

CONTEMPORARY NON RELIGIOUS CEREMONY

(This is a contemporary, non religious ceremony. You may change it anyway you wish or construct your own ceremony)

Opening Words

Good afternoon (*morning/evening*)! We are gathered here today, not to witness the beginning of what will be, but rather what already is! We do not create this marriage, because we cannot. We can and do, however, celebrate with _____ and _____ and their friends and families the wondrous and joyful occurrence that has already taken place in their lives.

So let the ceremony begin!

The Celebration of Marriage

Marriage is a supreme sharing of experience, and an adventure in the most intimate of human relationships. It is the joyous union of two people whose comradeship and mutual understanding have flowered in romance. Today _____ and _____ proclaim their love and commitment to the world, and we gather here to rejoice, with and for them, in the new life they now undertake together.

The joy we feel now is a solemn joy, because the act of marriage has many consequences, both social and personal. Marriage requires "love," a word we often use with vagueness and sentimentality. We may assume that love is some rare and mystical event, when in fact it is our natural state of being.

So what do we mean by love? When we love, we see things other people do not see. We see beneath the surface, to the qualities which make our beloved special and unique. To see with loving eyes, is to know **inner beauty**. And to be loved is to be seen, and known, **as we are known to no other**. One who loves us, gives us a unique gift: a piece of ourselves, but a piece that only they could give us.

We who love, can look at each other's life and say, "***I touched his life,***" or, "***I touched her life,***" just as an artist might say, "***I touched this canvas.***" "***Those brushstrokes in the comer of this magnificent mural, those are mine. I was a part of this life, and it is a part of me.***" Marriage is to belong to each other through a unique and diverse collaboration, like two threads crossing in different directions, yet weaving one tapestry together.

The secret of love and marriage is similar to that of religion itself. It is the emergence of the larger self. It is the finding of one's life by losing it. Such is the privilege of husband and wife - to be each himself, herself and yet another; to face the world strong, with the courage of two.

To make this relationship work, therefore, takes more than love. It takes **trust**, to know in your hearts that you want only the best for each other. It takes **dedication**, to stay open to one another, to learn and grow, even when it is difficult to do so. And it takes **faith**, to go forward together without knowing what the future holds for you both. While love is our natural state of being, these other qualities are not as easy to come by. They are not a destination, but a journey.

The true art of married life is in this an inner spiritual journey. It is a mutual enrichment, a give and take between two personalities, a mingling of two endowments which diminishes neither, but enhances both.

I would like to read to you a poem about this mingling, called "**Married Love**," which was written by a medieval poet about seven hundred years ago. In the English translation, it reads:

**You and I
Have so much love,
That it burns like a fire,
In which we bake a lump of clay
Molded into a figure of you
And a figure of me.
Then we take both of them.
And break them into pieces,
And mix the pieces with water,
And mold again a figure of you And a figure of me.
I am in your clay.
You are in my clay.
In life we share a single quilt,
In death we will share one coffin.**

As the poem shows us, mingling in marriage is a mutual dedication, a cooperative venture in every sense. It is a relationship based on love, respect, and a determination by both partners to adjust to each other and support one another, in health and in sickness, in joy and in sadness, in ease and in hardship.

Through this co-operation, we give ourselves, our lives and love into the hands of the one we love. We do so trustingly and generously. And so, each of us receives a gift: the life and love of the other. We receive this gift, not only from the one we love, but also from the parents who brought us into the world, and from our friends and families as well.

And so as _____ and _____'s friends and family, we are here to share with them this joy and hope, and to see them off on the path they will walk together. May it be a path of blessedness, bright with flowers of prosperity and spiritual awakening; a path of ever deepening, ever broadening love that they will travel, arm in arm. throughout eternity.

THE COMMITMENT

_____ and _____ this celebration is the outward token of your sacred and inward union of hearts, which the church and temple may bless, and the state make legal, but which neither state nor church can create nor annul. It is a union created by your loving purpose and kept by your abiding will. It is in this spirit and for this purpose that you have come here to be joined together.

THE VOWS

*(You may choose **other vows** or write your own)*

Groom

_____, **will you have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together in marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, and honor her, in sickness and in health, in sorrow and in joy, so long as you both shall live?**

I Will!

Bride

_____, **will you take this man to be thy wedded husband, to live together in marriage? Will you love him, comfort him, and honor him, in sickness and in health, in sorrow and in joy, so long as you both shall live?**

I Will!

Ceremony of the Rings

Traditionally, the marking of the passage to the status of husband and wife is marked by the exchange of rings. These rings are a symbol of the unbroken circle of love. Love freely given has no beginning and no end, no giver and no receiver for each is the giver and each is the receiver. May these rings always remind you of the vows you have taken.

(Each places the ring on the other's finger and repeats this simple vow:)

"With this ring, I thee wed."

Apache Blessing

We will close with an Apache Blessing:

***Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be the shelter for each other.
Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be the warmth for the other.
Now you are two persons, but there is only one life before.
Go now to your dwelling to enter into the days of your life together.
And may your days be good and long upon the earth.***

_____ and _____, remember to treat both yourself 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, difficulty or fear assail your relationship – as they threatened all relationships at one time or another – remember to focus on what is right between you, not only the part that seems wrong.

In this way, you can ride out the times when clouds hide the face of the sun in your lives – 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 lives together, your life together will be marked by abundance and delight.

*(The **Unity Candle** and/or **The Rose Ceremony** may be added at this point if you wish.)*

PRONOUNCEMENT

Inasmuch as you have consented together in this ceremony to live in wedlock and have sealed your vows in the presence of this company and by the giving of these rings, it gives me great pleasure to pronounce that you are **Husband** and **Wife**.

Congratulations, you may kiss the bride!

(Recessional)

(I will make any announcements of reception, party or announcements that you wish at the conclusion of the ceremony.)

UNITY CANDLE CEREMONY

_____ and _____, the two separate candles symbolize your separate lives, separate families and separate sets of friends. I ask that each of you take on of the lit candles and that together you light the center candle.

The individual candles represent your lives before today. Lighting the center candle represents that your two lives are now joined to one light, and represents the joining together of your two families and sets of friends to one.

(You can also involve children in the unity candle ceremony.)

Rose Ceremony:

Your gift to each other for your wedding today has been your wedding rings - which shall always be an outward demonstration of your vows of love and respect; and a public showing of your commitment to each other.

You now have what remains the most honorable title which may exist between a man and a woman - the title of "husband" and "wife." For your first gift as husband and wife, that gift will be a single rose.

In the past, the rose was considered a symbol of love and a single rose always meant only one thing - it meant the words "I love you." So it is appropriate that for your first gift - as husband and wife - that gift would be a single rose.

Please exchange your first gift as husband and wife.

(Sometimes a couple will play a special song at this point).

In some ways it seems like you have not done anything at all. Just a moment ago you were holding one small rose - and now you are holding one small rose. In some ways, a marriage ceremony is like this. In some ways, tomorrow is going to seem no different than yesterday. But in fact today, just now, you both have given and received one of the most valuable and precious gifts of life - one I hope you always remember - the gift of true and abiding love within the devotion of marriage.

_____ and _____, I would ask that where ever you make your home in the future - whether it be a large and elegant home - or a small and graceful one - that you both pick one very special location for roses; so that on each anniversary of this truly wonderful occasion you both may take a rose to that spot both as a recommitment to your marriage - and a recommitment that THIS will be a marriage based upon love.

In every marriage there are times where it is difficult to find the right words.

It is easiest to hurt who we most love. It is easiest to be most hurt by who we most love. It might be difficult some time to words to say "I am sorry" or "I forgive you"; "I need you" or "I am hurting". If this should happen, if you simply can not find these words, leave a rose at that spot which both of you have selected - for that rose than says what matters most of all and should overpower all other things and all other words.

That rose says the words: "I still love you."

The other should accept this rose for the words which can not be found, and remember the love and hope that you both share today.

_____ and _____, if there is anything you remember of this marriage ceremony, it is that it was love that brought you here today, it is only love which can make it a glorious union, and it is by love which your marriage shall endure."