TOPIC PRINTABLE

Marriage

What Scripture says about marriage: one flesh in Genesis, Jesus' teaching, Paul's call to mutual self-giving, and passages often read at weddings.

GENESIS 2:24

Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother, and will join with his wife, and they will be one flesh.

Leaving, joining and becoming "one flesh": the verse Jesus and Paul both quote when they speak about marriage.

MARK 10:6–9

But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this cause a man will leave his father and mother, and will join to his wife, and the two will become one flesh, so that they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

Jesus goes back past the law on divorce to creation itself and concludes, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

EPHESIANS 5:21–33

subjecting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the assembly, being Himself the savior of the body. But as the assembly is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the assembly and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present the assembly to Himself gloriously, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without defect. Even so husbands also ought to love their

own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord also does the assembly, because we are members of His body, of His flesh and bones. “For this cause a man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife. Then the two will become one flesh.” This mystery is great, but I speak concerning Christ and the assembly. Nevertheless each of you must also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Paul’s fullest teaching on marriage, which begins with mutual submission “in the fear of Christ” and measures a husband’s love by Christ, who “gave Himself up for her.”

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1 CORINTHIANS 13:4–7

Love is patient and is kind. Love doesn’t envy. Love doesn’t brag, is not proud, doesn’t behave itself inappropriately, doesn’t seek its own way, is not provoked, takes no account of evil; doesn’t rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

The most common wedding reading. Written about life in a church community, it describes the patient, unselfish love a marriage needs day to day.

SONG OF SONGS 8:6–7

Set me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm; for love is strong as death. Jealousy is as cruel as Sheol. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a very flame of the LORD. Many waters can’t quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man would give all the wealth of his house for love, he would be utterly scorned.

Love “strong as death” that “many waters can’t quench”: Scripture celebrating the love of a bride and groom.

TOBIT 8:5–8

And Tobias began to say, “Blessed are You, O God of our fathers, and blessed is Your holy and glorious name forever. Let the heavens bless You, and all Your creatures. You made Adam, and gave him Eve his wife for a helper and support. From them came the seed of men. You said, it is not good that the man should be alone. Let’s make him a helper like

him. And now, O Lord, I take not this my sister for lust, but in truth. Command that I may find mercy and grow old with her." She said with him, "Amen." And they both slept that night.

A newly married couple begin by praying together, and Tobias asks to "grow old with her." One of the Old Testament readings offered for Catholic weddings.

COLOSSIANS 3:12–14

Put on therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, humility, and perseverance; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, if any man has a complaint against any; even as Christ forgave you, so you also do. Above all these things, walk in love, which is the bond of perfection.

Compassion, patience, bearing with one another and forgiving: the ordinary virtues of a shared life, bound together by love.

HEBREWS 13:4

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled; but God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.

"Let marriage be held in honor among all": a short charge to the whole community to honor marriage.

RUTH 1:16–17

Ruth said, "Don't urge me to leave you, and to return from following you, for where you go, I will go; and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me."

Often read at weddings for its vow of lifelong loyalty, though Ruth spoke these words to Naomi, her mother-in-law, not to a husband.
