

Who presents this woman in marriage?

Thank you. You may be seated.

Lets bow our heads in prayer.

Father, we thank You for the holy covenant of marriage. We thank You that you did not leave man alone, but created for him a suitable helpmate... a person who will be his equal partner in all of life's journey and walk. We ask now that You will bless this union and that You will lend to them your strength, Your wisdom... Your guidance... Your blessing. We ask that You will bless them in the morning and in the evening. We ask that You will bless them in the country and the city. We ask that You will bless them coming and going. We ask that You will seal them with Your name. Father, we ask that Your Word will indeed be a "lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path." We ask that during the storms and trials of life that You will be with them... guiding them with Your Word, and that they will thank You for Your grace during these times of testing. We also ask that they will remember You in the good seasons of their life and that they will return to You and give You praise and thanks for Your kindness and grace. We ask all of these things in the name of our Savior, and it is in that name that we seal this covenant so You will bless them. In Christ's name... Amen.

The marriage covenant is the holist of all agreements that two people can make. The word "covenant" is an ancient Hebrew word, which literally means, "to cut." This is a direct reference to slitting or "cutting" in half an animal of sacrifice. These two pieces were then spread apart and the two people making the covenant would walk in a figure eight pattern (representing infinity) between the two pieces of flesh. They would state to each other that as long as these two pieces of flesh did not grow back together, so should the covenant be binding. As we can clearly see by this act, the covenant is binding for the life of the parties involved. That is why your vow say, "until death do us part." The marriage covenant is the most ancient of all covenants, as we will see in scripture, for it was made between the first two humans God created. And, you will see that it is the most holy of all covenants because it is the foundation of family and all of human civilization. It is the most ancient because it was made between the first man and woman. It is the most enduring because it last the entire lifetime of each of the parties. And, it is the most holy because it evokes the name of God.

For a man and woman to come together as husband and wife is as natural as eating, breathing, and sleeping. I have minister friends around the world and no matter where they go and what culture they encounter, they find husbands and wives. Even in the most remote places like Papua New Guinea among people who have never seen anyone else other than the neighboring tribe, they find husbands and wives. Why is this, because marriage is innately part of us?

Today I will use for, the foundation of your marriage vows, I will use a text from Genesis chapter 2. This text is written by Moses. Moses had leaded a slave race out of Egypt. This race had no law, no education, and no real religion. As a result Moses established all

three for them. He became their lawgiver, their educator, and their priest. In the course of time and in the establishment of civil law, Moses shares with the people the story of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. Many people ask me how should a wedding ceremony be performed. They ask, “Do we kneel, stand, pray, sing...must it be inside...what do we wear, etc?” Moses addresses all of these with the story of Adam and Eve. Let me read:

*21And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;*

*22And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.*

*23And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*

Let me point out here that this next verse is not a quote of Adam but rather the instruction of Moses:

*24Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

The covenant is simple and direct. Man is instructed to do three things in marriage. First, he is to leave his father and mother. Why, because he is creating a new family. Marriage is the foundation of family, and family is the foundation of all civilization. If you remove marriage or family, civilization crumbles. Second, he is to cleave to his wife. Once again, this is an old Hebrew word that is the root word for wood glue. The two are literally glued together for life. And thirdly, they become one flesh. Many of use have heard songs, poems, and literature about becoming one flesh. This is where the concept comes from.

I have one more insight I would like to share with you. God, in His wisdom created man in such a way that he sees pictures in his mind when her hears stories. I'm sure everyone here saw some kind of picture in their mind as I read the passage of Adam and the creation of Eve. Perhaps you saw Adam lying under a tree or near a pond waking to see this beautiful woman God had created for him. One thing is for sure...everyone saw something. There is another picture hear that God casts for us, and that is the picture of the bone He used to fashion the woman. For had He taken a bone from the foot, perhaps the man would have viewed her as lower than him. Had He taken a bone from the head, perhaps the woman would have seen herself as being above the man. And, had He taken a bone from the front of back, perhaps it would have cast the image that the woman is to either lead of follow the man. But God, in His wisdom, chose a bone from the side. This creates three distinct pictures. First, a bone from the side represents her equality. She is neither below nor above the man...neither in front nor behind the man. She is his equal partner in all of life...walking next to her husband. Second, her place comes from below his arm. This is a place of protection, comfort, and security. I'm sure you have put your

arm around her many times and drawn her close. During these times I am sure she has felt safe and loved. And third, while the Bible does not say which side the rib came from, I will take a license and say it is the left side. This is the side where the bride traditionally stands. We also see that it is the left hand that the wedding bands are worn. But most of all, this places the woman as the closest thing and person to the man's heart. She is to be loved, treasured, and endeared about all things and people. She is number one.

This is my message to you. In the years to come when you wish to remember what this minister said to you on your wedding day, simply turn to this passage and you will find the foundation of marriage. In its simplicity, we find profound truth!

Now if the two of you will face each other, I am going to ask each of you a question. When I am finished, you may answer with "I do!"

(Groom's Name), as you look (Bride's Name), in the eyes, I ask, do you take (Bride's Name) to be your lawfully wedded wife...forsaking all others...to love, honor, and cherish all the days of your life...for better or for worst...for rich or for poor...in sickness or in health...until death do you part?

Groom — "I do!"

Now (Bride's Name), as you look (Groom's Name) in the eyes, I ask you the same question. Do you take (Groom's Name) to be your lawfully wedded husband...forsaking all others...to love, honor, and cherish all the days of your life...for better or for worst...for rich or for poor...in sickness or in health...until death do you part?

Bride — "I do!"

(Groom's Name) we discussed the covenant earlier. What do you offer as a symbol of this covenant?

Groom — "I offer a ring."

May I have the ring? This ring represents three aspects of the covenant. First, it is circular. A circle is an ancient symbol of eternity...having no beginning or ending...just like our Creator. Therefore, your love in Christ is eternal. Second, it made of a pure metal representing the purity of this covenant. This is indeed a just, right, and pure relationship...before God, between the two of you, before your children and family, before your friends and peers, and anyone in the world. This covenant is respect around the globe. An thirdly, it is made of a precious metal and adorned with jewels representing the treasure of this covenant that you will openly display for all to see. Marriage is indeed a public covenant.

(Groom's Name), take the ring and place it on her finger and while looking her in the eyes repeat after me, "(Bride's Name) ...with this ring...I thee wed."

(Bride's Name), what do you offer a symbol of this covenant?

Bride — "I offer a ring."

(Groom's Name), you are agreeing to the same terms of the covenant and recognize as well the same three meanings of the ring. (Bride's Name), place the ring on (Groom's Name) finger and repeat after me, "(Groom's Name)...with this ring...I thee wed."

Excellent! This brings us to the end of our ceremony. If the two of you will face me, I have the high privilege and honor, according to the laws of the state of Texas, but most of all according to the law of God, for this is His way, His law, and His covenant...to pronounce you husband and wife! Sir, you my kiss your bride!!!

Let me be the first to offer you my blessings. And, if the two of you will now turn and face the crowd...I have the high privilege and honor of introducing to you, for the first time, Mr. and Mrs. (Couple's Name)! They are now husband and wife.