

# A Wedding Ceremony for Today

By Jonathan Buck

**I** have performed many weddings using the following ceremony, which I wrote originally for my daughter and her husband several years ago. Before each wedding, I ask the couple getting married to read through the ceremony, and if they see anything they think could be improved or adjusted, to let me know. As a result, the ceremony now contains the unique touch of many couples.

I think it's a lovely ceremony because it moves with the culture, but never strays from the bedrock reasons for marriage. Here it is:

*Marriage is amazing. It's the most ancient and revered tradition known to humanity, a wonderful institution that has survived and flourished through the centuries, providing enormous happiness and fulfillment for billions of us humans. And even in its rather battered state today, marriage continues to attract*

*millions of couples, eagerly seeking the treasures it contains.*

*So, what is it about marriage that makes it so appealing? Simply put, it is the freedom that comes from knowing you are loved—and will always be loved, despite all your obvious imperfections—for nothing more than being you. We crave that love as children from our parents, as teenagers from our friends, but in marriage we find it at its best in this*

*one incredible person who willingly and publicly declares that he, or she, will love you and cherish you for the rest of your lives together.*

*And what more could we want in this human existence of ours? At the very roots of our being, this is what we were created for: to*

*give and receive love, believing love can tackle and overcome every obstacle, every mistake and every disagreement. And the overwhelming evidence that this is true—that such a love really exists—can be seen in all those marriages that survive and even flourish in the most trying of circumstances.*



Such an incredibly successful design surely tells of a brilliant designer, with something wonderful and inspiring in mind. But what is it? Well, the Bible tells us that marriage was God's idea, and he designed it for one very basic and simple purpose: to help us humans experience the kind of love he made possible, and the amazing sense of freedom his love creates.

That's why love is so important. It opens the door to a freedom you may not have believed possible: the freedom to be utterly real, totally transparent, and even vulnerable with each other, without any fear or embarrassment whatsoever. It is for this kind of freedom that marriage was created—where there are no demands, no expectations, no guilt-trips—just the overwhelming sense of relief and peace of mind that you are loved, no matter what.

That's what marriage offers, and to help you experience it to the full, God will give you all the

support you need. If you ever want to know if God is real and that he really cares for you, just ask him for the love that will keep your marriage together and watch what happens!

And what kind of love does God have on offer? It's the kind of practical, enduring love that will keep your relationship intact and your friendship growing, because it's a love that's patient and kind; it doesn't bear grudges or remember wrongs; it isn't sarcastic, arrogant or accusing; it doesn't get jealous or short-tempered; it's a love that forgives, trusts, and perseveres through thick and thin. That's the love God offers—and it's there for the asking at a moment's notice for both of you—to enable you to grow closer, not further apart, as time goes by.

Hopefully, then, it dawns on you at some point in your happily married lives—as this one dear person keeps your need to be loved constantly fulfilled—that this is life at its best, and the way

life is meant to be. So, on behalf of God, can I pass on his thanks and congratulations to you both for being so willing to experience what he wants for you. And all it takes from now on is this: that you will be faithful to each other, come what may, just as God is forever faithful to you.

An exchange of vows then follows, then a prayer by me, the familiar exchange of rings, kiss, signing forms, publicly announcing the couple as officially married, and off they go for congratulations all 'round.

Many people have asked me afterwards where I got the ceremony from. I tell them it came from thinking about my daughter and the people she would have at her wedding. They were like her, young and turned off religion, but still open to the magic of marriage. It was that magic I wanted to capture, for their sakes, because marriage still can be amazing.

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