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**HUMANIST READINGS for a WEDDING CEREMONY**

*(These readings may be used as reflections, family readings, blessings, vows, or may be read by the couple to each other. Also consider song lyrics, writings, or other inspirations)*

**Old German poem**

I am yours. You are mine.  
Of this we are certain.  
You are lodged in my heart, the small key is lost.  
You must stay there forever.

**Love, Plato**

Love is the joy of the good,  
The wonder of the wise  
The amazement of the Gods

**Classical Chinese Poem**

I want to be your friend forever and ever  
When the hills are all flat and the rivers run dry  
When the trees blossom in winter  
and the snow falls in summer,  
when heaven and earth mix -  
not till then will I part from you.

**from the I Ching**

When two people are at one in their inmost hearts  
They shatter even the strength of iron, of bronze  
And when two people understand each other in their inmost hearts  
Their words are sweet and strong  
like the fragrance of orchids..

**Marriage, Homer**

There is nothing nobler and more admirable  
Than when two people who see eye to eye  
Keep house as man and wife,  
Confounding their enemies –  
And Delighting their friends

**The Life That I Have, Leo Marks**

The life that I have  
is all that I have  
And the life that I have is yours  
The love that I have  
of the life that I have  
Is yours and yours and yours.

A sleep I shall have  
a rest I shall have  
Yet death will be but a pause  
For the peace of my year  
in the long green grass

Will be yours  
and yours and yours.

*Written in 1943 by British cryptographer Leo Marks, it formed the basis of a cipher for transmitting coded messages between spymasters in England and Violette Szabo, an Allied secret agent in German-occupied France. The poem became famous after it was featured in Carve Her Name With Pride, a 1958 film about Ms. Szabo, who was ultimately captured, tortured and executed by the Nazis.*

**My Lady Love Robert C. O. Benjamin (1855-1900)**

There are none so happy as my love and I,  
None so joyous, blithe and free;  
The reason is, that I love her,  
And the reason is, she loves me.

There are none so sweet as my own fond love,  
None so beautiful or true;  
Her equal I could never find,  
Though I search the whole world thro'.

There's no love so true as my lady sweet;  
None so constant to its troth;  
There's naught on earth like her so dear,  
No queen her equal in her worth.

So there's none so happy as my love and I;  
None so blissful, blithe and free,  
And the reason is that I am hers,  
And she, in truth, belongs to me.

**George Eliot**

Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pouring them all out, just as they are, chaff and grain together, certain that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away.

***The Most Wonderful of All Things in Life* - Sir Hugh Walpole**

The most wonderful of all things in life, I believe, is the discovery of another human being with whom one's relationship has a growing depth, beauty and joy as the years increase. The inner progressiveness of love between two human beings is a most marvellous thing; it cannot be found by looking for it or by passionately wishing for it. It is a sort of divine accident, and the most wonderful of all things in life.

**On Love, Anatole France**

It is not enough to love passionately; you must also love well. A passionate love is good doubtless, but a beautiful love is better. May you have as much strength as gentleness; may it lack nothing, not even forbearance, and let even a little compassion be mingled with it ... you are human and, because of this, capable of much suffering. If then something of compassion does not enter into the feelings you have one for the other, these feelings will not always befit all the circumstances of your life together; they will be like festive robes that will not shield you from wind and rain. We love truly only those we love even in their weakness and their poverty. To forbear, to forgive, to console – that alone is the science of love.

**(To My Wife 1959) - T.S.Eliot**

To whom I owe the leaping delight  
That quickens my senses in our waking time  
And the rhythm that governs the repose of sleeping time,  
The breathing in unison  
Of lives whose bodies smell of each other  
Who think the same thoughts without need of speech  
And babble the same speech without the need of meaning  
No peevish winter wind shall chill  
No sullen tropic sun shall wither  
The roses in the rose-garden which is ours and ours only.  
But this dedication is for others to read:  
These are private words addressed to you in public.

**from First Poems, by Rainer Maria Rilke**

Understand, I'll slip quietly  
Away from the noisy crowd  
When I see the pale  
Stars rising, blooming over the oaks  
I'll pursue solitary pathways  
Through the pale twilit meadows,  
With only this one dream:  
You come too.

**Scaffolding by Seamus Heaney**

Masons, when they start upon a building,  
Are careful to test out the scaffolding;  
Make sure that planks won't slip at busy points,  
Secure all ladders, tighten bolted joints,  
And yet all this comes down when the job's done,  
Showing off walls of sure and solid stone.  
So if, my dear, there sometimes seem to be  
Old bridges breaking between you and me  
Never fear. We may let the scaffolds fall  
Confident that we have built our wall.

**I love you, by Carl Sandburg**

I love you. I love you for what you are,  
but I love you yet more for what you are going to be.  
I love you not so much for your realities as for your ideals.  
I pray for your desires, that they may be great,  
rather than for your satisfactions,  
which may be so hazardously little.  
A satisfied flower is one whose petals are about to fall.  
But the most beautiful rose is one,  
hardly more than a bud,  
wherein the pangs and ecstasies of desire  
are working for larger and finer growth.  
Not always shall you be what you are now.  
You are going forward toward something great.  
I am on the way with you and I love you

**Marriage, by Carl Sandburg**

Live long and laugh loud,  
Sent on singing, singing,  
Smashed to the heart  
Under the ribs  
With a terrible love.  
Joy always,  
Joy everywhere --  
Let joy kill you!  
Keep away from the little deaths.

**(He wishes for the cloths of heaven) by William Butler Yeats**

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
Of night and light and the half-light,  
I would spread the cloths under your feet:  
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet;  
Tread softly, because you tread on my dreams.  
Love's Tranquility, by Sir Philip Sidney

My true love hath my heart, and I have his  
By just exchange one for the other given:  
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss,  
There never was a better bargain driven:  
My true love hath my heart, and I have his.  
His heart in me keeps him and me in one,  
My heart in him his thought and senses guides:  
He loves my heart, for once it was his own,  
I cherish his, because in me it bides

**Poem XIII from Chamber Music by James Joyce |**

Go seek her out all courteously,  
And say I come,  
Wind of spices whose song is ever  
Epithalamium.

O hurry over the dark lands  
And run upon the sea  
For seas and land shall not divide us  
My love and me.

Now, wind, of your good courtesy  
I pray you go,  
And come into the garden  
And sit at her window;  
Singing: The bridal wind is blowing  
For Love is at his noon;  
And soon will your love be with you,  
Soon, O soon.

**Letters to a Young Poet, Rainer Maria Rilke**

For one human being to love another human being  
that is perhaps the most difficult task that has been  
entrusted to us, the ultimate, the final test and proof,  
The work for which all other work is but preparation...

Love is a high inducement for the individual to ripen ..  
to become world in himself for the sake of another person  
....human love... consists in this: that two solitudes  
protect and border and greet each other.

...even between the closest human beings infinite distances  
continue to exist, a wonderful living side by side can grow up,  
if they succeed in loving the distance between them  
which makes it possible for each to see the other against a wide sky!

**SONNET 116, William Shakespeare**

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments; love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
O, no, it is an ever-fixèd mark,  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error and upon me proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

**SONNET XVII, Pablo Neruda**

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

**two happy lovers make one bread by Pablo Neruda**

Two happy lovers make one bread,  
a single moon drop in the grass.  
Walking, they cast two shadows that flow together;

waking, they leave one sun empty in their bed.  
Of all the possible truths, they chose the day;  
they held it, not with ropes but with an aroma.  
They did not shred the peace; they did not shatter words;  
their happiness is a transparent tower.  
The air and wine accompany the lovers.  
The night delights them with its joyous petals.  
They have a right to all the carnations.  
Two happy lovers, without an ending, with no death,  
they are born, they die, many times while they live:  
they have the eternal life of the Natural.

**From Adam Bede by George Eliot,**

What greater thing is there for two human souls  
than to feel that they are joined for life,  
to strengthen each other in all labor,  
to rest on each other in all sorrow,  
to minister to each other in all pain  
to be one with each other in silent unspeakable memories  
at the moment of the last parting?

Adapted from **Erasmus On Marriage**

What more sweet than to live with one  
with whom you are united in body and mind,  
who talks with you in secret affection,  
to whom you have committed  
all your faith and your fortune?  
What in all nature is lovelier?  
You are bound to friends in affection.  
How much more to a husband or wife  
in the highest love,  
with union of the body,  
the bond of mutual vows  
and the sharing of your goods!  
Nothing is more safe, tranquil,  
pleasant and lovable than marriage.

**From The Book and the Brotherhood by Iris Murdoch**

I hereby give myself. I love you. You are the only being whom I can love absolutely with my complete self, with all my flesh and mind and heart. You are my mate, my perfect partner, and I am yours. You must feel this now, as I do. It was a marvel that we ever met. It is some kind of divine luck that we are together now. We must never, never part again. We are, here in this, necessary beings, like gods. As we look at each other we verify, we know, the perfection of our love, we recognize each other Here is my life, here if need be, is my death.

**Books do furnish a room - by Anthony Powell Davies**

When two individuals meet, so do two private worlds. None of our private worlds is big enough for us to live a wholesome life in. We need the wider world of joy and wonder, of purpose and venture, of toil and tears. What are we, any of us, but strangers and sojourners, wandering through the nighttime until we draw together and find the meaning of our lives in one another, dissolving our fears in each other's courage, making music together and lighting torches to guide us through the dark?

from **Captain Corelli's mandolin, Louis de Bernieres.**

Love is a temporary madness; it erupts like volcanoes and then subsides. And when it subsides you have to make a decision. You have to work out whether your roots have so entwined together that it is inconceivable that you should ever part. Because this is what love is. Love is not breathlessness, it is not excitement, it is not the promulgation of eternal passion. That is just being in love, which any fool can do. Love itself is what is left over when being in love has burned away, and this is both an art and a fortunate accident. Those that truly love have roots that grow towards each other underground, and when all the pretty blossoms have fallen from their branches, they find that they are one tree and not two.

**The Blaze of Poui** by Mark McMorris

Tell me in short, Love, what is a wedding?  
A wedding is at once a crowded place  
and a private room, packed with trusts  
and empty of all but the heart's letters  
which one other heart may read and decipher...  
let the compass points gather in one center  
as rambling desires gather, as the circle  
of abstraction, of invitation and guesswork,  
becomes the circle of pledge and deliberate speech:  
see, the circle widens to enclose, and in it  
two are dancing and then it grows smaller  
and in it two are colliding like sparks  
and make one fire, and so Love, at least,  
has done her part

**"So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish," Douglas Adams**

"They looked at each other for a moment.

The moment became a longer moment, and suddenly it was a very long moment, so long one could hardly tell where all the time was coming from. For Arthur, who could usually contrive to feel self-conscious if left alone for long enough with a Swiss Cheese plant, the moment was one of sustained revelation. He felt on the sudden like a cramped and zoo-born animal who awakes one morning to find the door to his cage hanging quietly open and the savannah stretching grey and pink to the distant rising sun, while all around new sounds are waking. He wondered what the new sounds were as he gazed at her openly wondering face and her eyes that smiled with a shared surprise. He hadn't realized that life speaks with a voice to you, a voice that brings you answers to the questions you continually ask of it, had never consciously detected it or recognized its tones till it now said something it had never said to him before, -- which was "Yes"."

**Excerpt from Goodridge v. Dept. Of Public Health**, introduction by Massachusetts Supreme Court Chief Justice Margaret H. Marshall, *the landmark case that legalized same-sex marriages in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.*

Marriage is a vital social institution. The exclusive commitment of two individuals to each other nurtures love and mutual support; it brings stability to our society. ... marriage is at once a deeply personal commitment to another human being and a highly public celebration of the ideals of mutuality, companionship, intimacy, fidelity, and family. "It is an association that promotes a way of life, not causes; a harmony in living, not political faiths; a bilateral loyalty, not commercial or social projects."

Because it fulfils yearnings for security, safe haven, and connection that express our common humanity, marriage is an esteemed institution, and the decision whether and whom to marry is among life's momentous acts of self-definition.

**From A Natural History of Love by Diane Ackerman**

Love. What a small word we use for an idea so immense and powerful it has altered the flow of history, calmed monsters, kindled works of art, cheered the forlorn, turned tough guys to mush, consoled the enslaved, driven strong women mad, glorified the humble, fueled national scandals, bankrupted robber barons, and made mincemeat of kings. How can love's spaciousness be conveyed in the narrow confines of one syllable.

Love is an ancient delirium, a desire older than civilization, with taproots stretching deep into dark and mysterious days. The heart is a living museum. In each of its galleries, no matter how narrow or dimly lit, preserved forever like wondrous diatoms, are our moments of loving and being liked.

**from A Farewell to Arms, Ernest Hemingway**

At night, there was the feeling that we had come home, feeling no longer alone, waking in the night to find the other one there, and not gone away; all other things were unreal. We slept when we were tired and if we woke the other one woke too so one was not alone. Often a man wishes to be alone and a woman wishes to be alone too and if they love each other they are jealous of that in each other, but I can truly say we never felt that. We could feel alone when we were together, alone against the others. We were never lonely and never afraid when we were together.

**A Gift from the Sea by Anne Morrow Lindbergh**

A good relationship has a pattern like a dance, and is built on some of the same rules. The partners do not need to hold on tightly, because they move confidently in the same pattern, intricate but gay, and swift and free, like a country dance of Mozart's. To touch heavily would be to arrest the pattern and freeze the movement, to check the endlessly changing beauty of its unfolding. There is no place here for the possessive clutch, the clinging arm, the heavy hand; only the barest touch in passing. Now arm in arm, now face to face, now back to back - it does not matter which. Because they know they are partners moving to the same rhythm, creating a pattern together, and being invisibly nourished by it.

The joy of such a pattern is not only the joy of creation; it is also the joy of living in the moment. Lightness of touch and living in the moment are intertwined.

**taken from a novel by Alexander McCall Smith**

She went out into the garden. The sun had set, but there was still a faint glow in the west, enough to provide that half-light that makes everything seem so rounded, so perfect. She stood in her garden and looked about her. Against the gradually darkening sky, the branches of the trees traced a pattern of twigs and leaves – a pattern of such intricacy and delicacy that those standing below might look up and wonder why the world can be so beautiful and yet break the heart.

She stood for a while, thinking about marriage. A wedding was a strange ceremony, she thought, with all those formal words, those solemn vows made by one to another; whereas the real question that should be put to the two people involved was a very simple one. *Are you happy with each other?* was the only question that should be asked; to which they both should reply, preferably in unison, *Yes*. Simple questions – and simple answers – were what we needed in life.

**Chapter One of One Thousand by O.J. Preston**

For two people this dawn brought on a magical day  
Now husband and wife they head on their way  
As a boat setting sail may their journey begin  
With calmest of waters, most helpful of wind

And if they should stumble upon turbulent sea  
May it pass them unharmed - leave them be.  
For here are two people whom love has well bitten  
Here opens their book which has yet to be written  
As the first page unfolds and their life inks its path  
May it write a true story where forever love lasts  
Let their journey be happy till death do they part  
Of one thousand chapters may this be the start.

***somewhere I have never traveled ee Cummings***

somewhere i have never traveled, gladly beyond  
any experience, your eyes have their silence:  
in your most frail gesture are things which enclose me,  
or which i cannot touch because they are too near  
your slightest look will easily unclothe me  
though i have closed myself as fingers,  
you open always petal by petal myself as Spring opens  
(touching skillfully, mysteriously) her first rose  
or if your wish be to close me, i and  
my life will shut very beautifully, suddenly,  
as when the heart of this flower imagines  
the snow carefully everywhere descending;  
nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals  
the power of your intense fragility: whose texture  
compels me with the color of its countries,  
rendering death and forever with each breathing  
(i do not know what it is about you that closes  
and opens; only something in me understands  
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)  
nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands

***i carry your heart with me(i carry it in my heart) –ee Cummings***

i carry your heart with me(i carry it in  
my heart)i am never without it (anywhere  
i go you go,my dear;and whatever is done  
by only me is your doing,my darling) i fear  
no fate (for you are my fate, my sweet )i want  
no world (for beautiful you are my world, my true)  
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant  
and whatever a sun will always sing is you  
here is the deepest secret nobody knows  
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud  
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows  
higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)  
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart  
i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart

***Love Song, by Williams Carlos Williams***

SWEEP the house clean,  
hang fresh curtains  
in the windows  
put on a new dress  
and come with me!  
The elm is scattering

its little loaves  
of sweet smells  
from a white sky!  
Who shall hear of us  
in the time to come?  
Let him say there was  
a burst of fragrance  
from black branches

**Double Love Song, by Thomas Whitebread**

Open your heart, as if you could,  
Let me come into it like fire,  
And let me know it as dry wood,  
Pretend your being is desire.  
Then turn to sandstone, as you can  
And let me flow like water through  
Your pores toward air, where I began  
As if your earth were all of you

**From A House of Stone - by Carmen Bugan**

In the village where I was born, we wish  
A house of stone to shelter the heart of the marriage  
So here too, I wish you  
Obstinate, strong love, unyielding and unending.  
May you be in reach of each other when all seems lost,  
May your tears and your smiles happen always face to face.  
When you imagine that you have shared everything  
May you know that you still have the rest of your lives  
To do all of it again and again.  
But now listen to the hurry of bells and  
Look how petals of roses about the vineyard  
Bring you the words husband and wife:  
First words in your house of stone.

**Your eyes are like street lamps to me. By Marianne Williamson**

Your eyes are like street lamps to me.  
They tell me I am home. This is where I live.  
I am safe here, I have made it.  
There is someone waiting here  
to talk to me and hold me...  
I want to know everything,  
and I am rushing now across the grass,  
to throw open the door, to say "I'm home"...  
to see your eyes,  
to know that this is the right address,  
the right address at last.-

**To Love is Not to Possess By James Kavanaugh**

To love is not to possess,  
To own or imprison,  
Nor to lose one's self in another.  
Love is to join and separate,  
To walk alone and together,

To find a laughing freedom  
That lonely isolation does not permit.  
It is finally to be able  
To be who we really are  
No longer clinging in childish dependency  
Nor docilely living separate lives in silence,  
It is to be perfectly one's self  
And perfectly joined in permanent commitment  
To another--and to one's inner self.

Love only endures when it moves like waves,  
Receding and returning gently or passionately,  
Or moving lovingly like the tide  
In the moon's own predictable harmony,  
Because finally, despite a child's scars  
Or an adult's deepest wounds,  
They are openly free to be  
Who they really are-- and always secretly were,  
In the very core of their being  
Where true and lasting love can alone abide

#### **Adrienne Rich, 21 Love Poems**

Whenever in this city, screens flicker  
with pornography, with science-fiction vampires,  
victimized hirelings bending to the lash,  
we also have to walk...if simply as we walk  
through the rainsoaked garbage, the tabloid cruelties  
of our own neighborhoods.

We need to grasp our lives inseparable  
from those rancid dreams, that blurt of metal, those disgraces,  
and the red begonia perilously flashing  
from a tenement sill six stories high,  
or the long-legged young girls playing ball  
in the junior high school playground.  
No one has imagined us. We want to live like trees,  
sycamores blazing through the sulfuric air,  
dappled with scars, still exuberantly budding,  
our animal passion rooted in the city.

or

Now we are ready and each of us knows it  
I have never loved like this  
I have never seen my own forces so taken up and shared and given back  
After the long training, the early sieges  
we are moving almost effortlessly in our love

or

I am the lover and the loved, home and wanderer,  
she who splits firewood and she who knocks  
a stranger in the storm  
two women, eye to eye, measuring each other's spirit,  
each other's limitless desire  
a whole new poetry beginning here

**Modern Declaration** by Edna St. Vincent Millay

I, having loved ever since I was a child a few things, never  
having wavered  
In these affections; never through shyness in the houses of the  
rich or in the presence of clergymen having denied these  
loves;  
Never when worked upon by cynics like chiropractors having  
grunted or clicked a vertebra to the discredit of these  
loves;  
Never when anxious to land a job having diminished them by  
a conniving smile; or when befuddled by drink  
Jeered at them through heartache or lazily fondled the fingers  
of their alert enemies; declare  
That I shall love you always.  
No matter what party is in power;  
No matter what temporarily expedient combination of allied  
interest wins the war;  
Shall love you always.

**Habitation, by Margaret Atwood**

Marriage is not  
a house or even a tent.  
it is before that, and colder:  
the edge of the forest, the edge  
of the desert  
the unpainted stairs  
at the back where we squat  
outside, eating popcorn  
the edge of the receding glacier  
where painfully and with wonder  
at having survived even this far  
we are learning to make fire.

**The Sound of Silence by Raymondo Baughan**

Here in the space between us and the world  
lies human meaning  
Into the vast uncertainty we call.  
The echoes make our music,  
sharp equations which can hold the stars,  
and marvelous mythologies we trust.  
This may be all we need  
to lift our love against indifference and pain.  
Here in the space between us and each other  
lies all the future of the fragment of the universe  
which is our own.

**Dance Me To The End Of Love by Leonard Cohen**

Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin  
Dance me through the panic 'til I'm gathered safely in  
Lift me like an olive branch and be my homeward dove  
Dance me to the end of love

Oh let me see your beauty when the witnesses are gone  
Let me feel you moving like they do in Babylon  
Show me slowly what I only know the limits of  
Dance me to the end of love

Dance me to the wedding now, dance me on and on  
Dance me very tenderly and dance me very long  
We're both of us beneath our love, we're both of us above  
Dance me to the end of love

Dance me to the children who are asking to be born  
Dance me through the curtains that our kisses have outworn  
Raise a tent of shelter now, though every thread is torn  
Dance me to the end of love

Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin  
Dance me through the panic till I'm gathered safely in  
Touch me with your naked hand or touch me with your glove  
Dance me to the end of love.

### **Love By Roy Croft**

I love you  
Not only for what you are,  
But for what I am when I am with you.  
I love you  
Not only for what you have made of yourself,  
But for what you are making of me.  
I love you  
For the part of me that you bring out;  
I love you  
For putting your hand into my heaped-up heart  
And passing over all the foolish, weak things  
That you can't help dimly seeing there,  
And for drawing out into the light  
All the beautiful belongings  
That no one else had looked quite far enough to find

I love you because you are helping me  
to make of the lumber of my life  
Not a tavern, but a temple.  
Out of the works of my every day  
Not a reproach, But a song.

I love you,  
Because you have done more  
than any creed could have done  
To make me good.  
And more than any fate could have done  
To make me happy.

You have done it without a touch,  
Without a word,  
Without a sign.  
You have done it  
By being yourself.

**From an old Irish poem**

My love is no short year's sentence.  
It is grief lodged under the skin,  
Strength pushed beyond its bounds;  
The four quarters of the world,  
The highest point of heaven.  
It is a heart breaking or  
Battle with a ghost,  
Outrunning the sky or  
Courting an echo.  
So is my love, my passion & my devotion  
To him (her) to whom I give them.

**Celtic Traditional Vow 1**

I honour your gods  
I drink at your well  
I bring an undefended heart to our meeting place  
I have no cherished outcome  
I will not negotiate by withholding  
I am not subject to disappointment.

**Celtic Traditional Vow 2**

You cannot possess me for I belong to myself  
But while we both wish it,  
I give you that which is mine to give.  
You cannot command me for I am a free person.  
But I shall serve you in those ways you require  
And the honeycomb will taste sweeter coming from my hand.  
I pledge to you that yours will be the name I cry aloud in the night.  
and the eyes into which I smile in the morning.  
I pledge to you the first bite from my meat.  
And the first drink from my cup.

I pledge to you my living, and my dying, equally in your care.  
And tell no strangers our grievances.  
This is my wedding vow to you  
This is a marriage of equals.

**I like you and I know why by Sandol Stoddard Warburg**

I like you and I know why.  
I like you because you are a good person to like.  
I like you because when I tell you something special, you know it's special  
And you remember it a long, long time.  
You say, Remember when you told me something special  
And both of us remember

When I think something is important  
you think it's important too  
We have good ideas  
When I say something funny, you laugh  
I think I'm funny and you think I'm funny too

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If you go away, then I go away too  
or if I stay home, you send me a postcard  
You don't just say Well see you around sometime, bye  
I like you a lot because of that  
And I like you because if we go away together

And if we are in Grand Central Station  
And if I get lost  
Then you are the one that is yelling for me  
And I like you because when I am feeling sad  
You don't always cheer me up right away  
Sometimes it is better to be sad  
You can't stand the others being so googly and gaggly every single minute  
You want to think about things  
It takes time

I like you because if I think I am going to throw up  
then you are really sorry  
You don't just pretend you are busy looking at the birds and all that  
You say, maybe it was something you ate  
You say, the same thing happened to me one time  
And the same thing did

If you find two four-leaf clovers, you give me one  
If I find four, I give you two  
If we only find three, we keep on looking  
Sometimes we have good luck, and sometimes we don't  
I like you because I don't know why but  
Everything that happens is nicer with you  
I can't remember when I didn't like you  
It must have been lonesome then

If you and I had some drums and some horns and some horses  
If we had some hats and some flags and some fire engines  
We could be a HOLIDAY  
We could be a CELEBRATION  
We could be a WHOLE PARADE

Even if it was the 999th of July  
Even if it was August  
Even if it was way down at the bottom of November  
Even if it was no place particular in January  
I would go on choosing you  
And you would go on choosing me  
Over and over again  
That's how it would happen every time

### **The Square Root of Three, by Dave Feinberg**

I'm sure that I will always be  
A lonely number like root three  
The three is all that's good and right,  
Why must my three keep out of sight  
Beneath the vicious square root sign,  
I wish instead I were a nine  
For nine could thwart this evil trick,  
with just some quick arithmetic

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I know I'll never see the sun, as 1.7321  
Such is my reality, a sad irrationality  
When hark! What is this I see,  
Another square root of a three  
As quietly co-waltzing by,  
Together now we multiply  
To form a number we prefer,  
Rejoicing as an integer  
We break free from our mortal bonds  
With the wave of magic wands  
Our square root signs become unglued  
Your love for me has been renewed

**Falling in love is like owning a dog, by Taylor Mali**

First of all, it's a big responsibility,  
especially in a city like Winnipeg.  
So think long and hard before deciding on love.  
On the other hand, love gives you a sense of security:  
when you're walking down the street late at night  
and you have a leash on love  
ain't no one going to mess with you.  
Because crooks and muggers think love is unpredictable.  
Who knows what love could do in its own defense?  
On cold winter nights, love is warm.  
It lies between you and lives and breathes  
and makes funny noises.  
Love wakes you up all hours of the night with its needs.  
It needs to be fed so it will grow and stay healthy.  
Love doesn't like being left alone for long.  
But come home and love is always happy to see you.  
It may break a few things accidentally in its passion for life,  
but you can never be mad at love for long.  
Is love good all the time? No! No!  
Love can be bad. Bad, love, bad! Very bad love.  
Love makes messes.  
Love leaves you little surprises here and there.  
Love needs lots of cleaning up after.  
Sometimes you just want to get love fixed.  
Sometimes you want to roll up a piece of newspaper  
and swat love on the nose,  
not so much to cause pain,  
just to let love know  
Don't you ever do that again!  
Throw things away and love will bring them back,  
again, and again, and again.  
But most of all, love needs love, lots of it.  
And in return, love loves you and never stops.

**A Lovely Love Story By Edward Monkton**

The fierce Dinosaur was trapped inside his cage of ice. Although it was cold he was happy in there. It was, after all, his cage.

Then along came the Lovely Other Dinosaur.  
The Lovely Other Dinosaur melted the Dinosaur's cage with kind words and loving thoughts.  
I like this Dinosaur thought the Lovely Other Dinosaur. Although he is fierce he is also tender and he

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is funny. He is also quite clever though I will not tell him this for now.

I like this Lovely Other Dinosaur, thought the Dinosaur. She is beautiful and she is different and she smells so nice. She is also a free spirit which is a quality I much admire in a dinosaur.

But he can be so distant and so peculiar at times, thought the Lovely Other Dinosaur. He is also overly fond of things. Are all Dinosaurs so overly fond of things?

But her mind skips from here to there so quickly thought the Dinosaur. She is also uncommonly keen on shopping. Are all Lovely Other Dinosaurs so uncommonly keen on shopping?

I will forgive his peculiarity and his concern for things, thought the Lovely Other Dinosaur. For they are part of what makes him a richly characterized individual.

I will forgive her skipping mind and her fondness for shopping, thought the Dinosaur. For she fills our life with beautiful thoughts and wonderful surprises. Besides, I am not unkeen on shopping either.

Now the Dinosaur and the Lovely Other Dinosaur are old.  
Look at them.

Together they stand on the hill telling each other stories and feeling the warmth of the sun on their backs.

And that, my friends, is how it is with love.  
Let us all be Dinosaurs and Lovely Other Dinosaurs together.  
For the sun is warm.  
And the world is a beautiful place.

**All I really need to know I learned in Kindergarten:**

All I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be I learned in Kindergarten. These are the things I learned:

Share everything.  
Play fair.  
Don't hit people.  
Put things back where you found them.  
Clean up your own mess.  
Don't take things that aren't yours.  
Say you're sorry if you hurt somebody.  
Wash your hands before you eat.  
Flush.

Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.  
Live a balanced life – learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.  
Take a nap every afternoon.

When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.  
Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: the roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.  
Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup – they all die. So do we.  
And then remember the Dick and Jane books and the first word you learned – the biggest word of all – LOOK.

Everything you need to know is in there somewhere. The golden rule and love and basic sanitation. Ecology and politics and equality and sane living.

Take any one of those items and extrapolate it into sophisticated adult terms and apply it to your family life or your work or your government or your world and it holds true and clear and firm.

Think what a better world it would be if we all – the whole world – had cookies and milk about three o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankies for a nap.

Or if all governments had as a basic policy to always put things back where they found them and to clean up their own mess.

And it is still true, no matter how old you are –

when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands -- and stick together.

**Excerpt from the Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams:**

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit. "Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?" "It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time.

That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept.

Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

**BLESSINGS, BENEDICTIONS, L'ENVOIS**

This is a time set apart -

apart from the ordinary and the routine,  
apart from the ongoing rush of life;

This is a time set apart in the lives of these two people -  
a time for reflection and commitment,  
a time for beginnings and promises,  
a time of celebration,  
a time which they have invited us to share.

This is a place set apart -

apart from the familiar and commonplace,  
apart from the swirling currents of humanity;

This is a place set apart for the gathering  
of this unique community of persons –  
a place for welcomes and remembrances,  
a place for witnessing and sharing, a place of celebration,  
a place which we, together but once,  
can call our own for these few moments.

**A Blessing for Wedding by Jane Hirschfield**

Today when persimmons ripen  
Today when fox-kits come out of their den into snow  
Today when the spotted egg releases its wren song  
Today when the maple sets down its red leaves  
Today when windows keep their promise to open

Today when fire keeps its promise to warm  
Today when someone you love has died  
    or someone you never met has died  
Today when someone you love has been born  
    or someone you will not meet has been born  
Today when rain leaps to the waiting of roots in their dryness  
Today when starlight bends to the roofs of the hungry and tired  
Today when someone sits long inside his last sorrow  
Today when someone steps into the heat of her first embrace  
Today, let this light bless you  
With these friends let it bless you  
With snow-scent and lavender bless you  
Let the vow of this day keep itself wildly and wholly  
Spoken and silent, surprise you inside your ears  
Sleeping and waking, unfold itself inside your eyes  
Let its fierceness and tenderness hold you  
Let its vastness be undisguised in all your days

**A prayer for a wedding 11/29/63 by Joel Oppenheimer**

because everyone knows exactly what's good for another  
because very few see  
because a man and a woman may just possibly look at each other  
because in the insanity of human relationships there still may come a time we say: yes, yes  
because a man or a woman can do anything he or she pleases  
because you can reach any point in your life saying: now, I want this  
because eventually it occurs we want each other, we want to know watch other, even stupidly,  
even uglily  
because there is at best a simple need in two people to try and reach some simple ground  
because that simple ground is not so simple  
because we are human beings gathered together whether we like it or not  
because we are human beings reaching out to touch  
because sometimes we grow....

We ask a blessing on this marriage  
We ask that some simplicity be allowed  
We ask happiness  
We ask that this couple be known for what it is...  
And that the light shine upon it  
We ask a blessing for this marriage."

**Traditional Inuit Wedding Vow**

You are my husband/wife  
My feet shall run because of you.  
My feet dance because of you.  
My eyes see because of you.  
My mind thinks because of you.  
And I shall love because of you.

**This Marriage, by Rumi**

May these vows and this marriage be blessed.  
May it be sweet milk,  
this marriage, like wine and halvah.  
May this marriage offer fruit and shade  
like the date palm.  
May this marriage be full of laughter,

our every day a day in paradise.  
May this marriage be a sign of compassion,  
a seal of happiness here and hereafter.  
May this marriage have a fair face and a good name,  
an omen as welcomes the moon in a clear blue sky.  
I am out of words to describe  
how spirit mingles in this marriage

**Irish Blessing:**

You are the star of each night,  
You are the brightness of every morning,  
You are the story of each guest,  
You are the report of every land.  
No evil shall befall you, on hill nor bank,  
In field or valley, on mountain or in glen.  
Neither above, nor below, neither in sea,  
Nor on shore,  
In skies above, nor in the depths.  
You are the kernel of my heart,  
You are the face of my sun,  
You are the harp of my music,  
You are the crown of my company.

**Celtic Benediction 1**

The peace of the running water to you,  
The peace of the flowing air to you,  
The peace of the quiet earth to you,  
The peace of the shining star to you,  
And the love and the care of all of us to you.

**Celtic Blessing 2**

Happy is the bride that rain falls on  
May your mornings bring joy and your evenings bring peace.  
May your troubles grow few as your blessings increase.  
May the saddest day of your future  
Be no worse than the happiest day of your past.  
May your hands be forever clasped in friendship  
And your hearts joined forever in love. *(may repeat last line)*

**WEDDING BLESSING**

May the love which has brought you together  
continue to grow and enrich your lives.  
May you look for what is good in each other.  
May you respect each others differences.  
May you touch tenderly, speak kindly, and listen with attention.  
May you be quick to say "I am sorry" as well as "I forgive."  
May you meet with courage the problems which arise to challenge you  
and may your marriage always be one of respect and love.  
Again and again, may you renew your dreams.  
And may you share your love with the world.

**from The Twelve Gifts in Marriage by Charlene Costanzo**

May you look for what is good in each other.  
May you respect each other's differences.  
May you make time each day for moments of play.  
Every day, may you be grateful.  
May you show that you care when you come and go.  
May you choose to love even when you feel unloving.  
May you touch tenderly, speak kindly, and listen with attention.  
May you be quick to say "I am sorry" as well as "I forgive."  
May life's sorrows bring you closer together.  
May troubles strengthen your commitment.  
Again and again, may you renew your dreams.  
And may you share your love with the world.  
Living happily ever after is not the end of a fairy tale. It is the  
common purpose that all life seeks.

**Song of the Open Road, Walt Whitman**

Listen, I will be honest with you ...  
I do not offer the old smooth prizes  
But offer rough new prizes  
These are the days that must happen to you:

You shall not heap up what is called riches,  
You shall scatter with lavish hand  
all that you earn or achieve.  
However sweet the laid up stores,  
However convenient the dwelling,  
you shall not remain there.  
However sheltered the port,  
However calm the waters,  
you shall not anchor there.  
However welcome the hospitality that welcomes you,  
you are permitted to receive it but a little while.

Afoot and lighthearted, take to the open road  
Healthy, free, the world before you  
The long brown path before you,  
Leading wherever you choose.  
Say only to one another:

*Camerado, I give you my hand!  
I give you my love more precious than money;  
I give you myself before preaching and law:  
Will you give me yourself?  
Will you come travel with me?  
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?"*

**APACHE WEDDING BLESSING**

May the sun bring you new energies by day;  
May the moon softly restore you by night.  
May the rain wash away any worries you may have  
And the breeze blow new strength into your being.

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And all the days of your life,  
May you walk gently through the world  
And know its beauty.

Now you will feel not the rain, for each will shelter the other.  
Now you will feel not cold, for each will warm the other.  
Now you will feel not solitude, for each will company the other.  
Now you are two persons, but both will lead one life.  
When you go to your dwelling to enter into the days of your life,  
May your days be good and long upon the earth.

**BLESSING, by Gertrude Nelsen**

May every blessing and grace be yours  
May your love grow stronger and deeper with each passing year.  
May joy and delight fill your home  
May daily problems not vex you unduly  
nor the desire for earthly possessions dominate you  
May you have true friends to stay by you in joy and sorrow  
And if children bless you, may they return your love  
many times over.  
With wise and generous hearts  
May you help all to come to you in need of comfort  
and may you reach a ripe age together  
content for having lived a life of goodness and worth