

OPTIONAL WEDDING CEREMONY ELEMENTS

Listed in Alphabetical Order

(This list is frequently updated with new options—last revised 180222)

Following are a variety of optional elements that can be built into your wedding ceremony. If desired, we can work together to edit and adapt the words to suit your preferences, or if there are children's names you would like to include, that is very easy to do.

Most of these options usually fit will either after the Presentation of the Bride, or right after the Exchange of Rings, but we can be flexible.

Couples are responsible to provide the items necessary for the ceremony—candles, sand/containers, wine, etc. Two inexpensive sources for various items are Hobby Lobby and Michael's Art Supply—either online or at your local store.

Feel free to ask questions or propose other ideas; I want to work with you to personalize/customize the wedding to suit your preferences and creative desires. Want to see LOTS of different wordings for vows, ring exchanges, etc? Check out this website and tell me what you want.

<http://www.weddingplanningwords.com/>

Let's get creative and have fun!

BRANDING CEREMONY: *(also known as Wood Branding)*

Today (Groom) and (Bride) take a new step in their relationship together. As a sign of the intertwining of their lives,
and the fire that burns within their souls for each other,
gathered together among friends and family,
they will brand this piece of wood.

This brand will be on permanent display in their home
to show their devotion to each other
today, tomorrow and the rest of their lives;
to help them find their way back home,
if ever lost in the turbulent storms of life;
to remind them of the love and support
that each of you have given them today
and that you continue to give each and every day.

And as this brand can never be undone,
so shall their promise to each other stand the test of time.

BUTTERFLY RELEASE *(can be used for doves also)*

May be used as a memorial moment to honor loved ones who have passed away

A wedding is clearly a time
for celebration with family and friends—
(Groom) and (Bride) have asked me tell you how very grateful
they are for your presence with them
on this very special day in their lives.

They also want to make known
their love and gratitude for some other very important people
who are not able to be here today because they have passed on,
and so they have chose to release butterflies
in loving memory of each of the people whose names
I am about to read.

As I read each name, let the butterflies for that person be released.

(Name) *(release)*

(Name) *(release)*

(Name) *(release)*

In truth, we all stand on the shoulders
of those who have gone before us,
and it is appropriate that we remember them,
as we worship God in a wedding ceremony such as this.

Perhaps you would like to take a moment of silence
in your own heart
to remember with gratitude those who have passed on,
but who in their time helped you
become the person you now are,
and you may wish to say a thank-you to God
for allowing them to be present in your life.
(About ten seconds)

Amen, and thank you. We remember them all with joy.

CORD OF THREE STRANDS CEREMONY:
(Reading Option #1)

(Groom) and (Bride) have chosen to braid three strands together into a single cord.

Each strand has a significant meaning.

The gold strand represents God and His majesty.

The purple strand represents the groom and his life.

The white strand represents the bride and her life.

(Groom) and (Bride), you may now braid your strands together.

(They braid the three strands)

In braiding these three strands together,

(Groom) and (Bride) symbolize and proclaim

that their marriage is more than a joining of two lives together;

it is a unity with God as well.

They have chosen to allow God to be at the center of their marriage,

woven into every aspect to strengthen their relationship.

As Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 reads,

Two are better than one,

because they have a good return for their work:

If one falls down, his friend can help him up.

But pity the person who falls and has no one to help him up!

Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.

But how can one keep warm alone?

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.

A cord of *three* strands is not easily broken.

CORD OF THREE STRANDS CEREMONY:
(Reading Option #2)

(Groom) and (Bride) have chosen to braid three strands together into a single cord.

The braiding of the three stands demonstrates

how (Groom) and (Bride) are joined by God in marriage.

Each strand holds special meaning.

The Gold Strand symbolizes that the Lord Jesus

has been invited by (Groom) and (Bride)

to the position of authority in this marriage relationship.

The Purple Strand represents the groom.

As a new creation in Christ, the majesty of the Groom

is represented in purple.

As (Groom) loves his wife and submits himself to the Lord,

the Lord in turn will demonstrate His great love

in the marriage relationship.

The White Strand represents the bride.

Having been cleansed by salvation in Christ,

the purity of the Bride is represented in white.

As (Bride) honors her husband

and submits herself to the Lord,

the Lord in turn

will nurture and strengthen the marriage relationship.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 reads,

“Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.

A cord of *three* strands is not quickly broken.”

Today, (Groom) and (Bride) have been woven together

by God as ONE in marriage!

DOVE RELEASE: *(can be used for butterflies also)*

(See the wording for Butterfly Release which is essentially the same)

GIFT TO A CHILD *(may be used when blending families)*

As (Groom) and (Bride) are being joined in marriage today, they also are forming a family with ___child name(s)____. (Groom) or (Bride) will now present a gift to ___child name(s)____ as an expression of love and commitment to him/her/them. *(The adult takes a gift from the table behind the minister and presents it to the child with a hug, and kiss and whispered words of affection).*

HANDS CEREMONY *(may be read by a family member or friend)*

These are the hands of your best friend,
young and strong and full of love for you,
that are holding yours on your wedding day
as you promise to love each other today, tomorrow and forever.

These are the hands that will work alongside yours
as together you build your future.

These are the hands that will passionately love you
and cherish you through the years,
and with the slightest touch will comfort you like no other.

These are the hands that will hold you
when fear or grief temporarily comes your way.

These are the hands that will countless times
wipe the tears from your eyes, tears of sorrow and tears of joy.

These are the hands that will tenderly hold your children.

These are the hands that will give you support
and encouragement to chase down your dreams.

These are the hands that will hold you tight
as you struggle through difficult times.

These are the hands that will give you strength when you need it.

These are the hands that will lift your chin and brush your cheek
as they raise your face to look into eyes
that are filled with overwhelming love for you.

And lastly, these are the hands
that even when wrinkled and aged will still be reaching for yours,
still giving you the same unspoken tenderness with just a touch.

HANDBASTING CEREMONY: *(with a reading of The Hands Ceremony)
(also known as Tying the Knot)*

*Jeff receives the two tartan cloths from Best Man and Maid of Honor
(Groom) and (Bride), please join hands.*

(Groom), may the threads of this fabric represent the richness
of your love for (Bride).

(Bride), may the threads of this fabric represent the richness
of your love for (Groom).

(Groom) and (Bride), today on your wedding day,
as you promise to love each other forever,
you are holding the hands of your best friend.

Look at each others' hands:

These are the hands of your best friend,
sure and strong and full of love for you,
that are holding yours on your wedding day
as you promise to love each other today, tomorrow and forever.

These are the hands that will work alongside yours
as together you build your future.

These are the hands that will passionately love you
and cherish you through the years,
and with the slightest touch will comfort you like no other.

These are the hands that will hold you
when fear or grief temporarily comes your way.

These are the hands that will countless times
wipe the tears from your eyes, tears of sorrow and tears of joy.

These are the hands that will give you support
and encouragement to chase down your dreams.

These are the hands that will hold you tight
as you struggle through difficult times.

These are the hands that will give you strength when you need it.

These are the hands that will lift your chin and brush your cheek
as they raise your face to look into eyes
that are filled with overwhelming love for you.

And lastly, these are the hands
that many years from now may be wrinkled and aged,
but will still be reaching for yours,
still giving you the same unspoken tenderness
with just a touch.

Now (Groom) and (Bride), tie your knot of love!
(they pull their hands back to themselves)

(Jeff holds the knot high for everyone to see)

Keep this knot safe, may it never come undone.

May it always be a reminder of the bond and commitment
you have made here today.

(Jeff hands the knotted cloth to the Best Man)

HAND WASHING CEREMONY

Couple approaches a table with a glass bowl of water and two hand towels. Having flowers or lemon slices floating in the water is a nice touch.

(Groom) and (Bride),

Today, in front of your family and friends,

you start your life together anew as a married couple.

As with any new endeavor, it is best to start with a clean slate —

putting problems big and small behind you.

You come acknowledging that the person you have chosen

is not perfect, yet fits with you in a way no other person can. Whatever
difficulties you may have experienced,
today you have decided that your love is bigger than any of them,
and you have chosen a life together.

Washing with water symbolizes being made clean with forgiveness,
and we all need forgiveness.

We need to forgive others, receive forgiveness,
and we need to forgive ourselves

As you wash your hands in this bowl of water,
forgive yourself and each other for any pain in the past.

Allow yourself to be forgiven for your human imperfections.

Couple washes their hands.

Allowing yourselves to have your hands dried by each other signifies your
vulnerability.

And we have to be vulnerable —

it breaks through isolation and in our own vulnerability,
we become more caring and understanding of our mate.

In a loving and compassionate marriage,

to achieve the greatest intimacy,

you must have the courage to be open and vulnerable to each other.

Now you may dry one another's hands.

(Groom) and (Bride),

do you begin your lives as a couple about to be married
together with grace and compassion?

COUPLE:

We do.

JUMPING THE BROOM:

We conclude this ceremony

with the African American tradition of jumping of the broom. Slaves
in this country were not permitted to marry,
so they jumped a broom as a way of ceremonially uniting.

Today it represents great joy and at the same time

serves as a reminder of what many people in this country,
perhaps some of your ancestors,

had to overcome in order to share in love and family.

As our bride and groom jump the broom,

they physically and spiritually

cross the threshold into the land of matrimony.

It marks the beginning of making a home together.

It symbolizes the sweeping away of the old

and the welcoming of the new;

the sweeping away all that is negative or painful,
making way for all things that are good
to come into your lives.

It is also a call of support for the marriage

from the entire community of family and friends.

The bride and groom

will now begin their new life together with a clean sweep!

*One of the attendants then hands the broom to the groom, who makes
sweeping gestures to brush all that is old or painful.*

*The groom then hands the broom to the bride,
who places it on the ground in their path.*

Everyone join with me in counting 1, 2, 3... Jump!

All together: **1, 2, 3... Jump!**

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil,
for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever, Amen.

ROSES or LEIS TO THE NEW IN-LAWS (MOTHERS):

(Groom) and (Bride) recognize
that as they are about to form their own new family,
they will also join each others' families
and call them their own kin.
To symbolize their love and respect to their new families,
they will now present a rose to their new mothers-in-law
and share an affectionate greeting with the new fathers-in-law,
as representatives of the entire family they join.

ROSES or LEIS TO THE COUPLE'S OWN MOTHERS :

This wedding is also a celebration of family.
It is the blending of two families, separate up to this moment,
but united from this day forward.
(Groom) and (Bride) wish to honor this blending of families
by presenting a rose to their mothers ...
to thank them for their wisdom, support,
and for the unconditional love
that has been so freely given to them throughout their lives.

SAND CEREMONY:

For photos/ideas regarding sand ceremonies visit

[https://www.pinterest.com/search/pins/?q=ideas%20sand%20ceremony&rs=typed&term_meta\[\]=ideas%7Ctyped&term_meta\[\]=sand%7Ctyped&term_meta\[\]=ceremony%7Ctyped](https://www.pinterest.com/search/pins/?q=ideas%20sand%20ceremony&rs=typed&term_meta[]=ideas%7Ctyped&term_meta[]=sand%7Ctyped&term_meta[]=ceremony%7Ctyped)

We can adjust the text below to include children you bring to the marriage or to make more layers of sand if you like. Some couples buy the materials at Hobby Lobby or Michaels' Art Supply stores.

In Mark Chapter 10, verses 6-8,

Jesus said about Adam and Eve, the first couple,
“at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female. ‘For
this reason a man will leave his father and mother
and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’”
God created each of us as individuals, but not to be alone;
instead, he also made us man and woman
so that we could partners and helpers to each other.

Today as you have made a covenant before God to join in marriage,
you become one flesh.

You have chosen to symbolize your union with a sand ceremony.

First, I will pour in white sand, representing your faith in God
as the foundation of who you are as individuals.

(Groom), pour some of your sand,
representing yourself as an individual before you came to this union,
your strengths, passions, characteristics, all your life experiences,
both good and challenging, that make you the man you are today.

Now (Bride), also pour some of your sand,
representing yourself as an individual before you came to this union,
your strengths, passions, characteristics, all your life experiences,
both good and challenging, that make you the woman you are today.

(If children are to be included):

Childnames 1/2/3, add your sand as well, because you make your own special
contribution to your family. *They pour.*

Then, (Groom) and (Bride), *(and children if applicable)*
pour your remaining sand in together
to represent your joining as one in marriage and family
completely and eternally.

Lastly, I will pour another layer of white sand
to represent God watching over you and protecting you
with his everlasting love.

May God bless this marriage
so that you are as inseparable as these grains of sand.

~we walk back to center and continue the ceremony~

TYING THE KNOT (*with a reading of The Hands Ceremony*)
(also known as *HANDBASTENING CEREMONY*)

*Jeff receives the two tartan cloths from Best Man and Maid of Honor
(Groom) and (Bride), please join hands.*

(Groom), may the threads of this fabric represent the richness
of your love for (Bride).

(Bride), may the threads of this fabric represent the richness
of your love for (Groom).

(Groom) and (Bride), today on your wedding day,
as you promise to love each other forever,
you are holding the hands of your best friend.

Look at each others' hands:
These are the hands of your best friend,
sure and strong and full of love for you,
that are holding yours on your wedding day
as you promise to love each other today, tomorrow and forever.

These are the hands that will work alongside yours
as together you build your future.

These are the hands that will passionately love you
and cherish you through the years,
and with the slightest touch will comfort you like no other.

These are the hands that will hold you
when fear or grief temporarily comes your way.

These are the hands that will countless times
wipe the tears from your eyes, tears of sorrow and tears of joy.

These are the hands that will give you support
and encouragement to chase down your dreams.

These are the hands that will hold you tight
as you struggle through difficult times.

These are the hands that will give you strength when you need it.

These are the hands that will lift your chin and brush your cheek
as they raise your face to look into eyes
that are filled with overwhelming love for you.

And lastly, these are the hands
that many years from now may be wrinkled and aged,
but will still be reaching for yours,
still giving you the same unspoken tenderness
with just a touch.

Now (Groom) and (Bride), tie your knot of love!
(*they pull their hands back to themselves*)

(*Jeff holds the knot high for everyone to see*)
Keep this knot safe, may it never come undone.
May it always be a reminder of the bond and commitment
you have made here today.

(*Jeff hands the knotted cloth to the Best Man*)

UNITY CANDLE:

The two candles have been lit
to represent the two distinct lives of (Groom) and (Bride).

Now they symbolize their common life
by lighting a unity candle.

The outside candles remain lit
as a symbol of the families and paths from which they come. From this
point forward,

(Groom) and (Bride) embark on a future together.
The light from this one candle cannot be divided,
it may only be shared.

So it is with God's plan;
that these two shall never be divided;
they are to live in the light and warmth
of God's love together always.

~we walk back to center and continue the ceremony~

UNITY GLASS CEREMONY

Officiant: (Groom) and (Bride), today you are making a life-long commitment to share
the rest of your lives with each other *and honor your children as well*. The family
relationship is symbolized through the pouring of these individual containers of glass;
each representing all that you were, all that you are, and all that you will ever be with
additional colors to represent each child.

(*If there are children to participate*)

There are children who will share in this marriage.

 Children's names will now come forward to help us with the Blending of
the Glass. The gathering of this new family will have a deep influence upon them. We
realize that in order for the home to be a happy one, it is essential that there be love and
understanding between this new family that is being created.

As you each hold your glass the separate containers of glass represent your lives to this
moment; individual and unique. As you now combine your glass together, your lives
also join together as one family.

You may now blend the glass together
symbolizing the uniting of the children and (Groom) and (Bride) into one.
Just as these colors of glass can never be separated,
so will your marriage and your family be.

UNION—A Reading by Robert Fulghum

(Groom) and (Bride),

You have known each other from the first glance of acquaintance to this point of commitment. At some point, you decided to marry. From that moment of yes, to this moment of yes, indeed, you have been making commitments in an informal way. All of those conversations that were held in a car, or over a meal, or during long walks – all those conversations that began with, "When we're married", and continued with "I will" and "you will" and "we will" – all those late night talks that included "someday" and "somehow" and "maybe" – and all those promises that are unspoken matters of the heart. All these common things, and more, are the real process of a wedding. The symbolic vows that you are about to make are a way of saying to one another, "You know all those things that we've promised, and hoped, and dreamed – well, I meant it all, every word." Look at one another and remember this moment in time. Before this moment you have been many things to one another – acquaintance, friend, companion, lover, dancing partner, even teacher, for you have learned much from one another these past few years. Shortly you shall say a few words that will take you across a threshold of life, and things between you will never quite be the same. For after today you shall say to the world – This is my husband. This is my wife.

UNITY CROSS

(Groom) and (Bride) will now assemble the Unity Cross, a beautiful sculpture they will display in their home to remind them of the covenant they are making today, a covenant between three parties of (Groom), (Bride), and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through this covenant, from this moment forward you will both be together on your journey through life and you will never be alone.

In Genesis chapter 1,

we read that God created man in His own image.

That means that He created man bold, strong, to be a leader, to be a protector of his wife and family.

(Holding the groom's piece of the Unity Cross, the pastor says:)

The outer form of the Unity Cross

represents the strength, leadership, and protection of the man. The book of Ephesians reminds husbands to love their wives

as Christ loved the church, totally and completely giving himself for her.

(Minister hands the piece to the groom and he places his cross onto the base.)

(Holding the bride's piece of the cross, the minister says)

Similarly, Genesis 2:20-23 tells us

that the woman was taken from man.

The bride's piece of the Unity Cross

represents the beauty and the many capabilities of the woman, designed with intricate, beautiful detail

and is placed inside the protection of the groom's cross, completing the sculpture and representing the Two Becoming One.

(Minister hands the bride her piece which she places into the center of the cross.)

To complete this sculpture,

representing the couple's covenant,

we are placing three pegs to hold it together.

These pegs represent the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

showing God's place in this covenant

and the security and completeness

that only our Heavenly Father can give.

(The three pegs are placed into the Unity Cross, completing the sculpture.)

In Jeremiah 1 verse 5

the scriptures say that God knew you both

before you born

and in Jeremiah 29 verse 11

we're told that he has plans for your lives,

plans for you both to prosper,

plans that are amazing and unimaginable.

But more than that,

God's word tells us that He created you for His purposes.

May this cross be a reminder in your home

of what God has destined for you as a married couple.

VEIL, CORD AND COIN CEREMONY

(Groom) and (Bride), I will now ask your sponsors
Sponsor 1 and Sponsor 2 to please join us up front
with pillows and lay a veil over you to clothe you together.

*(Sponsor 1 and 2 Sponsor 2 come forward
and each place a pillow on the floor for (Groom) and (Bride))*

Minister pointing to the veil held by Sponsor 1 & Sponsor 2:
Let this veil be a symbol of the faithful love you have for each other.
Through the passing of the years, let the veil remind you that you belong
to each other and to no one else.

*(Instruction: Sponsor 1 will pin the veil on (Groom)'s right shoulder, while
Sponsor 2 will drape the veil over (Groom) & (Bride)'s head and pin it on the
left side of (Bride)'s veil shoulder.*

(Groom) and (Bride), I now invite your sponsors
Sponsor 3 & Sponsor 4
to come forward to place a cord over you.

Minister pointing to the cord held by Sponsor 3:
This cord symbolizes an infinite bond of love you share
that keeps your relationship strong in the face of adversity,
as well as that you both are no longer two, but one in marriage.

*(Instruction: Sponsor 3 will place the cord over (Bride)'s head and rest it on
her shoulders, while Sponsor 4 will place the cord over (Groom)'s head and
rest it on his shoulders.)*

May this cord remind you to face your life together courageously
and to be mutual in support of each other
with infinite, unconditional love
in carrying out your duties and responsibilities as a couple.

And, may your love grow stronger
and bind you closer together through the years.

Sponsor 3 & Sponsor 4, please now remove the cord and veil.

*(Sponsor 3 & Sponsor 4 do so, return to their seats w veil/cord;
the couple rises to their feet,
then Sponsor 1 & Sponsor 2 take the pillows and go back to their seats)*

COIN CEREMONY

We will now watch as (Groom) and (Bride) exchange the Arras, or coins.
I invite Sponsor 5 to come forward with the purse of coins.

Sponsor 5 presents the purse with the coins to the Officiant.

Originally, there was an understanding
of husband as “bread winner” and wife as “home maker.”
Today the coins are a reminder of good stewardship for all couples;
that they will mutually support
each other, their children, and the world around them.

May God bless these coins
that symbolize mutual support and responsibility.

*The officiant places the coins into (Groom)'s waiting hands.
(Groom) then drops the coins into (Bride)'s hands and repeats each phrase as
given by the Minister:*

GROOM:
(Bride), please accept these coins/ as a symbol of my dedication/
to your well-being/ and the welfare of our future family

BRIDE:
(Groom), I accept these coins/ as a sign of your dedication/
to my well-being/ and the welfare of our future family.

*(Bride) then puts her hand above GROOM's
then drops the coins back into his hands.*

Finally, GROOM gives the coins to (Best Man) for safe-keeping.

WINE BLENDING CEREMONY

(Groom) and (Bride) have chosen as part of their wedding ceremony to symbolize the blending of their two lives into one, through the blending of wines.

Wine is a welcome and joyful element to a wedding because in the Bible, according to the Gospel of John chapter 2, the first miracle which Jesus performed was turning water into wine at a wedding; the best wine at the celebration.

The glass closest to (Groom), the red wine, symbolizes all that he is as an individual, his character, strengths, ideas and passions, as well as all his life experiences, both trials and joys, that have made him the man who stands here today.

The glass closest to (Bride), the white wine, symbolizes all that she is as an individual, her character, her strengths, her ideas, and her passions, as well as all her life experiences, both trials and joys that have made her the woman she is today.

These individual wines also represent the two families that will be joined today.

By combining the two, (Groom) and (Bride) express their willingness to join these two families and become their kin.

Each individual wine holds its own beauty and character and can stand on its own and without needing anything else, but blended together they create a new and extraordinary, more intricate entity.

(Groom) and (Bride), please pour the wines together in the unity glass to symbolize the union of your two lives and the families from which you come.

**they pour from their individual glasses into the unity wine glass*

Just as the two wines can never be separated and put back into their separate containers, so your marriage will be, enfolded with two individuals, two families, bonded together in one heart.

You may now drink the wine which signifies your commitment to live your lives as one family.

(Groom) lifts the common cup and offers it to (Bride), she sips, Then (Bride) returns the cup to (Groom) who takes a sip and sets the glass down.

As with any glass of wine, one of you may have found it sweet and the other perhaps dry or in between.

Let the drink you shared today serve as a reminder that although you may perceive things differently, you will remember that marriage requires compromise and you will be able to blend the differences you each have as you have blended the wines to create a new and beautiful wine.
~we walk back to center and continue the ceremony~

WINE BOX AND LOVE LETTER CEREMONY:

(Groom) and (Bride) have chosen as a couple to perform a Love Letter & Wine Box ceremony. This box contains a bottle of wine, and a love letter from each to the other.

The letters describe the good qualities they find in one another, the reasons they fell in love, and their reasons for choosing to marry.

The letters are sealed in individual envelopes and they have not seen what the other has written.

So then, you have created your very own “romantic” time capsule to be opened on your 5th wedding anniversary.

I recommend that you keep the box in a place of honor prominently displayed in your home as a constant reminder of your commitment to each other.

(Groom) and (Bride), should you ever find your marriage facing what seem to be insurmountable hardships, you are to as a couple, open this box, sit and drink the wine together, then separate and read the letters you wrote to one another when you were united as a couple in marriage.

By reading these love letters you will reflect upon the reasons you fell in love and chose to marry each other here today.

The hope is, however, that you will never have that kind of reason to open this box.

In that happy case, you are to open this box to share and enjoy on your 5th year wedding anniversary!

When you are finished, write a new letter reflecting on how your love has changed and grown through the years, place a new bottle of wine in the box and return to the box every 5th year.

(Groom) and (Bride), you may now seal the box.
(They nail or screw it shut, then return to their places)

WOOD BRANDING CEREMONY: (see "*Branding Ceremony*")