

A collection of Readings from the Bible for the Wedding Ceremony

A service of Marriage in an Anglican Church always includes at least one reading from the Bible, although there may be up to three readings from the Bible. The couple being married may invite family members or friends to read. The usual sequence of readings, if there is to be more than one, is:

- (i) a reading from the Old Testament
- (ii) a reading from the New Testament
- (iii) A reading from the Gospels

The reader concludes the reading by saying 'For the Word of the Lord' to which the congregation respond 'Thanks be to God'.

Readings from the Old Testament

1. Male and female God created them

Genesis 1.26-31

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

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

Genesis 2.18-23

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken." Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

3. Isaac and Rebekah find each other

From Genesis ch. 24

Then Laban and Bethuel answered, 'The thing comes from the Lord; we cannot speak to you anything bad or good. Look, Rebekah is before you; take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken. And they called Rebekah, and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?' She said,

'I will.' So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,
'May you, our sister, become
thousands of myriads;
may your offspring gain possession
of the gates of their foes.'

Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, and said to the servant, 'Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?' The servant said, 'It is my master.' So she took her veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

4. I will go where you go From Ruth ch. 1

Then Naomi started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, and Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me'. Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. So she said, 'See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.'

But Ruth said,
'Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!
Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.
Where you die, I will die—
there will I be buried.
May the Lord do thus and so to me,
and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!'

5. Set me as a seal upon your heart From the Song of Songs ch. 2

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

looking through the lattice.
My beloved speaks and says to me:
"Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;
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 said to me;
Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm;
for love is 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.

6. How beautiful you are my love
From the Song of Songs ch. 4

How beautiful you are, my love,
how very beautiful!
Your eyes are doves
behind your veil.
Your hair is like a flock of goats,
moving down the slopes of Gilead.
Your lips are like a crimson thread,
and your mouth is lovely.
Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate
behind your veil.
Your neck is like the tower of David,
built in courses;
on it hang a thousand bucklers,
all of them shields of warriors.
Until the day breathes
and the shadows flee,
I will hasten to the mountain of myrrh
and the hill of frankincense.
You are altogether beautiful, my love;
there is no flaw in you.

7. A three-fold cord
Ecclesiastes 4.1-12

Again, I saw vanity under the sun:
the case of solitary individuals,
without sons or brothers;
yet there is no end to all their toil,
and their eyes are never satisfied with riches.
"For whom am I toiling," they ask,
"and depriving myself of pleasure?"
This also is vanity and an unhappy business.
Two are better than one,
because they have a good reward for their toil.
For if they fall, one will lift up the other;
but woe to one who is alone and falls
and does not have another to help.
Again, if two lie together, they keep warm;
but how can one keep warm alone?
And though one might prevail against another,
two will withstand one.
A threefold cord is not quickly broken.

8. Tobias and Sarah pray on their wedding night
From Tobit ch. 8

Tobias and Sarah got up to pray, and Tobias said:
'Blessed are you, O God of our ancestors,
and blessed is your name in all generations for ever.
Let the heavens and the whole creation bless you for ever.
You made Adam, and for him you made his wife Eve
as a helper and support.
From the two of them the human race has sprung.
You said, "It is not good that the man should be alone;
let us make a helper for him like himself."
I now am taking this woman, to be my wife, with sincerity.
Grant that she and I may find mercy
and that we may grow old together.'
And they both said, 'Amen, Amen.'

Psalms

1. Psalm 67

God be gracious to us and bless us:
and make your face to shine upon us,
That your way may be known upon earth:
your salvation among all nations.
Let the peoples praise you, O God:
let all the peoples praise you.
Let the nations be glad and sing for joy:
for you judge the peoples with equity

and govern the nations upon earth.
Let the peoples praise you, O God:
let all the peoples praise you.
Then the earth will bring forth its increase:
and God, our own God, will bless us.
You, O God, will bless us:
and all the ends of the earth will fear you.
Glory to God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
As in the beginning, so now, and for ever. Amen.

2. Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills:
but where shall I find help?
My help comes from the Lord:
who has made heaven and earth.
He will not suffer your foot to stumble:
and he who watches over you will not sleep.
Be sure he who has charge of Israel:
will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord himself is your keeper:
the Lord is your defence upon your right hand;
The sun shall not strike you by day:
nor shall the moon by night.
The Lord will defend you from all evil:
it is he who will guard your life.
The Lord will defend your going out and your coming in:
from this time forward for evermore.

3. Psalm 127

Unless the Lord builds the house:
their labour is but lost that build it.
Unless the Lord keeps the city:
the watchmen watch in vain.
It is in vain that you rise up early and go so late to rest,
eating the bread of toil:
for the Lord bestows honour—and on those whom he loves.
Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord:
and the fruit of the womb is his gift.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior:
are the children of one's youth.
Happy the man who has his quiver full of them:
he will not be put to shame
when he confronts his enemies at the gate.

4. Psalm 128

Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord:
and walks in the confine of his ways.
You will eat the fruit of your labours:
happy shall you be, and all shall go well with you.
Your wife within your house:
shall be as a fruitful vine;
Your children around your table:
like the fresh shoots of the olive.
Behold, thus shall the man be blessed:
who lives in the fear of the Lord.
May the Lord so bless you from Zion:
that you see Jerusalem in prosperity
all the days of your life.
May you see your children's children:
and in Israel let there be peace.

Readings from the New Testament

1. The Greatest is love

The First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians ch. 13

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 so that I may boast, 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. 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.

2. The Greatest is love

The First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians ch. 13 (paraphrase)

The higher gifts are those you should prize. But I can show you an even better way. I may speak in tongues of men or of angels, but if I have no love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging symbol. I may have the gift of prophecy and the knowledge of every hidden truth. I may have faith enough to move mountains. But if I have no love, I am nothing.

I may give all I possess to the needy, I may give my body to be burnt, but if I have no love, I gain nothing by it.

Love is patient; love is kind; love envies no one; love is never boastful, never conceited, never rude; love is never selfish, never quick to take offence.

Love keeps no score of wrongs; takes no pleasure in the sins of others, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, its endurance. Love will never come to an end.

Prophecies will cease; tongues of ecstasy will fall silent; knowledge will vanish. For our knowledge and our prophecy alike are partial, and the partial vanishes when wholeness comes.

When I was a child I spoke like a child, thought like a child, reasoned like a child; but when I grew up I finished childish things. At present we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but one day we shall see face to face. My knowledge now is partial, then it will be whole, like God's knowledge of me.

There are only three things that last forever; faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.

3. A prayer that Christ may dwell within you

The Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians ch. 3

For this reason 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 his 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 than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

4. Live a life worthy of your calling

The Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians ch. 4

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

5. Rejoice!

The Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians 4.4-9

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 honourable, 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 in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

6. Clothe yourself with love

The Letter of St. Paul to the Colossians 3.12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, 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 also must 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.

7. Love one another

The First Letter of St. John 3.18-24

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

8. Let us love one another

The First Letter of St. John 4.7-12

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Readings from the Gospels

1. The Beatitudes

St. Matthew 5: 1-12

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, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

2. Build your house on the rock

St. Matthew 7.24-29

'Everyone then who hears 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 beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!'

3. The greatest commandment St. Matthew 22.35-40

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?' He said to him, ' "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'

4. What God has joined together, let no one separate From St. Mark ch. 10

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.' People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

5. The wedding at Cana St. John 2.1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

6. Abide in my love St. John 15.9-17

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved 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. 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.