

ACTIVITIES PRECEDING AND FOLLOWING THE WEDDING CEREMONY

Prelude - Slideshow begins 15 – 30 minutes before the service.

Seating of Guests - Bride's family and friends to the left when facing front, Groom's to the right, unless they are not somewhat equal numbers. In that case, the side does not matter.

Seating of Grandparents and Great Grandparents - Groom's first, then Bride's.

Seating of Groom's Parents

Seating of Bride's Mother (assuming her father is escorting the Bride). At this point, some couples have the two mothers light the two candles by the Unity Candle.

Entry of the Pastor and Groom's Party (side door) – The pastor enters first, followed by the Groom, with the pastor going to his place on the platform, while the Groom's Party proceeds to the head of the aisle to await the Bride. It is also acceptable to have the groomsmen enter escorting the bridesmaids.

Bridal Procession - Bridesmaids first, Ring Bearer and Flower Girl, Maid of Honor. (Some brides have the attendants enter as couples. In that case, only the Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor enter alone.) At this point, the music often changes, the Bride's mother stands, signaling the congregation to stand, and the Bride enters, traditionally escorted by her father. When all are in place the pastor may signal the congregation to be seated, or may begin the ceremony and seat people after a Call to Worship and/or Prayer.

Husband + Wife Last Name Wedding Ceremony

Opening Prayer

Father, we are gathered here this afternoon for an event that Husband, Wife have dreamed of for years, their wedding day. This is a tremendous and wonderful day because from this day forward their life will never be the same; the changes that begin today will last for the rest of their life.

While Husband + Wife's friends and family have gathered to be witnesses to this special moment, we pause to acknowledge you, our heavenly father and thank you for your presence here today. You are the one who created Husband and Wife years ago and you brought them together. You are the one who has given this most incredible gift of each other to them and you created the institution of marriage to seal this gift. We thank you for that today. Amen

Giving of the Bride

Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

Father: "Her mother and I." (The father places Wife's right hand in the right hand of Husband. Wife may give her Father a kiss. At this point the wedding party may move forward to the plat-form.)

Statement on Marriage:

We are here today in the presence of God, to join this Man and this Woman in marriage. Marriage is given by God, taught about in God's Word, affirmed by Jesus Christ, and to be held in honor by our government. The source of marriage is God. Jesus affirms that a man will leave his father and mother and become one with his wife. God, through the apostles has taught us that those who enter into this relation should love and cherish one another; support one another in their sickness and weaknesses; to comfort each other in trouble and sorrow; and with honesty and diligence provide for one another, and their household. They are to pray for and encourage one another in their relationship with God; and live together as co-heirs of eternal life.

Scripture - Wife

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.] In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ

does the church-- for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Ephesians 5:21-33

Message (also called The Charge to the Bride and Groom)

These words on marriage, written by the Apostle Paul, are considered by some to be the most controversial, counter cultural words on marriage that you will ever find written. His words cut to the core of the emotional world as he uses clear and pointed language to teach us about the marriage relationship. Paul reminds you that being married is not about what you can get out of marriage but you can give to it.

However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. Eph. 5:33

Husband, Paul under inspiration of the Holy Spirit is telling you that as a husband you must love Wife with the same kind of love that Christ has for his church, the same kind of love and forgiveness that Christ has shown to you is the kind of love and forgiveness that you are called to show to Wife. Christ gave up his life for the church; he literally set aside all of his majesty, all of his glory, he set aside the rights and privileges of being the Son of God so that his church could have life through him. He set aside everything that he had a right to in order to give his bride, the church, of which you are a member, eternal life. That is the example that he holds out to you as prepare to enter into your marriage with Wife. If there is a privilege, right, gift, hobby or toy that you would like to give yourself, from here on out remember that you are giving your life to her rather than pleasures or work responsibilities.

The secret of a marriage that is thrilling is keeping a sharp focus on your love for Christ and then giving your life in love to Wife the way Christ gave his life in love to you.

Wife, Paul's words about marriage while writing under inspiration of the Holy Spirit is that you must strive to respect Husband and to support his leadership in your home. The newspaper, women's magazines and the television are all filled with articles on women's rights, instructions on how a wife can assert herself in a marriage and manipulate the leadership in her home. Rather than telling a wife to encourage and support her husband's leadership, popular culture is telling you to marginalize and manipulate him. The Bible tells you that discouraging your husband's leadership and marginalizing his role rather than supporting it will do nothing but destroy your marriage. The dreams you have of a happy and stable home may be quickly derailed by not respecting Husband's leadership. His

dreams are to have a wife who looks to him as her hero and champion and when he sees that in you it will literally cause him to lay down his life for you. Wife, today I challenge you from God's word to be that kind of wife for Husband.

I want to challenge you both that on your wedding anniversary for years to come, each September 2nd open your Bibles and reread these counter cultural words that Paul gives us about marriage. Take the time to regularly recalibrate your relationship around them, you will never regret it. They may at first appear to be words that are out of touch but I believe that time will demonstrate that they are the words that will keep you in touch with God and each other throughout your lives together.

Vows

Will you now make your vows to one another?

(Husband and Wife are to face each other, holding hands. Wife gives her flowers to the Maid of Honor. Husband repeats the vow after the pastor as follows...)

I, Husband, take you Wife, to be my wedded wife, / to have and to hold from this day forward, / for better for worse, / for richer, for poorer, / in sickness and in health, / to love and to cherish, till death us do part, / according to God's plan / and with God's help.

The Bride repeats the vow after the pastor as follows...

I, Wife, take you, Husband, to be my wedded husband, / to have and to hold from this day forward, / for better for worse, / for richer, for poorer, / in sickness and in health, / to love and to cherish, till death us do part, / according to God's plan / and with God's help.

Giving of Rings

You have decided to seal your vows by the giving and receiving of rings.

Rings are a special symbol, which signals to others that you are in an exclusive relationship with each other. The rare and precious metal from which they are formed reminds you of the precious possession you have of one another in your marriage. The circle they form reminds you that while your love had a beginning, it is never designed to have an end.

(Get rings)

Husband, signifying your responsibility to Wife to take her into your care and keeping, I give you this ring to place on her finger, as a symbol and a promise of your vows.

Husband (repeating after PK):

Wife, this ring I give you / is a constant reminder / of my never ending love and commitment.

Wife, indicating your responsibility to Husband, to take him into your care and keeping, I give you this ring to place on his finger as a symbol and a promise of your vows.

Wife (repeating after PK):

Husband, this ring I give you / is a constant reminder / of my never ending love and commitment.

Unity Candle + Special Music

Prayer of Dedication

Our heavenly Father, we ask that you would have your hand upon Husband and Wife, may they live faithfully together all the days of their lives. Remind them in the difficult times of the vows they have made with you as their greatest witness. And sustain their love for one another through their relationship with Jesus Christ. Amen.

Pronouncement

For inasmuch as Husband and Wife have consented together, and we have witnessed their vows before God to pledge their faith and love to each other, and they have declared their love by joining hands and by giving and receiving rings, I pronounce that they are husband and wife together, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. What God has joined together, let man not tear apart.

Kiss (To Husband)

You may kiss your bride.

Presentation of Couple

(Wife retrieves her flowers from the Maid of Honor and they turn to face the congregation.)

It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Last Name

Recessional - The Couple exits together. When they have left the sanctuary, the other attendants recess quickly in couples. The pastor may stay in position until the parents are escorted out and then exit himself.

Postlude

Ushering Out of Family - Bride's Parents, Groom's Parents, Bride's Grandparents, Groom's Grandparents

Ushering out of Remaining Guests

Receiving Line and Reception

