

A COLLECTION OF SPECIAL READINGS

(The following readings can be used in any ceremony)

BIBLE PASSAGES I Corinthians 13:1-13, Song of Solomon 2: 8-10, 14,16a;8:6-8a Ecclesiastes: 3: 1-8 Genesis 1: 26-28; 31 Genesis 2: 18-24 Ephesians 5: 2, 25-32 Colossians 3: 12-17 | John 4: 7-12 John 15: 9-12

MEMORY READING: Although death has separated us physically, faith and love has bound us eternally. Though we cannot see you, we know that you are here. Though we cannot touch you, we feel the warmth of your smile as we begin this new chapter in our lives. We pause to reflect upon those who have shaped our character, and molded our hearts. May the special moment (or the lighting of this candle) be a reminder of the memories we have shared with....*names may be listed*, as a representation of the everlasting impact that she/her/they have made upon our lives.

MEMORY READING: God looked around His garden and found an empty place. He then looked down upon His earth and saw your loving face. He saw your path was difficult and He closed your weary eyes, He whispered to you, "peace be thine" and gave you wings to fly. It broke our hearts to lose you, but you did not go alone. For part of us went with you on the day God called you home.

SAND CEREMONY: _____ and _____, you have just sealed your relationship by giving and receiving rings and the exchange of vows, and this covenant is a relationship pledge between two people who agree that they will commit themselves to one another throughout their lives. The most beautiful example of this partnership is the marriage relationship. You have committed here today to share the rest of your lives with each other. Today, this relationship is symbolized through the pouring of these two individual containers of sand, one representing you, _____, and all that your were, all that you are and all that you will ever be. The other representing you, _____, and all that your were, all that you are and all that you will ever be. As these two containers of sand are poured into the third container, the individual containers of sand no longer exist, but will be joined together as one. Just as these grains of sand can never be separated and poured again into the individual containers, so will you marriage be forever and a day.

#1 "TRADITIONAL IRISH BLESSING" May to road rise to meet you, may the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, the rains fall soft upon your fields. And until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand. May God be with you and bless you; may you see your children's children. May you be poor in misfortune, rich in blessings, may you know nothing but happiness from this day forward. May the road rise to meet you, may the wind be always at your back. May the warm rays of sun fall upon your home and may the hand of a friend always be near. May green be the grass you walk on, may blue be the skies above you, may pure be the joys that surround you, may true be the heart that loves you."

#2 "SONNET 116" by William Shakespeare "Let me not the marriage of true minds Admit impediments. Love is not love With alters when it alteration finds Or bends with the remover to remove. O, no, it is an ever fixed mark That looks on tempests and is never shaken, It is the star to every wandering 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."

#3 "SOUND OF SILENCE" by Raymond J. Baughan "Here in the space between us and the world lies human meaning, Into the vast uncertainty we call. The echo makes 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 fragrant of the universe which is our own."

#4 ELIZABETH BARRET BROWNING "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. I love thee to the depth and breadth and height My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight For the ends of Being and ideal Grace. I love thee to the level of every day's most quiet need, by sun and candle-light. I love thee freely, as men strive for Right. I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise. I love thee with the passion put to use In old grief's, and with my childhood's faith. I love thee with a love I seemed to lose With my lost saints,-I love thee with the breath, Smiles, tears, of all my life!-and, if God choose, I shall thee better after death."

#5 PAUL L' HERROU "The hand which you each offer to the other is an extension of yourselves; Just as is the warmth and love Which you express to each other. Cherish the touch, For you are touching another life. Be sensitive to its pulse, And try to understand and respect its flow and rhythm, Just as you do your own."

#6 "TWO TREES" by Janet Miles "A portion of your soul has been entwined with mine. A gentle kind of togetherness, which separate we stand. As two trees deeply rooted in separate plots of ground, While their topmost branches come together, Forming a miracle of lace against the heavens."

#7 THE PROPHET KHLIL GIBRAN "Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup. Give one another of your bread but eat not the same loaf. Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone, Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music. Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping. For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts. And stand together yet not too near together: For the pillars of the temple stand apart, And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow."

#8 "BLESSING FOR A MARRIAGE" by James Dillet Freeman "May your marriage bring you all the exquisite excitements a marriage should bring, And may life grant you also patience, tolerance, and understanding. May you always need one another not so much to fill your emptiness as to help you to know your fullness. A mountain needs a valley to be complete; the valley does not make the mountain less, but more; and the valley is more a valley because it has a mountain towering over it. So let it be with you and you. May you need one another, but not out of weakness. May you embrace one another, but not out of lack. May you entice one another, but not compel one another. May you succeed in all important ways with one another, and not fail in the little graces. May you look for things to praise, often say, "I love you!" and take no notice of small faults. If you have quarrels that push you apart May both of you hope to have good sense enough to take the first step back. May you enter into the mystery which is the awareness of one another's presence- no more physical than spiritual, warm and near when you are side by side, and warm and near when you are in separate rooms or even distant cities. May you have happiness, and may you find it making one another happy. May you have love, and may you find it loving one another!"

#9 ROSS SNYDER "Love is sensing the other as a presence. Love is receiving the feelings, thoughts intentions of the other into your own understanding. Love is fidelity over the long haul. Without fidelity love is a puff of wind, a gust of emotion. Love is talking together about insignificant things and significant things until a few important things, words, people have similar meanings for both of you, and you both know that this is so. Love is listening together to the pulse of what-it-means-to-be-alive, to be human, to glorify that which is sacred and enjoy it."

#10 ELLEN BRENEMAN "I wonder if you know how special you are to me. I wonder if it shows how wonderful I think you are... Or how many times a day I think of you.. Or how excited I feel whenever I look forward to being with you and holding you close. I wonder if you can read my mind or see into my heart and know how happy I am to have you in my life. Sometimes I don't know how to let you know... But if I ever imagined someone perfect for me to be my love and share my life, it would be you... and I just wondered if you knew."

#11 DOROTHY R. COLGAN "I promise to give you the best of myself...and to ask of you no more than I can give. I promise to accept you the way you are...I fell in love with you for the qualities, abilities, and outlook on life that you have, and I won't try to reshape you in a different image. I promise to respect you as a person with your own interests, desires, and needs, and to realize that those are sometimes different, but no less important than my own. I promise to share with you...my time, my close attention, and to bring joy and strength and imagination to our relationship. I promise to keep myself open to you...to let you see through the window of my personal world into my innermost fears and feelings, secrets and dreams. I promise to grow along with you, to be willing to face change as we both change in order to keep our relationship alive and exciting. And finally, I promise to love you in good times and in bad, with all I have to give and all I feel inside... in the only way I know how...completely and forever."

#12 "TO THE ONE I LOVE" Goethe "This is the true measure of love When we believe that we alone can love, That no one could ever have loved so Before us, and that no one Will ever love in the same way After us."

#13 "YOU'RE ALSO MY FRIEND" "You're more than the one I love, You're also my friend. Someone I feel really lucky to know And I'll always be close to, wherever I go... Someone who knows me, Both inside and out, Who accepts me and knows What real trust is about. Someone to talk with or lovingly tease, Who makes me feel good And completely at ease. Someone who makes life a wonderful blend Of the perfect romance With the best kind of friend, Someone who has all my love, Without end. This is what I've found in you. You are the one I love, You're also my friend."

#14 "Why Marriage?" by Mari Nichols-Haining "Because to the depths of me, I long to love one person, with all my heart, my soul, my mind and my body. Because I need a forever friend to trust with the intimacies of me, who won't hold them against me, who loves me when I am unlikable, who sees the small child in me, and who looks for the divine potential of me. Because I need to cuddle in the warmth of the night with someone who thanks God for me, with someone I feel blessed to hold. Because marriage means opportunity to grow in love and in friendship. Because marriage is a discipline to be added to a list of achievements. Because marriages do not fail, people fail when they enter into marriage expecting to make them whole. Because, knowing this, I promise to myself to take full responsibility for my spiritual, mental and physical wholeness, I create me. I take half of the responsibility for my marriage, together we create our marriage. Because with this understanding the possibilities are limitless. "

#15 "To Be One With Each Other" George Elliot "What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel 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 with each other in silent unspeakable memories at the moment of parting?"

#16 "What Is Love" Author Unknown "Sooner or later we begin to understand that love is more than verses or valentines and romance in the movies. We begin to know that love is here and now, real and true, the most important thing in our lives. For love is the creator of our favorite memories and the foundation of our fondest dreams. Love is a promise that is always kept, a fortune that can never be spent, a seed that can flourish in even the most unlikely places. And this radiance that never fades, this mysterious and magical joy, is the greatest treasure of all - one known only by those who love."

#17 "Marriage Joins Two People In The Circle Of Its Love" by Edmund O'Neill "Marriage is a commitment to life, the best two people can find and bring out in each other. It offers opportunities for sharing and growth that no other relationship can equal. It is a physical and an emotional joining that is promised for a lifetime. Within the circle of its love, marriage encompasses all of life's most important relationships. A wife and a husband are each other's best friend, confidant, lover, teacher, listener, and critic. And there may come times when one partner is heartbroken or ailing, and the love of the other may resemble the tender caring of a parent for a child. Marriage deepens and enriches every facet of life. Happiness is fuller, memories are fresher, commitment is stronger, even anger is felt more strongly. Marriage understands and forgives the mistakes life is unable to avoid. It encourages and nurtures new life, new experiences, and new ways of expressing love that is deeper than life. When two people pledge their

love and care for each other in marriage, they create a spirit unique unto themselves which finds them closer than any spoken or written words. Marriage is a promise, a potential made in the hearts of two people who love each other and take a lifetime to fulfill."

#18 "Eskimo Love Song" Author Unknown "You are my husband/wife. My feet shall run because of you. My feet shall dance because of you. My heart shall beat because of you. My eyes shall see because of you. My mind with think because of you. And I shall love because of you."

#19 "A Polish Blessing" "May your heart be as patient as the earth, your love as warm as harvest gold. May your days be full, as the city is full, your nights as joyful as dancers. May your arms be as welcoming as home. May your faith be as enduring as God's love, your spirit as valiant as your heritage. May your hand be as sure, as a friend, your dreams as hopeful as a child. May your soul be as brave as your people, and my you be blessed."

#20 "The Prophet" Kahlil Gibran "Love has no other desire but to fulfill itself. But if you love and must needs have desires, let these be your desires: to melt and be like a running brook that sings its melody to the night. To know the pain of too much tenderness. To be wounded by your own understanding of love; and to bleed willingly and joyfully. To wake at dawn with a winged heart and give thanks for another day of loving; to rest at the noon hour and meditate love's ecstasy; to return home at eventide with gratitude; and then to sleep with a prayer for the beloved in your heart and a song of praise upon your lips."
