to walk life's path together, may you do so, not as two, but as one, in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now with the blessings of your families, by the power vested in me by God in Heaven and the laws of the sovereign state of North Carolina, as a minister of the Gospel, in the presence of God and these witnesses, I delight to pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss the bride!!!!

[You turn now and face the crowd] ...Friends and family of the bride and groom, I have the happy privilege of introducing for the first time,

Mr and Mrs. _____.