

## A Contemporary Marriage Service

### Statement of Purpose

Friends, we have come today at the invitation of B \_\_\_\_\_ and G \_\_\_\_\_ to share in the joy of their wedding. This outward celebration we shall see and hear is an expression of the inner love and devotion they have in their hearts.

Jesus Christ reminds us that at the beginning the Creator made us male and female, and said, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh."

God loved us, and created us to love others. Our lives find completion only as we love and are loved in return. Together, we can become what we could never be separately. Marriage is of God.

G \_\_\_\_\_ and B \_\_\_\_\_ come today desiring to be united in this sacred relationship.

*Or this.*

God is the author of love. The Bible teaches that God is love, and that love comes from God. From beginning to end, the Bible is a love story. There we read of God's love for His people, of the love that sent Christ to the cross, of redeeming love for the sinner, of abiding love for the redeemed.

We read also of the love of man and woman: of Jacob's love for Rachel, of Mary pledged to Joseph, of the Shulamite and her beloved.

In the beginning, when the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and placed him in the Garden of Eden, Adam was lonely. So the Lord God made a companion and helper for him. When Adam saw Eve, he was no longer lonely.

God can lead us to our life's companion. Abraham prayed that God would find a wife for his son, Isaac, and God answered that prayer. When Abraham's servant found Rebekah, the servant bowed and worshiped, praising God.

Then he brought her to his master's son. The Scripture says, Isaac loved her, and he was comforted.

God has guided G \_\_\_\_\_ and B \_\_\_\_\_ to this moment, has blessed their love and brought them together. Let us again go to Him in prayer.

O God, You have made us male and female, and given us the desire to leave father and mother and be united to the one we love and become one flesh. We thank You for the love G \_\_\_\_\_ and B \_\_\_\_\_ have for You. We believe that You have led them to this day, and we ask Your blessing as they exchange their vows and seal their promises.

As they become husband and wife, may they do so not only in our presence, but in Yours, with Your grace surrounding them and Your love within their hearts. We pray through Christ, amen.

### Declaration of Intent

TO GROOM: G \_\_\_\_\_, do you now leave your father and mother to establish your own home with B \_\_\_\_\_ as her husband, to receive her as your wife, to make a home where she will be loved and cared for as long as God grants her life?

If so, answer, "I do."

TO BRIDE: B \_\_\_\_\_, do you now leave your father and mother to establish your own home with G \_\_\_\_\_ as his wife, to receive him as your husband, to make a home where he will be loved and cared for as long as God grants him life?"

TO PARENTS OF BOTH BRIDE AND GROOM (*Bride's mother, groom's parents will stand*): Do you promise to encourage G \_\_\_\_\_ and B \_\_\_\_\_ in their marriage, to present an example of love and devotion for them to emulate, and to help them build a strong and stable home for themselves and their family?

If so, answer, "We do."

TO THE BRIDE'S FATHER: Who is giving this woman to be married to this man?

*Bride's father answers, "I do," or "Her mother and I do," then places bride's right hand in groom's left. Bride's father takes his place by his wife and they and groom's parents are seated.*

### **Exhortation to Bride and Groom**

*If the wedding couple and their attendants are to move to the platform, they do so at this point.*

The ceremony of marriage in which you come to be united is the first and oldest ceremony in all the world, celebrated in the beginning in the presence of God himself. Marriage is a gift of God, given to comfort the sorrows of life and magnify its joys.

Marriage is the clasping of hands, the blending of hearts in the union of two lives as one. Your marriage must stand, not by the authority of the State nor by the seal on your wedding certificate, but by the strength of your love and by the power of your faith in each other and in God.

You can have this kind of home if you continue to recognize God as the source of romance and love and affection, for these are His gifts. Build your home on a spiritual foundation.

With God, you will have everything; without Him, you will have nothing.

Now, will you please join hands and, to each other, express your vows of love and devotion.

### **The Marriage Vows**

*The couple holds hands and faces each other.*

TO GROOM: G \_\_\_\_\_, will you repeat this vow to B \_\_\_\_\_, saying after me:

I, G \_\_\_\_\_, take you, B \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward; for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health; to love

and to cherish until we are separated by death; as God is my witness, I give you my promise.

TO BRIDE: B\_\_\_\_\_, will you repeat this vow to G\_\_\_\_\_, saying after me:

I, B\_\_\_\_\_, take you, G\_\_\_\_\_, to be my husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward; for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish until we are separated by death; as God is my witness, I give you my promise.

*Or this:*

Will you join hands.

TO GROOM: G\_\_\_\_\_, do you take B\_\_\_\_\_, saying after me:

I, G\_\_\_\_\_, take you, B\_\_\_\_\_, to be your wife, to live and love together in the sight of God, so long as you both shall live?

If so, answer, "I do."

TO BRIDE: B\_\_\_\_\_, do you take G\_\_\_\_\_, saying after me:

I, B\_\_\_\_\_, take you, G\_\_\_\_\_, to be your husband, to live and love together in the sight of God, so long as you both shall live?

If so, answer, "I do."

- *Some couples prefer to write their own vows, in which case their would be substituted for the vows given here. The vows may either be repeated as the minister prompts, or they may be recited from memory. The couple may also chose to read their vows.*

### **Reading of Scripture**

The Word of God tells us what love is like and what love does: "Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

*"Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)*

The New Testament reveals that happiness comes from putting the other first, rather than oneself:

"Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. "Wives be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord....Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her....

"Let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband" *(from Ephesians 5)*

Having this kind of love in your hearts, you have chosen to exchange rings (a ring) as the sign and seal of the vows you are making today. May I have the ring(s)?

## **The Exchange of Rings**

*While holding the rings (ring), the minister shall say:*

Though small in size, these rings are (this ring is) very large in significance. Made of precious metal, they remind us that love is not cheap nor common; indeed, love may cost us dearly.

Made in a circle; their design tells us that love must never come to an end; we must keep it continuous.

As you wear these rings, whether together or apart for a moment, may they be constant reminders of these glad promises you are making today.

TO GROOM: G\_\_\_\_\_, will you take your ring and place it upon the third finger of B\_\_\_\_\_'s left hand, and repeat after me this promise, saying:

“With this ring, I seal my promise, to be your faithful and loving husband, as God is my witness.”

TO BRIDE: B\_\_\_\_\_, will you take your ring and place it upon the third finger of G\_\_\_\_\_'s left hand, and repeat after me this promise, saying:

“With this ring, I seal my promise, to be your faithful and loving wife, as God is my witness.”

## **Lighting the Unity Candle**

*Then the minister shall say:*

The two outside candles have been lighted to represent your lives to this moment. They are two distinct lights, each capable of going its separate way. To bring joy and radiance into your home, there must be the merging of these two flames into one.

From this time onward may your thoughts be for each other rather than for your individual selves; may your plans be mutual, your joys and sorrows shared.

As you each take a candle and together light the center one, you will extinguish your own candles, thus having the center candle represent the union of your two lives into one flesh. As this center light cannot be divided, let not your lives be divided, but instead be the united testimony of a Christian home, as Christ gives you light.

## **Prayer for the Bride and Groom**

Our Father, we come today asking Your blessing upon these two lives and this home being established. You have made us so that we are incomplete without the other so that we yearn for someone whom we can love and whose love we can receive.

We are thankful for the love we see here, and even more, for the love we feel from You. May we never take Your love for granted.

We pray that Your love will be the shield and stay for G\_\_\_\_\_ and B\_\_\_\_\_. When joy comes, may they share it together. When sorrow threatens, may they bear it together in

gladness or in tears, in sunshine or shadow, may they ever draw closer to each other and nearer to You.

Grant them patience, gentleness, forbearance, and understanding. O Father, protect their home from those forces that would break it apart.

We ask for health, for long life, for the fulfillment of every good dream. May their love continue through life and finally blend into the life eternal.

Through Christ we pray, amen.

*Or this:*

Our Father, source of love and life, these Your children come today asking Your blessing upon their marriage.

May theirs be a home of faith and trust, Like that of Abraham and Sarah; may theirs be the love that endures, like that of Isaac and Rebekah; may their lives be given in service to Christ, like those of Aquila and Priscilla. May joy and gladness flow from them into the hearts of many others.

Guide them in the way of wisdom; lead them along the path of righteousness. May Your grace be theirs in every joy and sorrow.

O Father, may this home be an example of the love of Jesus Christ. We pray in His name, amen.

### **Pronouncement of Marriage**

You have come before us and before God and have expressed your desire to be husband and wife. You have shown your love and affection by joining hands, you have made promises of faith and devotion, each to the other, and have sealed these promises by the giving and receiving of rings (a ring).

I therefore pronounce that you are husband and wife. May God bless you and keep you and give you His peace. Amen.

*Taking their joined hands in the minister's, the minister shall say:*

What God has joined together, let man not separate.

### **The Kiss**

TO GROOM: You may kiss your bride.

### **Recognition of Parents**

*Some couples give roses to their parents on the way out of the church. Others prefer to include this in the ceremony. The following is one suggestion as to how this may be done.*

*The minister says to the audience.*

As G\_\_\_\_\_ and B\_\_\_\_\_ begin their lives together and establish their own home, they wish to offer tokens of appreciation and recognition to the homes from which they came.

*The wedding party remains in place as the couple takes roses or other flowers from the table where the unity candle was lighted and presents them as follows: the groom gives his rose to the bride's mother and he and the bride express informal words of thanks to her parents. The couple moves to the groom's parents where the bride presents a rose to the groom's mother, and the couple expresses informal words of thanks to them. The couple moves back to the platform for the benediction and the presentation.*

### **Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord make His face shine on you,  
And be gracious to you;  
The Lord lift up His countenance on you,  
And give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26

### **Alternative Benediction**

Building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. Job 20, 21

### **Presentation of the Newlyweds**

*The couple turns and faces the audience, and the minister shall say:*

Dear friends, may I present to you Mr. and Mrs. G\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_.