CHAPTER THREE

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURAL READINGS AND GENERAL INTERCESSIONS



ur problem is how to live what we pray, how to make our lives a daily commentary on our prayer book, how to live in consonance with what we promise, how to keep faith with the vision we pronounce.

-Abraham Joshua Heschel-

As discussed in the preceding chapter (pages 8-10), one of the prime ways in which a couple demonstrates their understanding of their marriage is by their choice of readings and intercessions. These public proclamations contextualize the couple's vows and connect their life to the life of the entire People of God; consequently, the couple should try, as much as possible, to find readings and prayers that reflect their hopes, dreams, and desires as they embark on their marriage. For this reason, it is recommended that couples use the method of selection outlined in Chapter Two. But even the best method needs content to be completely effective. That is where this chapter comes in.

What follows are passages taken from Scripture that could be appropriate to a wedding celebration. Selected from one of four contemporary translations of the Bible – the New Revised Standard Version, the Revised English Bible, the New American Bible, or the New Jerusalem Bible – based on appropriateness and eloquence, this list – though not exhaustive--intends to help the couple choose well from the riches offered in the whole of Scripture.* Also included are brief ideas that explain how the passage may fit.

To further help, the chapter is broken down into five sections, paralleling the ordinary choice of scripture and prayer made in a Catholic wedding:

Section I: Old Testament Readings

Section III: New Testament Readings

Section IV: Gospel Readings

OT

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Spection V: Sample General Intercessions

Genesis 1: 26-28, 31

A reading from the book of Genesis.

^{*} Although, in the United States, the official translation used in Catholic liturgy comes from the New American Bible, other translations—approved in other English-speaking countries—are sometimes presented here for their beauty and message. As always, this deviation from the rite is not offered authoritatively but as advice.

God said: "Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness, to have dominion over the fish in the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, all wild animals on land, and everything that creeps upon the earth."

God created human beings in his own image; in the image of God, he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them,
"Be fruitful and increase,
fill the earth and subdue it.
Have dominion over the fish in the sea,
the birds of the air,
and every living thing that moves on the earth."

And God saw all that he had made, and, indeed, it was very good.

The word of the Lord.

(Revised English Bible) This story from Genesis emphasizes the goodness of all God's creation, of which the crowning moment is the creation of humanity. Here the ideas of marriage – unity, fruitfulness – are seen as present at the very beginning of the world, a part of God's good plan.

Genesis 2: 18-24

A reading from the book of Genesis.

The Lord God said:

"It is not good for the man to be alone.

I will make a suitable partner for him."

So the Lord God formed out of the ground various wild animals and various birds of the air, and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them.

The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals; but none proved to be a suitable partner for the man.

So the Lord God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, the Lord God took one of his ribs, and closed up its place with flesh. The Lord God then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man. When he brought her to the man, the man said:

"This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called 'woman' for from man this one has been taken."

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body.

The word of the Lord.

(New American Bible) This passage from Genesis, which tells of the creation of woman, speaks of the inherent unity of husband and wife — "bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh." Jewish commentators on this text point out that the woman is made, not from the head to rule; nor from the feet to serve; but from the side to be always beside her husband as a companion.

A reading from the book of Genesis.

The servant of Abraham said to Laban: "I bowed down in worship to the Lord, blessing the Lord, God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right road to obtain the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son.

If, therefore, you have in mind to show true loyalty to my master, let me know; but if not, let me know that, too. I can then proceed accordingly."

Laban and Bethuel said in reply:

"This thing comes from the Lord;
we can say nothing to you either for or against it.
Here is Rebekah, ready for you;
take her with you,
that she may become the wife of your master's son,
as the Lord has said."
So they called Rebekah and asked her:
"Do you wish to go with this man?"
She answered: "I do."

At this they allowed their sister Rebekah and her nurse to take leave, along with Abraham's servant and his men. Invoking a blessing on Rebekah, they said:

"Sister, may you grow into thousands of myriads; And may your descendants gain possession of the gates of their enemies!"

Then Rebekah and her maids started out; they mounted their camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and went on his way.

Meanwhile, Isaac had gone from Beer-lahai-roi and was living in the region of the Negeb.

One day, towards evening,
he went out in the field,
and as he looked around,
he noticed that camels were approaching.
Rebekah, too, was looking about
and when she saw him,
she alighted from her camel,
and asked the servant:

"Who is that man out there, walking through the fields towards us?" "That is my master," replied the servant. Then she covered herself with her veil.

The servant recounted to Isaac all the things he had done.
Then Isaac took Rebekah into his tent; he married her and thus she became his wife. In his love for her, Isaac found solace after the death of his mother, Sarah.

The word of the Lord.

(New American Bible) The story of the finding of Rebekah is a tale indicative of how God makes the union of husband and wife. Rebekah comes because of her awareness that God has called her to this vocation of marriage, and Isaac responds to her out of the same call. Furthermore, Isaac, whose mother, Sarah, had died shortly before, finds in Rebekah comfort in his sorrow and hope for the future of the people God has chosen to be his own.

A reading from the book of Genesis.

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he had reached a certain place, he stopped there for the night, since the sun had set.

Taking one of the stones of that place, he made it his pillow and lay down where he was.

He had a dream: there was a ladder, planted on the ground with its top reaching to heaven; and God's angels were going up and down on it. And there was Yahweh, standing beside him and saying:

"I, Yahweh, am the God of Abraham your Father and the God of Isaac; the ground on which you are lying I shall give to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will be as plentiful as the dust on the ground; you will spread out to the west and east to north and south; and all the clans on earth will bless themselves by you and your descendants.

Be sure, I am with you;
I will keep you safe wherever you go,
and bring you back to this country,
for I shall never desert you
until I have done what I have promised you."

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said: "Truly, Yahweh is in this place and I did not know!"
He was afraid and said: "How awe-inspiring this place is!
This is none other than the abode of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"

Early next morning,
Jacob took the stone he had used for his pillow
and set it up as a pillar,
pouring oil over the top of it.
He named the place Bethel.

Jacob then made this vow:

"If God remains with me,
and keeps me safe on this journey I am making,
if he gives me food to eat and clothes to wear,
and if I come home safe to my father's home,
then Yahweh shall be my God.

This stone I have set up as a pillar is to be a house of God, and I shall faithfully pay you a tenth part of everything you give me."

The word of the Lord.

(New Jerusalem Bible) The vision of Jacob, who will become Israel, shows the promise of God opening up in a surprising way. This promise that is to be lived out throughout human history, is nothing less than that God will abide with Jacob all his life. In this vision, Jacob, who is fleeing at this point in his story, finds hope and promise when he least expects it and makes a vow to the Lord that unites his life to God's. The promise of God and the vow of Jacob speaks of the same unity present in the marriage of wife and husband.

Section I: Old Testament Readings

A reading from the book of Deuteronomy.

oses said to the people, **V ⊥**gathered beside the river Jordan: "This commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. It is not in heaven, that you should say: 'Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say: 'Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us, so that we may hear it and observe it?' No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death blessings and curses.
Choose life, so that you and your descendants may live,

loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) This passage comes near the end of Moses' life. Knowing that he will not enter the Promised Land himself, he speaks to the people and sums up for them the entire Law — a Law that is not something external to them, but lives in the depth of their hearts. For marriage, this life affirming message reminds us that we are called to live the vows we speak, to give them flesh and so make God present in them.

OT Ruth 1: 16-17

A reading from the book of Ruth.

Wherever you go, I shall go, wherever you live, I shall live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Where you die, I shall die and there I shall be buried. Let Yahweh bring ills on me, if anything but death should part me from you!"

The word of the Lord.

(New Jerusalem Bible) Although this passage is spoken between two women, the words speak as well to the constancy of married love. Ruth, the daughter in-law of Naomi and a foreigner in Israel, has lost her husband, Naomi's son. When Naomi tells her to go home to her own people, Ruth speaks these words as a pledge of her faithfulness and constant love. This bond, born of Ruth's first marriage, will lead her into her second, and a place in salvation history as the great-grandmother of King David.

A reading from the book of Tobit.

Tobiah said to Raphael:
"Brother Azariah, ask Raguel
to let me marry my kinswoman, Sarah."
Raguel overheard the words;
so he said to the boy:
"Eat and drink and be merry tonight,
for no man is more entitled to marry my daughter,
Sarah, than you, brother.
Besides, not even I have the right to give her
to anyone but you,
because you are my closest relative.
But now, son, eat and drink."

Tobiah answered: "I will eat or drink nothing until you set aside what belongs to me."
Raguel said to him: "I will do it.
She is yours according to the decree of the Book of Moses. Your marriage to her has been decided in heaven.
Take your kinswoman; from now on you are her love, and she is your beloved.
She is yours today and ever after.

And tonight, son, may the Lord of heaven prosper you both. May God grant you mercy and peace."

Then Raguel called his daughter, Sarah, and she came to him.

He took her by the hand, and gave her to Tobiah with the words: "Take her according to the Law. According to the decree

written in the Book of Moses, she is your wife.

Take her and bring her back safely to your father.

And may the God of heaven grant both of you peace and prosperity."

He then called her mother and told her to bring a scroll,

so that he might draw up a marriage contract, stating that he gave Sarah to Tobiah as his wife, according to the decree of the Mosaic Law.

Her mother brought the scroll, and he drew up the contract, to which they affixed their seals.

After this, they began to eat and drink.

The word of the Lord.

(New American Bible) The story of Tobiah and Sarah, like that of Rebekah and Isaac, involves finding the right match through obedience to God's Law, as it is written in our lives and in our world. In the face of pressure, Tobiah holds to the union that has "been decided in heaven" and so forms a lasting match.

A reading from the book of Tobit.

On the night of their wedding,
Tobiah and Sarah rose from their bed
and began to pray.
Tobiah began with these words:

"Blessed are you, O God of our ancestors; praised be your name forever and ever.
Let the heavens and all your creation praise you forever.
You made Adam and you gave him his wife Eve to be his help and support; and from these two the human race descended. You said: 'It is not good for the man to be alone, let us make him a partner like himself.'
Now, Lord, you know that I take this wife of mine not because of lust, but for a noble purpose. Call down your mercy on me and on her, and allow us to live together to a happy old age."

The word of the Lord.

(New American Bible) The prayer of Tobiah emphasizes the centrality of God's presence in married life. Recalling the creation of woman, Tobiah distinguishes mere desire from the living covenant of love that is the heart of marriage and that lasts into old age.

A reading from the book of Proverbs.

Let faithful love and constancy
never leave you: tie them round your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.
Thus you will find favor and success
in the sight of God and of people.
Trust wholeheartedly in Yahweh,
put no faith in your own perception;
acknowledge the Lord in every course you take,
and the Lord will see that your paths are smooth.

Honor Yahweh with what goods you have and with the first fruits of all you produce; then your barns will be filled with corn, your vats overflowing with new wine.

Refuse no kindness to those who have a right to it, if it is in your power to perform it.

The Lord blesses the home of the upright, and accords his favor to the humble.

The word of the Lord.

(New Jerusalem Bible) This passage from the Jewish wisdom literature was originally meant as guidance from a father to a son, and in that regard it offers advice to a couple as they begin their lives together. Emphasizing humility, compassion, and trust, the passage guides a couple towards the twin pillars of virtue and happiness: God and community.

A reading from the book of Ecclesiastes.

Better two than one alone, since thus their work is really rewarding. If one should fall, the other helps him up; but what of the person with no one to help him when he falls? Again: if two sleep together they keep warm; but how can anyone keep warm alone? Where one alone would be overcome, two will put up resistance; and a three-fold cord is not quickly broken.

The word of the Lord.

(New Jerusalem Bible) Another of the wisdom books, Ecclesiastes gives advice on living well amid the difficulties of life. Here the passage speaks of the need for the active loving of a true companion and friend. In a typical Hebraic magnification, the passage ends with a move from the one to the two to the three – from the individual, to the couple, to the couple joined in a community.



A reading from the Song of Songs.

The voice of my beloved!
Look, he comes
leaping over the mountains,
bounding over the hills.
My love is like a gazelle,
or a young stag.
Look, there he stands
behind our wall,
gazing in at the window,
looking through the lattice.

"My beloved speaks and says to me:

'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.

"'O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet and your face is lovely.'

"My beloved is mine and I am his.

"He says to me:

'Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm.
For love is as strong as death, passion fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame,
Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.'"

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) This passage is part of a love poem that was, according to tradition, written by Solomon. Filled with pastoral imagery of an agricultural people, the poem tells of a lover and a beloved seeking one another, losing one another, and finally coming together with love whose power is rooted in God's own call to them. This poem has also been seen as an allegory of God's love for Israel – sought always with a passion stronger than death.

Song of Songs 8: 6-7a

A reading from the Song of Songs.

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm. For love is as strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame, Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.'

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) This passage, an excerpt from the previous reading, contains only the prayer-like plea found at the end of the Song of Songs. Its focus is not so much the interplay of the lover and the beloved, as the power of the love that unifies the two, a love whose "flashes are flashes of fire."

A reading from the book of Sirach.

Pleasant speech multiplies friends, and a gracious tongue multiplies courtesies. Let those who are friendly with you be many, but let your advisor be one in a thousand.

A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter; whoever finds one has found a treasure. A faithful friend is beyond price, no amount can balance one's worth. A faithful friend is life-saving medicine; and those who revere the Lord will find one. Those who revere the Lord direct their friendship aright, for as they are, so are their neighbors also.

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) This passage, another in the wisdom tradition, is especially appropriate for a couple whose relationship is rooted in their friendship. Written, once again, in the form of advice, this passage shows the connection between faith and true friendship, stressing how God forms the center of all strong and lasting relationships.

A reading from the book of Sirach.

A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter; whoever finds one has found a treasure. A faithful friend is beyond price, no amount can balance one's worth. A faithful friend is life-saving medicine; and those who revere the Lord will find one. Those who revere the Lord direct their friendship aright, for as they are, so are their neighbors also.

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) A briefer version of the reading that precedes it, this passage emphasizes the mutual support and incomparable value of a friend chosen in the Lord; though it leaves out the notion of the faithful friend as singular advisor.

A reading from the book of Sirach.

Wealth and wages make life sweet, but better than either is finding a treasure. Children and the building of a city establish one's name, but better than either is a blameless spouse. Wine and music gladden the heart; but the love of friends is better than either. The flute and the harp make sweet melody; but a pleasant voice is better than either. A friend or companion is always welcome, but a wife with her husband is better than either.

A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter; whoever finds one has found a treasure. A faithful friend is beyond price, no amount can balance one's worth. A faithful friend is life-saving medicine; and those who revere the Lord will find one. Those who revere the Lord direct their friendship aright, for as they are, so are their neighbors also.

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) This passage, which combines a later passage from Ben Sirach with the shorter one already seen, again emphasizes the power of friendship to bring true happiness. But in the juxtaposition of these passages, the connection of friendship and marriage are more obviously made. Here, of all the goods of a civilized life, marriage is seen as the highest — an especially appropriate passage for those who would emphasize the gift of self that is at the heart of marriage.

'A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Thus says the Lord:
"I have called you by name,
you are mine.
When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
in the rivers, you shall not drown.
When you walk through fire,
you shall not be burned,
the flames shall not consume you.

"For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in return for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and glorious, and because I love you.

"Fear not, for I am with you.

From the east I will bring back you descendants, from the west I will gather you.

Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

"See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth!"

The word of the Lord.

(New American Bible) The book of the prophet Isaiah is filled with the promises and prophecies of the messianic age. Here is one of the great hymns of God's election of a people, a hymn written to give hope in the midst of struggle and pain. This passage emphasizes the hope and unreasonable depth of love involved in the choice of a spouse – a choice that transcends reason and proportion, just as God's choice of Israel did.

Isaiah 55: 1-5, 12

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

ll you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; Come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk! Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what fails to satisfy? Heed me, and you shall eat well, you shall delight in rich fare. Come to me heedfully, listen, that you may have life. I will renew with you the everlasting covenant, the benefits assured to David. As I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of nations, So shall you summon a nation you knew not, and nations that knew you not shall run to you, Because of the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, who has glorified you.

"Yes, in joy you shall depart, in peace you shall be brought back; Mountains and hills shall break out in song before you, and all the trees of the countryside shall clap their hands."

The word of the Lord.

(New American Bible) Another passage foretelling the messianic age, this reading stresses the care God offers those who choose what matters -i.e., love and faith. Images of comfort and care link to images of choosing and commitment. Just as a couple chooses their love, in the presence of God, before all things, so God chooses them and will bless them throughout their life.

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.

"They will be called *oaks of righteousness,* the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines, but you shall be called "priests of the Lord," you shall be named ministers of our God; you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory. For I, the Lord, love justice, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

The word of the Lord.

(Revised Standard Version) Another of the messianic hymns of Isaiah, this passage stresses the love that remakes, that liberates, that comforts and that calls those who love the Lord. The promise is that God will be present, just as it is in other messianic passages, and it offers those who commit themselves in God inclusion in this life of hope and joy.

A reading from the book of the prophet Jeremiah.

Thus says the Lord,
"I will fulfill to you my promise,
and bring you back to this place.
For surely I know the plans I have for you,"
says the Lord,
"plans for your welfare and not for harm,
to give you a future with hope.

"Then when you call upon me, and come and pray to me, I will hear you.

When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me," says the Lord, "and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you," says the Lord, "and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you."

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) This passage from Jeremiah – who, with Isaiah, is one of the major prophets of Israel's redemption – emphasizes the faithfulness of God, who stands with those who vow themselves to love and covenant. For those entering marriage, it stresses that God is with them in their vows and in their life together.

A reading from the book of the prophet Jeremiah.

The days are surely coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, but not like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.

"But this is the covenant I will make with the House of Israel after those days," says the Lord:

"I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) In this passage, Jeremiah recalls the covenantal love of God, spoken of earlier in the passage from Deuteronomy, and the way in which that covenant becomes flesh in the lives of God's people. Such a reading stresses how the love captured in the covenant of God (or the covenant of wife and husband) must be rooted deeply for the life it promises to spring forth, and how this planting is ultimately a gift of God's grace.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.

We know that all things work together for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

If God is for us, who is against us?
He who did not withhold his own Son,
but gave him up for all of us,
will he not, with him,
also give us everything else?
Who will bring any charge against God's elect?
It is God who justifies.
Who is to condemn?
It is Christ Jesus, who died,
yes, who was raised,
who is at the right hand of God,
who indeed intercedes for us.
Who will separate us from the love of Christ?
Will hardship, or distress, or persecution,
or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

No; in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) At the heart of this passage is the unwavering and absolute choice God has made for us. A message of hope in the face of any hardship, this passage serves to emphasize the love that is the source of the union within a marriage, a union that exists both in the couple relationship to one another and in God's relationship to them.

NT 2

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.

I appeal to you, sisters and brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good. Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.

Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.
Live in harmony with one another.

And if it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) In this passage, St. Paul emphasizes the fully embodied love to which we are called. Just as Christ takes flesh, so our love for one another, especially husbands and wives, must consist in the offering of our whole bodies, by which we transform the world and create a new community rooted in peace and love.

A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

Strive for the greater gifts.

And I will show you a more excellent way.

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love,
I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
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 do not have love,
I am nothing.
If I give away all my possessions,
and if I hand over my body to be burned,
but do not have love,
I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends.

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) St. Paul's great hymn of love, this passage, and its longer counterpart that follows, outlines the ideal love expressed in God and mirrored in the love of husband and wife. The power of this passage rests in the transformative power of love, which gives every gift its full power, and – through forgiveness – transforms life's struggles into moments of growth.

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Love never ends.

But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face.

Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) Like its shorter counterpart, this passage emphasizes the transformative power of love, but goes further, emphasizing the lasting quality of that love. Unlike other gifts, love overcomes the limits of time, offering us God's full revelation in our lives.



A reading from the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

Blessed be the God and Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation,
who consoles us in all our affliction,
so that we may be able to console those
who are in any affliction
with the consolation
with which we ourselves are consoled by God.
For just as the sufferings of Christ
are abundant for us,
so also our consolation is abundant through Christ.
Our hope for you is unshaken,
for we know that as you share in our sufferings,
so also you share in our consolation.

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) This passage, written from Paul's prison cell and calling the Corinth community to hope, is first of all a prayer for a love that endures, even through times of trial, even through death itself. Pointing to Christ as the center of our love – including married love – Paul stresses how love creates unity, a unity in which sharing struggles means sharing joys, as well.

A reading from the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

Consider this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly; and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

Each of you must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Moreover, God is able to make every grace abundant for you, so that in all things, always having all you need, you may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written:

He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.

The one who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

The word of the Lord.

(New American Bible) Generosity is at the heart of this passage. What St. Paul speaks of is the kind of love one expects in marriage, where each partner must give of himself/herself entirely, trusting that all that is given will be returned in abundance, for at the center of all such loving is the God of abundance, whose gifts have no limit for the good of those who love God and one another.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before him. In love, he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved.

In Christ we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intentions of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ.

In him, you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit; this is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

The word of the Lord.

(New American Bible) Another example of St. Paul's combining of prayer and teaching, this passage stresses that the love which unites us is the sign of God's choice of us in Christ Jesus. In the sacrament of marriage, this choice of God's comes to fruition in the lives of a wife and husband, and is sealed with the Holy Spirit.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through the Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more that all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) This great hymns of St. Paul's identifies God as the source of every family, and the power that works in all kinds of love – including married love – to accomplish in our lives together something more than simply the sum of the parts. Like marriage, love lived in Christ is magnified for the life of the world.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

Be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.
Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord.
For the husband is head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the church, the body of which he is the savior.
Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word,

so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind — yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church,

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."

This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church.

Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

because we are members of his body.

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) Sometimes seen as anachronistic because of its imagery of submission, this passage in its entirety seeks to show that the love of husband and wife is a mutual gift. Both submit, as Christ gave himself to the Church and the Church gives herself to Christ, in a cycle of love and return.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians.

I thank my God whenever I think of you, and every time I pray for you, I always pray with joy, for your partnership in the gospel from the very first day up to the present. I am quite confident that the One who began a good work in you will go on completing it until the day of Jesus Christ comes. It is only right that I should feel like this towards you, because you have a place in my heart, since you have shared together in the grace that has been mine.

For God will testify for me how much I long for you, with the warm longing of Christ Jesus; it is my prayer that your love for one another may grow more and more with the knowledge and complete understanding that will help you to come to true discernment,

so that you will be innocent and free when the day of Christ comes, entirely filled with the fruits of uprightness through Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God.

The word of the Lord.

(New Jerusalem Bible) A prayer of thankfulness and love, this passage from St. Paul speaks eloquently of the sharing of life indicative of all love, and especially of the love of wife and husband. The passage emphasizes two things especially: the longing for the beloved, and the faith that – in Jesus – all love becomes life-giving, i.e., "filled with the fruits of uprightness."

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice!
Let your gentleness be known to everyone.
The Lord is near.
Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.
And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen, and the God of peace will be with you.

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) The meaning of this passage may be found in its first word: "Rejoice!" In the rest of the passage, St. Paul calls the community to trust in the abiding presence that blesses them, a presence called down upon every couple in their marriage.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Colossians.

s God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, **1** clothe yourselves with compassion, with kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another; and if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another, in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts, sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God. 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.

The word of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) Using the metaphor of clothing (this passage works particularly well if the bride is wearing her mother's dress or some other significant article of clothing is used), this passage of St. Paul's emphasizes the way one builds a community of love, with Christ at its center. For a couple beginning married life, this call to finding a home and to joy and gratitude offers a rich prayer on which to begin their life.

Hebrew 4: 12-14, 16

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

The word of God is something alive and active: it cuts more incisively than any two-edged sword: it can seek out the place where soul is divided from spirit, or joints from marrow; it can pass judgment on secret emotions and thoughts.

No created thing is hidden from him; everything is uncovered and stretched fully open to the eyes of the one to whom we must give account of ourselves.

Since in Jesus, the Son of God, we have the supreme high priest who has gone through to the highest heaven, we must hold firm to our profession of faith. Let us, then, have no fear in approaching the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace when we are in need of help.

The word of the Lord.

(New Jerusalem Bible) This passage promises the love that opens all that is hidden, and that takes us into the merciful arms of God – a God who knows us fully through the love of Christ Jesus. For a couple, this reading invites the openness of married love and the grace that accompanies it.

NT 14

A reading from the second letter of Peter.

Crace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of our Lord. By his divine power, he has lavished on us all the things we need for life and true devotion, through the knowledge of him who has called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these, the greatest and priceless promises have been lavished on us, that through them you should share the divine nature. With this in view, do your utmost to support your faith with goodness, goodness with understanding, understanding with self-control, self-control with perseverance, perseverance with devotion, devotion with kindness to others, and kindness to others with love.

The word of the Lord.

(New Jerusalem Bible) In this passage, Peter combines a reminder of God's lavish generosity with a guide to fully live in that generosity. Like a widening circle, faith grows towards love. For a couple beginning life together, the call is to live in this circle – faith, goodness, understanding, self-control, perseverance, devotion, kindness, and love.

A reading from the first letter of John.

Thildren, our love must be not just words or mere talk, but something active and genuine. This will be the proof that we belong to the truth, and it will convince us in his presence, even if our own feelings condemn us, that God is greater than our feelings, and knows all things. My dear friends, if our own feelings do not condemn us, we can be fearless before God, and whatever we ask, we shall receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what is acceptable to him. His commandment is this, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and that we should love one another, as he commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments remains in God, and God in him. And this it the proof that he remains in us: the Spirit that he has given us.

The word of the Lord.

(New Jerusalem Bible) In this passage, St. John calls for a love that takes in the whole of our lives, not merely our lip service. Such a love gives us a fearlessness, for it is the presence of God in our midst, and in this love we find the proof of God – the Spirit that unites us. For a couple, blessed in the Spirit of God and vowing their lives, such a message offers the promise of God's continued presence in their lives together.

1 John 4:7-12

A reading from the first letter of John.

y dear friends, let us love one another, since love is from God and everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.

Whoever fails to love does not know God, because God is love.

This is the revelation of God's love for us, that God sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through him. Love consists in this:

it is not we who loved God, but God loved us and sent his Son to expiate our sins.

My dear friends, if God loved us so much, we too should love one another.

No one has ever seen God, but as long as we love one another God remains in us and his love comes to its perfection in us.

The word of the Lord.

(New Jerusalem Bible) Identifying love as the very nature of God, this passage of St. John calls us to imitate and so to be one with the God who has loved us. Marriage – the great sacrament of love – is, thus, seen as a way in which God's love comes to perfection in our midst, blessing both the couple and the community.



A reading from the first letter of John.

We have recognised for ourselves, and put our faith in, the love God has for us.
God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God, and God in him.
Love comes to its perfection in us when we can face the Day of Judgment fearlessly, because even in this world we have become as he is.
In love there is no room for fear, but perfect love drives out fear.
Let us love, then, because he first loved us.

The word of the Lord.

(New Jerusalem Bible) As in the previous passage, St. John again reminds us that love is at the heart of God; love is the nature of God. And this love comes to perfection in our living it, without fear or hesitation. This enfleshed love is characterized in the life-giving love of wife and husband, who in the fearlessness of their commitment show the presence of God.

A reading from the book of Revelation.

I, John, heard what seemed to be the great sound of a huge crowd in heaven, singing:

"Alleluia! Salvation and glory and power to our God."

Then a voice came from the throne; it said:

"Praise our God, you servants of his, and those who fear him, small and great alike."

And I heard what seemed to be the voices of a huge crowd, like the sound of the ocean or the great roar of thunder, answering:

"Alleluia!

The reign of the Lord our God Almighty has begun; let us be glad and joyful and give glory to God, because this is the time for the marriage of the Lamb.

His bride is ready,

and she has been able to dress herself

in dazzling white linen,

because her linen is made of the good deeds of the saints."

The angel said: "Write this: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb.'"

The word of the Lord.

(New Jerusalem Bible) In this vision of the end times, marriage is seen as the great symbol of God's union with the world. The marriage of the lamb, like the marriage of husband and wife, unites, redeems, and calls the community to celebration.

G 1

Matthew 5:1-10

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.
Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) In this passage, the beatitudes, the evangelist sets out the world-changing truth of God's love, revealed in Jesus. Here, through the power of God's love, those things that would usually be thought of as weaknesses become sources of blessing. For a couple entering into marriage, this passage offers the promise that God will redeem all their struggles and be present to them as they hold true to the promise of their own loving.

Section IV: Gospel Readings

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

Sitting on the mountainside, Jesus taught his disciples in this way:

"You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned?

"You are the light of the world.

A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden.

Nor do they light a lamp
and then put it under a bushel basket;
it is set on the lamp-stand,
where it gives light to all in the house.

Just so, your light must shine before others,
that they may see your good deeds
and glorify your heavenly Father."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New American Bible) The call of love – especially married love – is to shine out as a blessing, not only for the lover and the beloved, but for all. In this passage, Jesus speaks to the calling offered to his disciples and encourages them to live their call and so bless all those who encounter them.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

Sitting on the mountainside, Jesus taught his disciples in this way:

"Do not worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and what you are to wear. Surely life is more than food, and the body more than clothing! Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet, your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are? Can any of you, however much you worry, add one single cubit to your span of life? And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin; yet, I assure you that not even Solomon in all his royal robes was clothed like one of these.

Now if that is how God clothes the wild flowers growing in the field which are there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more look after you, you who have so little faith?
Set your hearts on the kingdom first, and on God's saving justice, and all these other things will be given you, as well. Do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself.
Each day has enough trouble of its own."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New Jerusalem Bible) In this passage, Jesus calls his followers to faith in the God who has loved them so much. The reading is not meant to deny that there will be times of trouble and hardship, but to assure those with faith that they are a chosen people and that they need not worry about the constancy of that choice. For those beginning married life, this passage is a call to be strong in clinging to God and to one another, and a reminder to live in the present.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

Sitting on the mountainside, Jesus taught his disciples in this way:

"Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord!' will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

"Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them, will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New American Bible) In this passage, Jesus offers a two-fold message: that it is deeds and not words that build up the house of love; and that these deeds, built on the love of God, cannot be harmed by anything the world might present. For a couple entering marriage, this is a call to live the vows they profess and to ground those vows on the rock of faith.

Section IV: Gospel Readings

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus spoke in parables to the crowds about the coming of the kingdom of heaven:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches."

He spoke to them another parable:

"The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour, until the whole batch was leavened."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New American Bible) These two parables of Jesus offer similar messages of the small becoming great through the grace of God. For a couple entering marriage, it suggests that the small and singular event of their vows can become something that changes not only their lives, but the lives of others, as well. In their love, a couple becomes a home where others find shelter, or the leaven which raises the whole community to become what it might be.

G 6

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus spoke in parables to the crowds about the coming of the kingdom of heaven:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy, goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

"Again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls.

When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New American Bible) In these parables, Jesus seeks to show how the kingdom calls for total commitment of self and fortune. What is found is of absolute value, and everything else becomes relative to it. For those entering into the sacrament of marriage, where one's spouse is the primary means by which one finds God's love, the call here is to enter into the marriage fully – spending time and treasure, joys and sorrows on the beloved.

G 7

Matthew 19: 3-6

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

Some Pharisees approached Jesus, and tested him, saying: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?"

He said in reply:

"Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' and said:

'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?'

"So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New American Bible) This passage – though traditional – is less used today because of its context, i.e., because Jesus is speaking of divorce. Nevertheless, it is one of the few places in the Gospel where Jesus speaks directly on the issue of marriage, quoting Genesis and affirming that marriage is a life-long gift of self, rooted in God's grace and not mere human action.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

A lawyer asked Jesus a question: "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"

Jesus said to him,

"'You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

"This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it:

'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

"The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New American Bible) Here Jesus identifies not obedience or even faith, but love as the central commandment. In Christian marriage, the centrality of love gives divine sanction to the commitment a couple makes; especially since loving one's spouse is also a way to love God and receive God's love.

Mark 4: 26-29

G 9

A reading from the holy gospel according to Mark.

Jesus said:
"This is what the kingdom of God is like.
A man scatters seed on the land.
Night and day,
while he sleeps, when he is awake
the seed is sprouting and growing;
how, he does not know.
Of its own accord, the land produces

first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.
And when the crop is ready, at once he starts to reap because the harvest has come."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New Jerusalem Bible) The mysterious nature of love forms the center of this parable of Jesus. Without knowing how, the gift grows and develops until it is able to feed not only the farmer, but others as well. In the same way, the love of a couple may grow mysteriously in the soil of friendship until, at their marriage, they begin to bring in the crop that will feed them and all those whose lives they touch.

Mark 6: 45-51

A reading from the holy gospel according to Mark.

Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side.

After saying farewell to them,

he went up on the mountain to pray.

When evening came the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land.

When he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind,

he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea.

He intended to pass them by.

But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought is was a ghost and cried out; for they all saw him and were terrified.

But immediately he spoke to them and said: "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid!"

Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased.

The gospel of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) The meaning of the miracle of Jesus walking on the water may be summed up in the words of Jesus himself, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." As we sail through the turbulent waters of life, it is Christ who calms the winds and the seas, and we who must take heart. For those setting out on the sea of marriage, this message is key.

Mark 10: 6-9

A reading from the holy gospel according to Mark.

Jesus said to those around him: "From the beginning of creation,

'God made them male and female.

For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother,

and be joined to his wife,

and the two shall become one flesh.'

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) A shorter version of the passage from Matthew, this passage also comes from Jesus' conversation on divorce, though here that context is less obvious. Quoting Genesis, Jesus affirms that marriage is divine in origin, a mystery that unites two people in a union deeper than a mere contract could explain – a covenant that transforms two into one.

Luke 6: 36-38

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Jesus looked at his disciples and said:
"Be compassionate,
just as your Father is compassionate.
Do not judge, and you will not be judged;
do not condemn and you will not be condemned;
forgive, and you will be forgiven.
Give, and there will be gifts for you:
a full measure, pressed down,
shaken together, and overflowing
will be poured into your lap;
because the standard you use
will be the standard used for you."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New Jerusalem Bible) In this excerpt from the sermon on the plain, Jesus gives advice to his followers that might be well noted by those entering marriage. Called to put flesh on their love through forgiveness and generosity, disciples – including those who follow the Lord in marriage – are promised blessings in abundance, that will come to them through the life they give to one another and share with other people.

G 13

Luke 8: 4-8

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

With a large crowd gathering, and people from every town finding their way to him, Jesus told this parable:

"A sower went out to sow his seed.

Now as he sowed, some fell on edge of the path and was trampled on; and the birds of the air ate it up.

Some seed fell on the rock; and when it came up, it withered away, having no moisture.

Some seed fell in the middle of thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it.

And some seed fell into good soil, and grew and produced its crop a hundredfold."

Saying this he cried,

"Anyone who has ears for listening should listen!"

The gospel of the Lord.

(New Jerusalem Bible) Here, the familiar image of sowing offers a warning: even when what is sown is good, one must attend to it for it to take root. For a couple, this is a reminder to prepare their lives for the commitment into which they enter, avoiding shallowness or barrenness that can come when external troubles or business keeps love from taking root within their shared life.

G 14

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

That very day, two of the disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

While they were talking and discussing Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

And he said to them:

"What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?"
They stood still, looking sad.

Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him:

"Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"

He asked them, "What things?"

"The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word

before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.

But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

"Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place.

Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels

who said that he was alive.

Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him."

Then he said to them,
"Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow to believe
all that the prophets have declared!
Was it not necessary
that the Messiah should suffer these things
and then enter into his glory?"

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.
But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over."
So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.
Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

They said to each other,
"Were not our hearts burning within us
while he was talking to us on the road,
while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.

They were saying,
"The Lord has risen indeed,
and he has appeared to Simon!"

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The gospel of the Lord.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

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He asked them, "What things?"

"The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word

before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.

"Moreover, some women of our group astounded us.

They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive."

Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have declared!"

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.
But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over."
So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

They said to each other,
"Were not our hearts burning within us
while he was talking to us on the road,
while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem.
Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The gospel of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) This gospel – in either its short or the longer version – tells the story of the resurrected Jesus walking with a couple, revealing himself at the table of their hospitality. Especially appropriate in a Nuptial Mass with its Eucharistic theme, some scholars note that Cleopas is likely Clopas of John's gospel, whose wife, Mary, is at the crucifixion. Thus, these two disciples may be husband and wife, giving the story more poignancy as a model of married discipleship that walks with Jesus, welcomes Jesus, and then proclaims Jesus together.

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

There was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding.

When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."

And Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern effect me? My hour has not yet come."

His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you."

Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washing, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them up to the brim. Then he told them: "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it.

And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now."

Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs, in Cana of Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

The gospel of the Lord.

(New American Bible) The image of the wedding feast is a central metaphor for the life of Christ in the world. Here the first public miracle of Jesus is done at a wedding, suggesting the connection God wishes to make with the life and love of human beings. For those being married, this story may be a reminder that Christ is a guest and a blessing in their marriage, bringing to them the greatest gift for their joy and celebration.

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.
A large crowd kept following him,
because they saw the signs
that he was doing for the sick.
Jesus went up the mountain
and sat down there with his disciples.
When he looked up
and saw a large crowd coming toward him,
Jesus said to Philip:
"Where are we to have broad for these people to

"Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?"

He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.

Philip answered him,

"Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little."

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him,

"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish.

But what are they among so many people?"

Jesus said, "Make the people sit down."

Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted.

When they were satisfied, he told his disciples: "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) In the miracle of the loaves Jesus shows that he is the one who makes what we bring enough — enough for all of us, and enough to have more left over. For those entering marriage, this is a call to love generously, to give freely and to trust that in God's grace the love that is offered will be more than enough to bless the couple, and will be a blessing to others, as well.

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Jesus said to his disciples: "I am the true vine and my Father is the vinegrower.

Abide in me as I abide in you.

Just as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches.

Those who abide in me, and I in them, bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) At the last supper, Jesus calls for unity in love and faith, promising that those united in love will be united in God. For a couple, such a passage promises that their love, consecrated in God, will be blessing and life for them and others.

G 19

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

While sitting at table with his disciples, Jesus said to them:

"As the Father has loved me, so I have love you; abide in my love.

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.

I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

"This is my commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) Turning around all the commandments that begin "Thou shalt not" Jesus offers a new commandment and a promise besides. The commandment is to love – and not just to love, but to love as Jesus has loved. And the promise, when we love as Jesus loves, is that our love will be unified to God's own love. For those entering marriage, this promise and this commandment are central, for in them is the assurance of God's presence at the center of their life together.

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

7 Thile at table with his disciples, V Jesus said to them: "This is my commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) The love of which Jesus speaks at the last supper is life-giving — in every sense of the term — for as he lays down his life for his friends, he also commissions them to go out and bring life to others. This call to friendship and to life-giving love is also the call of marriage, where wife and husband give their lives in the equal love of friendship and so "bear fruit" by blessing the whole of the world.

Section IV: Gospel Readings

John 17: 20-24a

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Jesus, with his friends gathered around him, raised his eyes to heaven and prayed: "I pray that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.

"And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them, even as you loved me.

"Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am, they also may be."

The gospel of the Lord.

(New American Bible) The final prayer of Jesus at the last supper is a prayer that his disciples may share the unity that he shares with his Father in heaven. The image of the beloved as gift and of the abiding presence of God found in love is the message that a couple, entering into marriage, does well to hear.

G 22

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

After his resurrection,
Jesus revealed himself to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberius.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them:
"Children, you have no fish have you?"
They answered him: "No."
He said to them:
"Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some."
So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.
That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Simon Peter: "It is the Lord!"

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish,

for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread.

Jesus said to them:

"Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn.

Jesus said to them: "Come and have breakfast."
Now none of the disciples dare to ask him:
"Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord.
Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them,
and did the same with the fish.

This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

The gospel of the Lord.

(New Revised Standard Version) The appearance of the resurrected Jesus at the shore of Tiberius reminds the disciples of the reality of Jesus, who walks with them, eats with them, and shares their domestic life. For a wife and husband, the same abiding presence in their domestic life and shared labor is promised by the God who consecrates their marriage.

SECTION V SAMPLE GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

The following sample General Intercessions are provided to help you think of your own. Feel free to choose some of these (choosing one from each group) or to write your own.

At a wedding, it seems appropriate to reverse the usual order of the General Intercessions; i.e. beginning with the couple and moving outward. For more on this, see page 10.

Normally, there would be about 5-6 prayers and at least one should reach out beyond the immediate event to include a blessing for the world.

		e w erecemy jer me we	,	GROUP A: For the Couple	
Reader:	For	and	•	,	
	into the		joy into	lge today bring light the lives of others.	
Assembly:	Lord, hear	our prayer.			
Reader:	For	and	•		
	May these vows, sewn in love, take root in their hearts and bear fruit for all to see. We pray to the Lord.				
Assembly:	Lord, hear	our prayer.			
Reader:	For	and	•		
	May their lives be filled with laughter, their home be filled with peace, and their hearts be filled with love for all their lives. We pray to the Lord.				
Assembly:	Lord, hear	our prayer.			

	GROUP B: For the Community Gathered					
Reader:	For the family and friends of and					
	, who are gathered here:					
	May the love we witness strengthen our faith and renew us in our commitments to one another. We pray to the Lord.					
Assembly:	Lord, hear our prayer.					
Reader:	For all of us, gathered to celebrate the marriage of and:					
	May we become more and more a community of joy, built on love. We pray to the Lord.					
Assembly:	Lord, hear our prayer.					
Reader:	For the family and friends of and, who are gathered here:					
	May the love we witness bring us to greater unity, to greater joy, and to a deeper awareness of the ways we are blessed. We pray to the Lord.					
Assembly:	Lord, hear our prayer.					
Reader:	For this community, gathered in faith and hope:					
	May we be renewed by the commitment of and, that we might live more joyfully and more lovingly the lives to which we are called. We pray to the Lord.					
Assembly:	Lord, hear our prayer.					

GROUP C: For the Community in Dispersa	ıl
iends far away, who could not	

Reader:	For family and friends far away, who could not be with us today, especially: May the joy of this day reach out to distant friends, as their love has reached out to us. We pray to the Lord.				
Assembly:	Lord, hear our prayer.				
	GROUP D: For Those Who Have Died				
Reader:	For those who have gone before us, yet whose love remains in our hearts, especially:				
	May our lives shine with the spirit of those who have loved us in this life and who pray for us now. We pray to the Lord.				
Assembly:	Lord, hear our prayer.				
Reader:	For our friends and relatives who have died, especially:				
	May the light of those we have loved continue to shine through our lives. We pray to the Lord.				

Assembly: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: For our world:

May the love we celebrate be a sign of hope and a gift of peace to all the world. We pray to the Lord.

Assembly: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: For children everywhere, especially those who long for the simple needs of life:

May our love and compassion bring food and shelter, hope and joy to the children of our world. We pray to the Lord.

Assembly: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: For unity and peace:

May the grace of this celebration give hope to the world and healing to the wounds that divide people. We pray to the Lord.

Assembly: Lord, hear our prayer.

Final Intercession

Reader: For the many prayers we hold in our hearts (pause, long enough for the assembly to consider their own prayers.)

We pray to the Lord.

Assembly: Lord, hear our prayer.