



**HOW DO YOU SAY I DO?**

**A WEDDING CEREMONY  
SCRIPT FOR EGALITARIANS**

A resource from  
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## INTRODUCTION

This guide was designed to help couples think through the basic structure of a wedding and to encourage discussion about how a ceremony might reflect egalitarian convictions about marriage.

An egalitarian marriage is not a concession to modernity, but is rooted in the principle of mutual submission and encourages husbands and wives to love and serve each other as “one in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 5, Galatians 3:28).

In an egalitarian marriage husbands and wives respect each other as equal partners, and collaborating in decision-making and sharing family responsibilities. Such a marriage makes room for both partners to function out of their areas of strength and giftedness in their service to God and family, without restrictions or expectations based on gender.

The script that follows can be used as written, or as a template for designing something that fits a couples’ unique style. It is not original, but is a compilation of a number of ceremonies the editorial team has attended and participated in over the years. Please take it and make it your own.

A wedding ceremony that reflects a commitment to being full and equal partners is a great way to start a marriage, and so here are some ideas for how to say “I do”.



## WEDDING CEREMONY TEMPLATE

### **Processional**

*Decide ahead of time how the bridal party will walk down the aisle, and whether the groomsmen will accompany them or enter separately with the officiant. The Groomsmen can enter with the Officiant or the Bridal Party.*

Officiant, Groom enter from the side  
Bridal Party enters from the back  
Bride walks down the aisle with both parent(s)  
When they reach the front, Groom's parent(s) also stand for the presentation.

#### *~Option #2*

Officiant enters from the side  
Bridal Party processes down the aisle  
Groom walks down the aisle with his parent(s)  
Bride processes down the aisle with her parents.

#### *~Option #3*

The Bride and Groom enter without parents, either together or in separate aisles, meeting in the front. Parents stand for the presentation.

### **Presentation of the Bride and Groom**

#### **Officiant to Bride's Parents:**

"Who gives their blessing for this woman to marry this man?"

#### **Bride's Parent(s):**

"We do." ~OR~ "Her family gives their blessing."

#### **Officiant to Groom's Parents:**

"Who gives their blessing for this man to marry this woman?"

**Groom's Parent(s):** "We do." ~OR~ "His family gives their blessing."



*~Option #2*

**Officiant to Bride's Parents:** "Who presents [Bride's first name] to be married to [Groom's first name]?"

**Bride's Parent(s):**

"We do." ~OR~ "Her family does."

*~Option #3*

**Officiant to Groom's Parents:** "Who presents [Groom's first name] to be married to [Bride's first name]?"

**Groom's Parent(s):** "We do." ~OR~ "His family does."

*The parents can hug the bride and groom, then seat themselves. The groom takes the bride's arm and both face the Officiant.*

### **Welcome and Prayer**

**Officiant to audience:** On behalf of the [**Bride's Last Name**] and [**Groom's Last Name**] families, welcome to this celebration...etc. Join me in prayer as we ask God to bless this union.

*Following the welcome, the officiant, bride, and groom move to the platform.*

### **Declaration of Intent:**

**Officiant:** "Marriage symbolizes the intimate sharing of two lives. This sharing must not diminish, but should enhance the individuality of each partner. You do not shed your individuality, for that is what brought you together in the first place. A marriage that lasts is one in which each person is developing as in individual while growing in understanding of the other.

[**First Name**] and [**First Name**], it is not this ceremony or the state of being married that will truly join and hold you together, but your ongoing commitment to your relationship, to the Lord, and to the life you wish to make together. In this way, your marriage will not be just a word; it will be more than that. It will be an action; something you work to do every day.



Since it is your intention to enter into marriage, do you come here freely today and without reservation to commit yourselves to each other in marriage? **If so say 'WE DO'."**

**Bride and Groom:** "We do."

**Officiant:** "Will you be respectful and value one another as your equal, be open, kind and patient, trust and have faith in one another, and be worthy of that trust? **If so say 'WE WILL'."**

**Bride and Groom:** "We will."

**Officiant:** "Marriage is an ongoing dialogue, a series of discussions that will help you find your way together. Will you listen and communicate with each other fully, and without fear? **If so say 'WE WILL'."**

**Bride and Groom:** "We will."

**Officiant:** "Every marriage requires a leap of faith. Will you work, even when the work is hard, to honor your vows? **If so say 'WE WILL'."**

**Bride and Groom:** "We will."

**Officiant:** "And as your life unfolds before you, will you remain true to the promises you make this day? **If so say 'WE WILL'."**

**Bride and Groom:** "We will."

### **Scripture Reading/Special Music/Charge to Bride and Groom**

*Be sure that selections of scripture are read from a translation that is gender-accurate or gender-inclusive. The CEB, NRSV, TNIV, and NIV2011 are good options. Find a translation you like and copy the selection that readers will use during the ceremony. They can hold a bible, but read from the copy inside. At this point the Officiant often gives a brief message (homily). This is sometimes called a "charge" to the bride and groom and can be given here or before the exchange of rings.*



## **Exchange of Vows**

*You can write your own vows or use vows that are the same for both the husband and wife. If writing your own, set a word count ahead of time.*

**Officiant:** “We come now to the sacred moment when you make your vows of love and faithfulness to each other. Vows are never to be taken lightly, especially when they are made before God in the company of others.

They are life anchors that hold us steady in the storms of life. If you are sincere in the words you say to each other, and if you will remember them as long as you live, they will prove to be important guides in seasons of difficulty and distress.”

*Have the bride hand off her bouquet. Instruct the couple to take hands and repeat the vows as they are read. Either the bride or the groom can start.*

**Officiant** (repeated by **Groom**):

“I, [**Groom’s First Name**], take you, [**Bride’s First Name**],  
To be my wife.  
To love and respect from this day forward,  
For better, for worse; for richer, for poorer,  
In sickness and in health,  
To honor and to cherish, until we are parted by death.  
I promise to be open and honest, and to be faithful to you,  
So that together we may grow in the likeness of Christ.  
This is my solemn vow.”

**Officiant** (repeated by **Bride**):

“I, [**Bride’s First Name**], take you, [**Groom’s First Name**],  
To be my husband.  
To love and respect from this day forward,  
For better, for worse; for richer, for poorer,  
In sickness and in health,  
To honor and to cherish, until we are parted by death.”



I promise to be open and honest, and to be faithful to you,  
So that together we may grow in the likeness of Christ.  
This is my solemn vow."

*~Option #2 – Bride and Groom recite vows they have written*

### **Exchange of Rings**

**Officiant:** "May I have the rings you intend to give each other? These rings are tokens of your love and faithfulness from this day forward. Just as the circle of this ring is unbroken, so it is that your love should be unbroken."

"The wedding ring is an outward sign of an inward faith. It represents the union of [**First Name**] and [**First Name**] in marriage, but more importantly, it signifies the spiritual grace which exists in every marital relationship. May those who give them and those who wear them be reminded of the sacred vows they represent."

### **Prayer for the Exchange of the Rings**

**Officiant:** "Bless these rings, Lord, that [**First Name**] and [**First Name**] may abide in your favor all of the days of their life. Remind them, Jesus, of your great love for us and the covenant you have made with your people. May the covenant made here this day be kept holy, sacred, and unbroken. Guide them into a deeper relationship with one another, and with you as their Lord and Savior, may they be faithful, even unto death. In Jesus' name, Amen."

*The Officiant instructs the bride to place the ring on the ring finger of the groom's left hand and repeat (either the bride or the groom can start):*

**Officiant** (repeated by **Bride**):

"I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow and my abiding love,  
And with all that I am, and with all that I have, I honor you."



*Instruct the groom to place the ring on the ring finger of the bride's left hand and repeat after you:*

**Officiant** (repeated by **Groom**):

"I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow and my abiding love.  
And with all that I am, and with all that I have, I honor you."

### **Act of Unity/Communion/and or Special Music**

*If a unity candle is used, consider having both parents light the candles rather than just the mothers. Keeping the side candles lit can project the value of both unity and independence. This is a good place for special music. Have the bride retrieve her bouquet before continuing.*

### **Declaration and Pronouncement**

*("I now pronounce you husband and wife" is fstandard these days, rather than "man and wife", but you might want to check with the Officiant.)*

**Officiant:** "You have joined in this act of mutual profession of your love and desire to live as husband and wife, through solemn vows and through the giving and receiving of rings. You have promised before this congregation to love and cherish each other from this day forward for the rest of your lives."

"By the authority invested in me as one who proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ, I now pronounce you **husband and wife\*** in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

### **First Kiss**

**Officiant:** [**Groom's First Name**] and [**Bride's First Name**] you may now seal your vows with a kiss.

*~Option #2*

[**Groom's First Name**] and [**Bride's First Name**] you may now take your first kiss as husband and wife.





*~Option #3 (for those who prefer the more traditional route)*

**[Groom's First Name]** you may now kiss the bride.

### **Presentation**

*Decide how you want to be introduced. Here are some options:*

It gives me great pleasure to introduce for the first time, Mr. and Mrs.  
**[Last Name]!**

*~Option #2*

It gives me great pleasure to introduce for the first time, **[First Name]** and **[First Name] [Last Name]!**

*~Option #3*

If you are keeping both of your last names or the name situation is not conducive to this format you can skip the presentation altogether.

### **Recessional**

*As the music starts, the Bride and Groom exit, followed by the wedding party. The Groomsmen then come back to escort the family as they leave. The Officiant can exit after giving any needed announcements.*

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## **A Final Note**

No matter how carefully you plan, the reality is that weddings are rarely "perfect". With so many people involved and emotions running high it is likely that some part of the day is not going to go as you envisioned it.

In the end, the most important thing is your commitment to each other as full and equal partners, and that is not going to be impacted by anything that might not go according to plan in the ceremony.

Wishing you a long, happy, healthy marriage!



## Resources

### **Ceremony Ideas**

<http://bridalguide.com/planning/wedding-ceremony-traditions/examples-of-wedding-vows>

<http://soulation.org/jonalynblog/2012/08/egalitarian-marriage-what-it-looks-like.html>

<http://www.cbeinternational.org/blogs/proposals-parents-and-purchases/>

### **Marriage and Marriage Preparation**

As for Me and My House: Crafting Your Marriage to Last. Walter Wangerin Jr.

"The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home". Jack & Judith Balswick.

Getting Ready for Marriage: A Practical Road Map for Your Journey Together. Jim Burns and Doug Fields.

Prepare/Enrich. One of the most widely used programs for premarital counseling and premarital education. <https://www.prepare-enrich.com/>

Preparing Couples for Love and Marriage: A Pastor's Resource. Cameron Lee and James Furrow. Companion website: <http://preparingcouples.com/>

Together: Reclaiming Co-Leadership in Marriage and Together Companion Journal/Facilitator Guide. Tim and Anne Evans. <http://www.rlmarrriage.com/>

**The Junia Project** blog also has a number of posts on marriage. Just enter marriage in the Search bar at [www.juniaproject.com](http://www.juniaproject.com).

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