

All Church of England weddings should have at least one reading from the Bible, but if you wish, you can also include other special readings.

At your wedding ceremony, it's possible for a guest to read out a poem, an extract from a book, or even something that has been specially written, providing you also have a Bible reading. Ask your vicar for guidance on this, as they have had plenty of experience in developing ceremonies to include those personal touches.

To inspire you, the links below show some readings that have been used at weddings before.

Your walled garden: Author unknown

Your marriage should have within it a secret and protected space, open to you alone. Imagine it to be a walled garden, entered by a door to which you only hold the key. Within this garden you will cease to be a mother, father, employee, homemaker or any other of the roles which you fulfil in daily life. Here you can be yourselves, two people who love each other. Here you can concentrate on one another’s needs. So take each other’s hands and go forth to your garden. The time you spend together is not wasted but invested – invested in your future and nurture of your love.

The blessing of the Apaches: Author unknown

Now you will feel no rain
For each of you will be shelter to the other.
Now you will feel no cold
For each of you will be warmth to the other.
Now there is no more loneliness for you
For each of you will be companion to the other.
Now you are two bodies
But there is only one life before you.
Go now to your dwelling place.

To be at one with each other: George Eliot (1819-1880)

What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined – to strengthen each other – to be at one with each other in silent unspeakable memories.

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways: Sonnet From The Portuguese XLIII, Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)

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 my old griefs, 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 but love thee better after death.

Sonnet 116: Let Me Not To The Marriage Of True Minds: William Shakespeare

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which 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.

Marriage Advice: Jane Wells (1886)

Let your love be stronger than your hate or anger.
Learn the wisdom of compromise,
for it is better to bend a little than to break.
Believe the best rather than the worst.
People have a way of living up or down to your opinion of them.
Remember that true friendship is the basis for any lasting relationship.
The person you choose to marry is deserving of the courtesies
and kindnesses you bestow on your friends.

Please hand this down to your children and your children's children.

Never Marry But For Love: William Penn (1644-1718)

Never marry but for love; but see that thou lovest what is lovely.
He that minds a body and not a soul
has not the better part of that relationship,
and will consequently lack the noblest comfort of a married life.
Between a man and his wife nothing ought to rule but love.
As love ought to bring them together,
so it is the best way to keep them well together.

A husband and wife that love one another
show their children that they should do so too.
Others visibly lose their authority in their families
by their contempt of one another,
and teach their children to be unnatural by their own examples.

Let not enjoyment lessen, but augment, affection;
it being the basest of passions to like when we have not,
what we slight when we possess.

Here it is we ought to search out our pleasure,
where the field is large and full of variety, and of an enduring nature;
sickness, poverty or disgrace being not able to shake it
because it is not under the moving influences of worldly contingencies.

Nothing can be more entire and without reserve;
nothing more zealous, affectionate and sincere;
nothing more contented than such a couple,
nor greater temporal felicity than to be one of them.

Extract from 'The Anniversary': John Donne (1572–1631)

All kings, and all their favourites,
All glory of honours, beauties, wits,

The sun itself, which makes times, as they pass,
Is elder by a year now than it was
When thou and I first one another saw:
All other things to their destruction draw,
Only our love hath no decay;
This no tomorrow hath, nor yesterday,
Running it never runs from us away,
But truly keeps his first, last, everlasting day.

The Owl and the Pussy Cat: Edward Lear (1812-1888)

I
The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money,
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
“O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are,
You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are!”

II
Pussy said to the Owl, “You elegant fowl!
How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?”
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the Bong-Tree grows
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood
With a ring at the end of his nose,
His nose,
His nose,
With a ring at the end of his nose.

III
“Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?” Said the Piggy, “I will.”
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced by the light of the moon,
The moon,

The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.

One Fine Day by Ben Hiron (2015 – written specially for a family wedding)

To write of love is, to say the least, a challenge
I am still unsure I even know how it truly feels.
I love my sister, my mother, my father, my grandparents and my cousins
I always have, I always will, I can't imagine feeling any other way
I was born into love, have been loved and will always be loved by my family.
This love it didn't grow, it was always there, from the moment I became myself it was a given,
a fact of my life that will forever remain.
The love we feel for family is born and bred within us and no matter what may, it shall prevail.

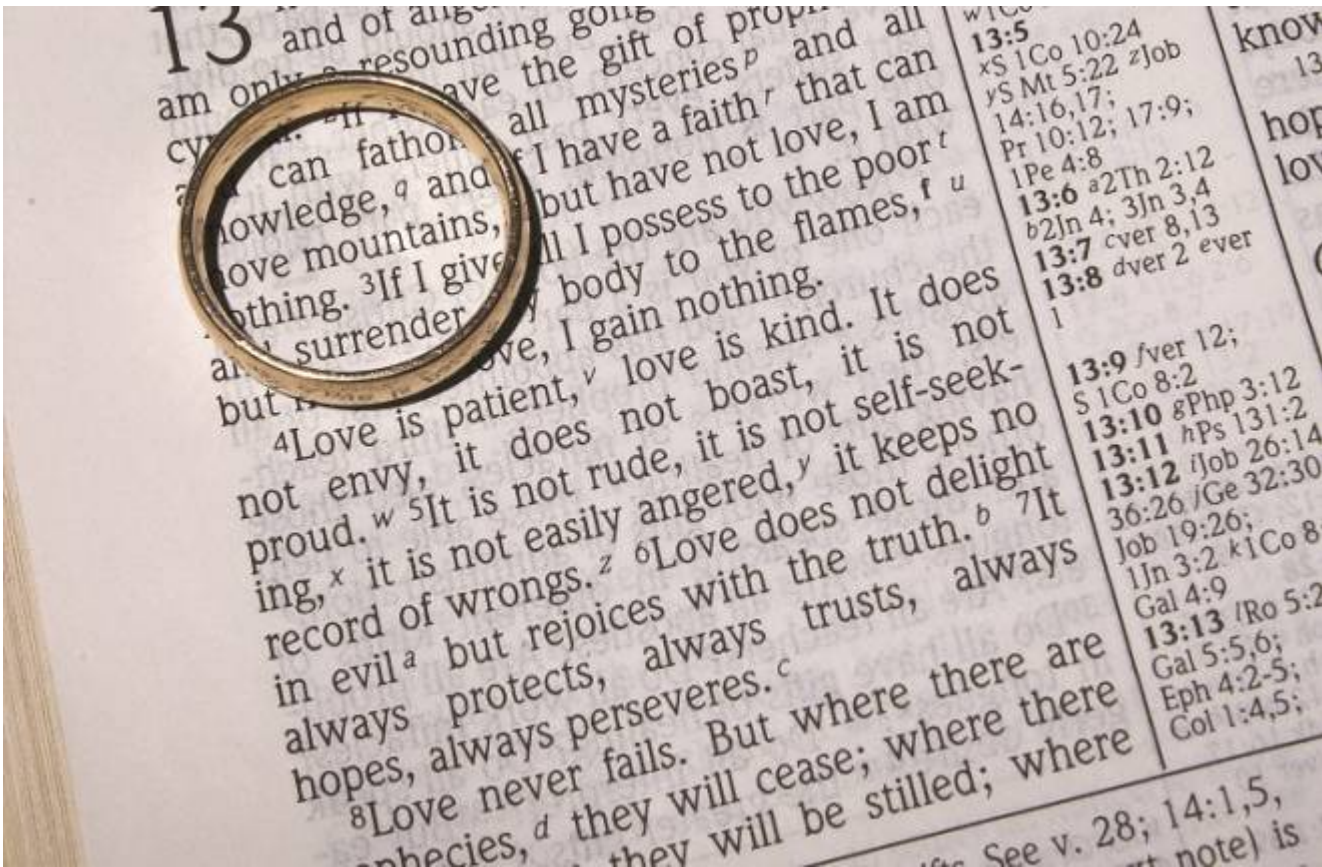
And then there's Love.
I may have felt it for another at sometime or another.
A tightness in my chest, a shortness of breath.
A stumble mid step.
A mumble mid sentence.
A magnificent mixture of strange and unusual feelings never together before.
I hit a wall and am suddenly undone
Befuddled, bemused, utterly and outrageously confused.
Love. It must be Love.
What else could it be?
This is a very small and simple part of what I have felt, for someone or other, who has passed
by.

To love for ever.
For real, for keeps.
To open up yourself and give everything you have to another.
bare your soul, heart and mind.
drop all the walls and let someone right inside your everything.
do anything, say anything,
whatever it takes.
forever and ever and ever
that i can't imagine.
to find that someone, to which all of the above applies.
above you
beyond you
That's why we are here
to bask in the glow of this love
this love we will never feel
because this is theirs and no one else's
and we could never understand
but we can enjoy it, marvel at it, and celebrate it
and hope that we may be so lucky to enjoy a love such as this, one fine day.

Also in this section



Hymns



Bible readings



Choices for your wedding ceremony



Countdown to your church wedding



Ceremony planner



The rehearsal



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Walking down the aisle



Reading of banns



Other music



Prayers



Wedding ceremony words



Wedding blessings



Wedding vows



Filming

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