



**Non-Religious Readings suitable for:**

**A Wedding,**

**A Service of the Renewal of Wedding Vows**

**A Service of Prayers and Blessing after a  
Civil Marriage.**

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The following readings do not mention any particular religion and are mainly based on the themes of marriage and relationships. They are ideal as opening readings for a non-religious ceremony but of course can be used within a more spiritual/religious ceremony too.

### **Reading 1: Love Is Well-Being**

Some people enter a relationship with the mentality of a beggar: they want to receive all the time. For them to give is to be deprived of something, and to give without receiving is to be cheated.

But others have a more mature attitude. They know they need to receive, because of ourselves we are incomplete. But they also know they need to give. For them to give is to be enriched. In it they discover their own wealth, and experience a feeling of being alive, just as a tree does in springtime, when offering its buds and blossoms to the world. Love is well-being. To open one's heart is to begin to live; to close it is to begin to die.

The love of others for me is a blessing, and still more is my love for others.

*Author Unknown*

### **Reading 2: We Wish You These Gifts**

We come today to join in your gladness, bringing and extending to you, both, the love that we feel for you, and bringing tokens of affection to grace your lives with brightness and beauty.

But we would also give you gifts of greater value, that will not age, nor fade, nor wear away. and so we bring along with earthly blessings a store of wishes for your wedding day.

May you have memories to share together a precious treasure gathered through the years of happy hours and troubles met and vanquished, the gold of laughter and the jewels of tears.

We wish you love, deep warm and tender, more deep and fragrant through each passing day, through cloud and sunshine, steadfast and unchanging; love that gives and seeks not her own.

We wish you joy in fullest measure, that every day be filled with joyful, happy things.

We wish you patience, gentleness and kindness, hope that does not wilt nor fade, courage, strong and unafraid, and faith that does not falter.

We wish you sympathy and sense, calmness and confidence, always with a twinkle in your eyes.

We wish you the peace that passes understanding to guard your hearts whatever may betide.

*Author Unknown*

### **Reading 3: A Blessing**

Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be shelter for the other. Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be warmth to the other. Now there will be no loneliness, for each of you will be companion to the other.

Now you are two persons, but there is only one life before you. May beauty surround you both in the journey ahead and through all the years. May happiness be your companion and your days together be good and long upon the earth. Treat yourselves and each other with respect, and remind yourselves often of what brought you together. Give the highest priority to the tenderness, gentleness and kindness that your marriage deserves. When frustration, difficulties and fear assail your relationship, as they threaten all relationships at one time or another, remember to focus on what is right between you, not only the part which seems wrong.

In this way, you can ride out the storms when clouds hide the face of the Sun in your lives - remembering that even if you lose sight of it for a moment, the sun is still there. And if each of you takes responsibility for the quality of your life together, it will be marked by abundance and delight.

*Author Unknown*

### **Reading 4: Cloths of Heaven**

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths, enwrought with golden and silver light, the blue and the dim and the dark cloths of night and light and the half-light, I would spread the cloths under your feet: But I, being poor, have only my dreams, I have spread my dreams under your feet, Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

*W. B. Yeats (1865 - 1939)*

### **Reading 5: Apache Blessing**

May the sun bring you new energy by day,  
May the moon softly restore you by night,  
May the rain wash away your worries  
And the breeze blow new strength into your being,  
And all of the days of your life may you walk  
Gently through the world and know its beauty.

### **Reading 6: From Heart to Heart**

Our love is like a lovely bridge between your heart and mine. A bridge we've built down through the years just to our own design.

It's based on happy memories of the good times that we've known. The hopes and dreams we two have shared. The thoughtfulness you've shown.

It's stronger now than ever, for it's grown with every smile and every act of kindness that makes life seem more worthwhile.

And now I know that, if you're near or if we're miles apart our love still unites us with a bridge from heart to heart.

*Author Unknown*

### **Reading 7: Promise**

I promise to give you the best of myself and to ask of you no more than you can give.

I promise to respect you as your own person and to realise that your interests, desires and needs are no less important than my own.

I promise to share with you my time and my attention and to bring joy, strength and imagination to our relationship.

I promise to keep myself open to you, to let you see through the window of my world into my innermost fears and feelings, secrets and dreams.

I promise to grow along with you, to be willing to face changes in order to keep our relationship alive and exciting.

I promise to love you in good times and in bad, with all I have to give and all I feel inside in the only way I know how. completely and forever.

*Dorothy R. Colgan*

### **Reading 7: Love**

Love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction.

For in fact, man and woman are not only looking outward in the same direction, they are working outward. Here one forms ties, roots, a firm base.

Here one makes oneself part of the community of men, of human society. Here the bonds of marriage are formed.

For marriage, which is always spoken of as a bond, becomes, actually, in this stage, many bonds, many strands of different texture and strength, making up a web that is taut and firm. The web is fashioned of love.

Yes, but many kinds of love: romantic love first, then a slow-growing devotion and, playing through these, a constantly rippling companionship.

It is made of loyalties, and interdependencies, and shared experiences. It is woven of memories, of meetings and conflicts, of triumphs and disappointments.

It is a web of communication, a common language, and the acceptance of lack of language too, a knowledge of likes and dislikes, of habits and reactions, both physical and mental. It is a web of instincts and intuitions, and known and unknown exchanges.

The web of marriage is made by propinquity, in the day-to-day living side by side, looking outward and working outward in the same direction. It is woven in space and in time of the substance of life itself.

*Antoine de Saint-Exupery*

### **Reading 8: We Will Not Wish You Joy**

We will not wish you joy on this great day, for joy is in your hearts and goes with you along the fragrant, mystic, sun-lit way: We will not wish you joy while love is new.

But this is our wish - may you be strong enough to shelter love, and keep it safe from harm, when winds blow high, and roads are steep and rough, may you protect your love, preserve its charm.

When days are dark, may love be your sure light. When days are cold, may love be your bright fire, your guiding star when hope is out of sight, the essence and sun of your desire.

May love be with you through the flight of years. Then after the storms, there will always be calm. Though you have cause for heartache and for tears, Despair lasts not, where love is there for balm.  
This be the prayer we breathe for you today: When you have reached the summit of life's hill, may it be possible for you to say, 'Married long years, but we are lovers still.'  
*Author Unknown*

### **Reading 9: Love one another .....**

Love one another, but make not a bond of love: Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls. Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup. Give one another of your bread but not from the same loaf.  
Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each of you be alone.  
Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music. Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping. For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts. And stand together yet not too near together: For the pillars of the temple stand apart, And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.  
*Kahlil Gibran from The Prophet*

### **Reading 10: How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.**

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.  
*Elizabeth Barrett Browning – from Sonnets from the Portuguese.*

### **Reading 11: To love one another .....**

To love one another you must try to understand one another, and to understand one another you have to be able to communicate. Whether that communication is done in words or in silent action matters not. As long as it is done in love your heart is open and the love flows freely. Where there is love there can be no language barriers, for love can be conveyed in action, in silent look, in the smallest deed. For love is so great it can be felt or sensed. Your eyes, your heart, your attitude, your whole being can convey what you are feeling towards one another. Just open your heart and let it flow.  
*Eileen Caddy – from Footprints On The Path*

### **Reading 12: It is not enough to love passionately....**

It is not enough to love passionately: you must also love well. A passionate love is good doubtless, but a beautiful love is better. May you have as much strength as gentleness; may it lack nothing, not even forbearance, and let even a little compassion be mingled with it... you are human, and because of this capable of much suffering. If then something of compassion does not enter into the feelings you have for one another, these feelings will not always befit all the circumstances of your life together; they will be like festive robes that will not shield you from wind and rain. We love truly only those we love even in their weakness and their poverty. To forbear, to forgive, to console - that alone is the science of love.  
*Anatole France — from The Honey Bee*

### **Reading 13: Marriage Joins Two People in The Circle of Its Love**

Marriage is a commitment to life, the best that two people can find and bring out in each other. It offers opportunities for sharing and growth that no other relationship can equal. It is a physical and an emotional joining that is promised for a lifetime.

Within the circle of its love, marriage encompasses all of life's most important relationships. A wife and husband are each other's best friend, confidant, lover, teacher, listener and critic. And there may come times when one partner is heartbroken or ailing, and the love of the other may resemble the tender caring of a parent for a child.

Marriage deepens and enriches every facet of life. Happiness is full, memories are fresher, commitment is stronger, even anger is felt more strongly, and passes away more quickly.

Marriage understands and forgives the mistakes life is unable to avoid. It encourages and nurtures new life, new experiences, and new ways of expressing a love that is deeper than life.

### **Reading 14: We are each a secret to the other.**

We are each a secret to the other. To know one another cannot mean to know everything about each other; it means to feel mutual affection and confidence, and to believe in one another. To analyse others is a rude commencement, for there is a modesty of the soul which we must recognise just as we do that of the body. No one has the right to say to another: "Because we belong to each other as we do, I have a right to know all your thoughts." Not even a mother may treat her child in that way. All demands of this sort are foolish and unwholesome. In this matter giving is the only valuable process; it is only giving that stimulates. Impart as much as you can of your spiritual being to those who are on the road with you, and accept as something precious what comes back to you from them.  
*Albert Schweitzer - from Memoirs of Childhood and Youth*

### **Reading 15: Not a Ready-made Garment**

Love is not a ready-made garment,  
but a piece of material to be cut and tailored.  
It is not a flat ready for occupation,  
but a house to be designed, built, furnished and repaired.

It is not a conquered peak,  
but a daunting ascent with many obstacles and falls  
made in the icy cold or the fierce heat.  
It is not a safe anchorage in a harbour of happiness,  
but a voyage on the open sea in storm and tempest.

It is not a triumphant "yes", an affirmation of success,  
a magnificent final chord followed by clapping and cheers,  
but "yes" repeated again and again throughout life  
accompanied by "no" repeated as many times, but overcome.

It is not the sudden appearance of a new life,  
perfect from the moment of its birth,  
but the flowing of a river from its source,  
sometimes in flood and sometimes only as a trickle of water,  
but always on its way to the infinite sea.

From *The Breath of Love*, by Michel Quoist, published by Gill and Macmillan, and used with permission.

### **Reading 16: Friendship**

It is a fact that happy marriages result when the partners are also good friends.

But how do you define what friendship is?

Here is Kahlil Gibran's answer:

"Your friend is your needs answered

He is your field which you sow with love and reap with thanksgiving.

Let your best be for your friend. If he must know the ebb of your tide, let him know its flood also.

For what is your friend that you should seek him always with hours to live.

For it is his to fill your need, but not your emptiness.

And in the sweetness of friendship, let there be laughter, and sharing of pleasures.

For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and is refreshed."

### **Reading 17: On Marriage**

Then Almitra spoke again and said, "And what of Marriage, master? And he answered saying: You were born together, and together you shall be forevermore. You shall be together when white wings of death scatter your days. Aye, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God. But let there be spaces in your togetherness. And let the winds of the heavens dance between you. Love one another but make not a bond of love: Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls. Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup. Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf. Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone, Even as the strings of the lute are alone although they quiver with the same music. Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping. For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts. And stand together yet not too near together: For the pillars of the temple stand apart, And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.  
from *The Prophet*, Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931)

### **Reading 18: It Takes Years to Marry**

It takes years to marry completely two hearts, even of the most loving and well assorted. A happy wedlock is a long falling in love. Young persons' think love belongs only to the brown-haired and crimson-cheeked. So it does for its beginning. But the golden marriage is a part of love which the Bridal day knows nothing of. Such a large and sweet fruit is a complete marriage that it needs a long summer to ripen in, and then a long winter to mellow and season it. But a really happy marriage of love and judgment between a noble man and woman is one of the things so very handsome that if the sun were, as the Greeks once fabled, a God he might stop the world and hold it still now and then in order to look all day long on some example thereof, and feast his eyes on such a spectacle.  
*Theodore Parker*

### **Reading 19: Like Lamp Light**

One day when you are beside me  
invite me to speak of the secrets I never knew  
I wanted to tell you, of the warmth I never knew I owned  
until you released it by moving close as lamplight seems to glass.  
Ask me why I came to you with the reverence of one who sees a flower bloom  
where none has bloomed before. By saying what it is I will have said what was.  
Sometimes when you are content ask me what it is that moves me to want to hold you so,  
so often, and laugh when I tell you the same old indestructible thing.  
One day when you are where you need no invitation to be  
I will tell you how you flower like lamplight in me.  
*Brian Turner*

### **Reading 20: Shakespeare's Sonnet: 18**

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimmed,  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed:  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,  
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st,  
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

### **Reading 21: Shakespeare's Sonnet: 105**

Let not my love be called idolatry,  
Nor my beloved as an idol show,  
Since all alike my songs and praises be  
To one, of one, still such, and ever so.  
Kind is my love to-day, to-morrow kind,  
Still constant in a wondrous excellence;  
Therefore my verse to constancy confined,  
One thing expressing, leaves out difference.  
Fair, kind, and true, is all my argument,  
Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words;  
And in this change is my invention spent,  
Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords.  
Fair, kind, and true, have often lived alone,  
Which three till now, never kept seat in one.

### **Reading 22: Shakespeare's Sonnet: 116**

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.

### **Reading 23: Today is a day you will always remember**

Today is a day you will always remember  
The greatest in anyone's life  
You'll start off the day just two people in love  
And end it as Husband and Wife  
It's a brand new beginning the start of a journey  
With moments to cherish and treasure  
And although there'll be times when you both disagree  
These will surely be outweighed by pleasure  
You'll have heard many words of advice in the past  
When the secrets of marriage were spoken  
But you know that the answers lie hidden inside  
Where the bond of true love lies unbroken  
So live happy forever as lovers and friends  
It's the dawn of a new life for you  
As you stand there together with love in your eyes  
From the moment you whisper 'I do'  
And with luck, all your hopes, and your dreams can be real  
May success find its way to your hearts  
Tomorrow can bring you the greatest of joys  
But today is the day it all starts.

### **Reading 24: The Promise.**

The sun danced on the snow with a sparkling smile;  
As two lovers sat quietly, alone for a while.  
Then he turned and said, with a casual air  
(though he blushed from his chin to the tips of his hair),  
"I think I might like to get married to you."  
"Well then," she said, "there's a thought.  
But what if we can't promise to be all that we ought?  
Can you promise me, say, that you won't rage and shout,  
If I'm late yet again, when we plan to go out,  
For I know I can't promise I'll learn to ignore  
Dirty socks or damp towels strewn all over the floor.  
So, if we can't vow to be all that we should  
I'm not sure what to do though the idea's quite good."  
But he gently smiled and tilted his head  
Till his lips met her ear and softly he said  
"I promise to weave my dreams into your own,  
that wherever you breathe will be my heart's home.  
I promise that, whether with rags or with gold I am blessed,  
Your smile is the jewel I will treasure the best.  
Do you think then, my love, we should marry - do you?"  
"Yes, she said smiling, "I do."

*Eileen Rafter*

### **Reading 25: Why Marriage?**

Because to the depths of me, I long to love one person,  
With all my heart, my soul, my mind, my body...  
Because I need a forever friend to trust with the intimacies of me,  
Who won't hold them against me,  
Who loves me when I'm unlikable,  
Who sees the small child in me, and  
Who looks for the divine potential of me.

Because I need to cuddle in the warmth of the night  
With someone who thanks God for me,  
With someone I feel blessed to hold...  
Because marriage means opportunity  
To grow in love in friendship...  
Because marriage is a discipline  
To be added to a list of achievements...

Because, knowing this,  
I promise myself to take full responsibility  
For my spiritual, mental and physical wholeness I create me,  
I take half of the responsibility for my marriage  
Together we create our marriage...  
Because with this understanding  
The possibilities are limitless.

*Mari Nichols-Haining*

### **Reading 26: Old Irish Blessing**

May the road rise to meet you,  
May the wind be always at your back.  
May the sun shine warm upon your face,  
The rains fall soft upon your fields.  
And until we meet again,  
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.  
May God be with you and bless you:  
May you see your children's children.

May you be poor in misfortune,  
Rich in blessings.  
May you know nothing but happiness  
From this day forward.  
May the road rise up to meet you  
May the wind be always at your back  
May the warm rays of sun fall upon your home  
And may the hand of a friend always be near.  
May green be the grass you walk on,  
May blue be the skies above you,  
May pure be the joys that surround you,  
May true be the hearts that love you.

### **Reading 27: The Peace Prayer of St. Francis**

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is discord, union;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy;

O Divine Master, Grant that we may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console,  
To be understood as to understand,  
To be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen

### **Reading 28: Wedding Prayer**

Lord, behold our family here assembled.  
We thank you for this place in which we dwell,  
for the love that unites us,  
for the peace accorded us this day,  
for the hope with which we expect the morrow,  
for the health, the work, the food,  
and the bright skies that make our lives delightful;  
for our friends in all parts of the earth. Amen  
*Robert Louis Stevenson*

### **Reading 29: From The Hymn Of The Universe**

Only love can bring individual beings to their perfect completion, as individuals, by uniting them one with another, because only love takes possession of them and unites them by what lies deepest within them. This is simply a fact of our everyday experience. For indeed at what moment do lovers come into the most complete possession of themselves if not when they say that they are lost in one another? And is not love all the time achieving - in couples, in teams, all around us - the magical and reputedly contradictory feat of personalizing through totalizing? And why should not what is thus daily achieved on a small scale be repeated one day on worldwide dimensions?

Humanity, the spirit of the earth, the synthesis of individuals and peoples, the paradoxical conciliation of the element with the whole, of the one with the many: all these are regarded as utopian fantasies, yet they are biologically necessary; and if we would see them made flesh in the world what more need we do than imagine our power to love growing and broadening, till it can embrace the totality of human beings and of the earth?  
*Teilhard De Chardin*

### **Reading 30: Irish Friendship Blessing from *Anam Cara***

May you be blessed with good friends.  
May you learn to be a good friend to yourself.  
May you be able to journey to that place in your soul where  
there is great love, warmth, feeling and forgiveness.

May this change you.  
May it transfigure that which is negative, distant, or cold in you.  
May you be brought in to the real passion, kinship, and affinity of belonging.  
May you treasure your family and friends.

May you be good to them and may you be there for them;  
May they bring you all the blessings, challenges, truth, and light that you need  
for your journey.  
May you never be isolated; but may you always be in the gentle nest of belonging with your dear ones.

### **Reading 31: Blessing Adapted from a Navajo Wedding Ceremony**

Now you have lit a fire and that fire should not go out. The two of you now have a fire that represents love, understanding and a philosophy of life. It will give you heat, food, warmth and happiness. The new fire represents a new beginning - a new life and a new family. The fire should keep burning; you should stay together. You have lit the fire for life, until old age separates you.

### **Reading 32: Blessing Adapted from the Serenity Prayer**

GOD, grant *N.* and *N.* the serenity to accept the things they cannot change, in this life which they now share.  
Grant them the courage to change the things they can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

May they live one day at a time; Enjoying one moment at a time; Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.  
Taking, as your Son did, this sinful world as it is, not as they would have it.

May they always trust that He will make all things right if they surrender to His Will;  
That they may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with Him forever in the next.  
*Reinhold Neibuhr*

### **Reading 33: Blessing for A Marriage**

May your marriage bring you all the exquisite excitements a marriage should bring, and may life grant you also  
patience, tolerance, and understanding.  
May you always need one another - not so much to fill your emptiness as to help you to know your fullness. A  
mountain needs a valley to be complete; the valley does not make the mountain less, but more; and the valley is more  
a valley because it has a mountain towering over it. So let it be with you and you.  
May you need one another, but not out of weakness.  
May you want one another, but not out of lack.  
May you entice one another, but not compel one another.  
May you embrace one another, but not out encircle one another.  
May you succeed in all important ways with one another, and not fail in the little graces.  
May you look for things to praise, often say, "I love you!" and take no notice of small faults.  
If you have quarrels that push you apart, may both of you hope to have good sense enough to take the first step back.  
May you enter into the mystery which is the awareness of one another's presence - no more physical than spiritual,  
warm and near when you are side by side, and warm and near when you are in separate rooms or even distant cities.  
May you have happiness, and may you find it making one another happy.  
May you have love, and may you find it loving one another!  
*James Dillet Freeman*

### **Reading 34: The Art of a Good Marriage**

Happiness in marriage is not something that just happens.  
A good marriage must be created.  
In marriage the little things are the big things.  
It is never being too old to hold hands.

It is remembering to say "I love you" at least once a day.  
 It is never going to sleep angry.  
 It is at no time taking the other for granted; the courtship should not end with the honeymoon, it should continue through all the years.  
 It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives.  
 It is standing together facing the world.  
 It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family.  
 It is doing things for each other, not in the attitude of duty or sacrifice, but in the spirit of joy.  
 It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways.  
 It is not looking for perfection in each other.  
 It is cultivating flexibility, patience, understanding and a sense of humour.  
 It is having the capacity to forgive and forget.  
 It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow.  
 It is a common search for the good and the beautiful.  
 It is establishing a relationship in which the independence is equal, dependence is mutual and the obligation is reciprocal.  
 It is not only marrying the right partner, it is being the right partner.  
*Wilferd Arlan Peterson*

### **Reading 35: Marriage is a Promise of Love**

Marriage is a commitment to life, the best that two people can find and bring out in each other. It offers opportunities for sharing and growth that no other relationship can equal. It is a physical and an emotional joining that is promised for a lifetime.

Within the circle of its love, marriage encompasses all of life's most important relationships. A wife and a husband are each other's best friend, confidant, lover, teacher, listener, and critic. And there may come times when one partner is heartbroken or ailing, and the love of the other may resemble the tender caring of a parent for a child.

Marriage deepens and enriches every facet of life. Happiness is fuller, memories are fresher, commitment is stronger, even anger is felt more strongly, and passes away more quickly.

Marriage understands and forgives the mistakes life is unable to avoid. It encourages and nurtures new life, new experiences, and new ways of expressing a love that is deeper than life.

When two people pledge their love and care for each other in marriage, they create a spirit unique unto themselves which binds them closer than any spoken or written words. Marriage is a promise, a potential made in the hearts of two people who love each other and takes a lifetime to fulfil.

*Edmund O'Neill*

### **Reading 36: What Makes a Marriage?**

In a marriage, the little things mean a lot,.....  
 It's never being too tired to smile  
 It's remembering to say I love you everyday  
 It's never going to sleep on an argument  
 It's about compromise and understanding  
 It's about facing all that life throws at you, together  
 It's about family & special friends  
 It's when a hug is needed to take away the pains  
 It's about giving each other space...  
 ....then closing back together seamlessly  
 It's always seeing the good in everything  
 It's about working as a team together  
 It's not just marrying the most special person  
 ....it's about being that right person  
 Everyday of your life together.

### **Reading 37: Foundations of Marriage**

Love, trust, and forgiveness are the foundations of marriage. In marriage, many days will bring happiness, while other days may be sad. But together, two hearts can overcome everything...In marriage, all of the moments won't be exciting or romantic, and sometimes worries and anxiety will be overwhelming.

But together, two hearts that accept will find comfort together. Recollections of past joys, pains, and shared feelings will be the glue that holds everything together during even the worst and most insecure moments. Reaching out to

each other as a friend, and becoming the confidant and companion that the other one needs, is the true magic and beauty of any two people together.

It's inspiring in each other a dream or a feeling, and having faith in each other and not giving up... even when all the odds say to quit. It's allowing each other to be vulnerable, to be himself or herself, even when the opinions or thoughts aren't in total agreement or exactly what you'd like them to be.

It's getting involved and showing interest in each other, really listening and being available, the way any best friend should be. Exactly three things need to be remembered in a marriage if it is to be a mutual bond of sharing, caring, and loving throughout life: love, trust, and forgiveness.

*Regina Hill*

### **Reading 38: Marriage is about....**

Marriage is about giving and taking  
and forgiving and forsaking  
kissing and loving and disagreeing and compromising  
caring and sharing and screaming and swearing  
about being together whatever the weather  
about being driven to the end of your tether  
about sweetness and kindness  
and wisdom and blindness  
it's about being strong when you're feeling quite weak  
it's about saying nothing when you're dying to speak  
it's about being wrong when you know you are right  
it's about giving in, before there's a fight  
it's about you two living as cheaply as one  
(you can give us a call if you know how that's done!)  
never heeding advice that was always well meant  
never counting the cost until it's all spent  
and for you two today it's about to begin  
and for all that the two of you had put in  
some days filled with joy, and some days with sadness  
too late you'll discover that marriage is madness

### **Reading 39: Union**

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 promises and agreements in an informal way.

All those conversations that were held riding in a car or over a meal or during long walks - all those sentences that began with "When we're married" and continued with "I will and you will and we will" - 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 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, and even teacher, for you have learned much from one another in these last few years. Now you shall say a few words that take you across a threshold of life, and things will never quite be the same between you. For after these vows, you shall say to the world, this- is my husband, this- is my wife.

*Robert Fulghum*

### **Reading 40: Letters**

Marriage is in many ways a simplification of life, and it naturally combines the strengths and wills of two young people so that, together, they seem to reach farther into the future than they did before. Above all, marriage is a new task and a new seriousness, - a new demand on the strength and generosity of each partner, and a great new danger for both.

The point of marriage is not to create a quick commonality by tearing down all boundaries; on the contrary, a good marriage is one in which each partner appoints the other to be the guardian of their solitude, and thus they show each other the greatest possible trust. A merging of two people is an impossibility, and where it seems to exist, it is a hemming-in, a mutual consent that robs one party or both parties of their fullest freedom and development. But once the realization is accepted that even between the closest people infinite distances exist, a marvellous living side by side can grow up for them, if they succeed in loving the expanse between them, which gives them the possibility of always

seeing each other as a whole and before an immense sky. That is why this too must be the criterion for rejection or choice: whether you are willing to stand guard over someone else's solitude, and whether you are able to set this same person at the gate of your own depths, which he learns of only through what steps forth, in holiday clothing, out of the great darkness.

Life is self-transformation, and human relationships, which are an extract of life, are the most changeable of all, they rise and fall from minute to minute, and lovers are those for whom no moment is like any another. People between whom nothing habitual ever takes place, nothing that has already existed, but just what is new, unexpected, unprecedented. There are such connections, which must be a very great, an almost unbearable happiness, but they can occur only between very rich beings, between those who have become, each for his own sake, rich, calm, and concentrated; only if two worlds are wide and deep and individual can they be combined...

...For the more we are, the richer everything we experience is. And those who want to have a deep love in their lives must collect and save for it, and gather honey.

*Maria Rainer Rilke*

### **Reading 41: From Bridge Across Forever**

A soul mate is someone who has locks that fit our keys, and keys to fit our locks. When we feel safe enough to open the locks, our truest selves step out and we can be completely and honestly who we are; we can be loved for who we are and not for who we're pretending to be.

Each unveils the best part of the other. No matter what else goes wrong around us, with that one person we're safe... Our soul mate is someone who shared our deepest longings, our sense of direction. .... Our soul mate is the one who makes life come to life.

*Richard Bach*

### **Reading 42: Never Marry but For Love**

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.

*William Penn*

### **Reading 43: Desiderata**

Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even the dull and ignorant; they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain and bitter; for there will always be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.

Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs; for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals; and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is as perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue & loneliness.

Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be, and whatever your labours and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be careful. Strive to be happy.

*Max Ehrmann*

#### **Reading 44: Excerpt from: Gift from The Sea**

When you love someone, you do not love them all the time, in exactly the same way, from moment to moment. It is an impossibility. It is even a lie to pretend to. And yet this is exactly what most of us demand. We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life, of love, of relationships. We leap at the flow of the tide and resist in terror its ebb. We are afraid it will never return. We insist on permanency, on duration, on continuity; when the only continuity possible, in life as in love, is in growth, in fluidity - in freedom, in the sense that the dancers are free, barely touching as they pass, but partners in the same pattern.

The only real security is not in owning or possessing, not in demanding or expecting, not in hoping, even. Security in a relationship lies neither in looking back to what was in nostalgia, nor forward to what it might be in dread or anticipation, but living in the present relationship and accepting it as it is now. Relationships must be like islands, one must accept them for what they are here and now, within their limits - islands, surrounded and interrupted by the sea, and continually visited and abandoned by the tides.

*Anne Morrow Lindbergh*

#### **Reading 45: A Gift from the Sea**

Love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction. For in fact, man and woman are not only looking outward in the same direction, they are working outward. Here one forms ties, roots, a firm base....

Here one makes oneself part of the community of men, of human society. Here the bonds of marriage are formed. For marriage, which is always spoken of as a bond, becomes actually, in this stage, many bonds, many strands, of different texture and strength, making up a web that is taut and firm.

The web is fashioned of love. Yes, but many kinds of love: romantic love first, then a slow-growing devotion and, playing through these, a constantly rippling companionship. It is made of loyalties, and interdependencies, and shared experiences. It is woven of memories of meetings and conflicts; of triumphs and disappointments.

It is a web of communication, a common language, and the acceptance of lack of language too, a knowledge of likes and dislikes, of habits and reactions, both physical and mental.

It is a web of instincts and intuitions, and known and unknown exchanges. The web of marriage is made by propinquity, in the day to day living side by side, looking outward and working outward in the same direction. It is woven in space and in time of the substance of life itself.

*Anne Morrow Lindbergh*

#### **Reading 46: Fidelity**

Fidelity and love are two different things, like a flower and a gem.

And love, like a flower, will fade, will change into something else or it would not be flowery.

○ flowers they fade because they are moving swiftly; a little torrent of life leaps up to the summit of the stem, gleams, turns over round the bend of the parabola of curved flight, sinks, and is gone, like a comet curving into the invisible.

○ flowers they are all the time travelling like comets, and they come into our ken for a day, for two days, and withdraw, slowly vanish again.

And we, we must take them on the wind, and let them go. Embalmed flowers are not flowers, immortelles are not flowers; flowers are just a motion, a swift motion, a coloured gesture; that is their loveliness. And that is love.

But a gem is different. It lasts so much longer than we do, so much much much longer that it seems to last forever.

Yet we know it is flowing away as flowers are, and we are, only slower. The wonderful slow flowing of the sapphire!

All flows, and every flow is related to every other flow. Flowers and sapphires and us, diversely streaming. In the old days, when sapphires were breathed upon and brought forth during the wild orgasms of chaos time was much slower, when the rocks came forth. It took aeons to make a sapphire, aeons for it to pass away.

And a flower it takes a summer.

And man and woman are like the earth, that brings forth flowers in summer, and love, but underneath is rock.

Older than flowers, older than ferns, older than foraminifera older than plasm altogether is the soul of a man underneath.

And when, throughout all the wild orgasms of love slowly a gem forms, in the ancient, once-more molten rocks of two human hearts, two ancient rocks, a man's heart and a woman's, that is the crystal of peace, the slow hard jewel of trust, the sapphire of fidelity. The gem of mutual peace emerging from the wild chaos of love.

*D.H. Lawrence*

### **Reading 47: Until the End of Time**

What can I say to you that I haven't already said,  
What can I give you that I haven't already given,  
Is there anything of me that isn't yours already,  
My body, my mind, my heart, even my soul,  
Everything that is me belonged to you long before this,  
And it shall be yours long after this,  
I will follow you anywhere and everywhere you lead,  
My hand in your hand, your hand in mine  
forever in each other's hearts, together forever.  
Until the end of time.

### **Reading 48: I am Love**

Some say I can fly on the wind, yet I haven't any wings. Some have found me floating on the open sea, yet I cannot swim. Some have felt my warmth on cold nights, yet I have no flame. And though you cannot see me, I lay between two lovers at the hearth of fireplaces.  
I am the twinkle in your child's eyes. I am hidden in the lines of your mother's face. I am your father's shield as he guards your home.  
And yet... Some say I am stronger than steel, yet I am as fragile as a tear. Some have never searched for me, yet I am around them always.  
Some say I die with loss, yet I am endless. And though you cannot hear me, I dance on the laughter of children. I am woven into the whispers of passion. I am in the blessings of Grandmothers. I embrace the cries of newborn babies.  
And yet... Some say I am a flower, yet I am also the seed. Some have little faith in me, yet I will always believe in them.  
Some say I cannot cure the ill, yet I nourish the soul.  
And though you cannot touch me, I am the gentle hand of the kind. I am the fingertips that caress your cheek at night.  
I am the hug of a child.  
I am love.

### **Reading 49: A Walled Garden**

'Your marriage' he said 'should have within it, a secret and protected place, open to you alone. Imagine it to be a walled garden, entered by a door to which only you hold the key.  
Within this garden, you will cease to be a mother, father, employee, homemaker or any other of the roles which you fulfill in everyday life. Here you are yourselves, two people who love each other. Here you can concentrate on one another's needs.  
So take my hand and let us go back to our garden. The time we spend together is not wasted but invested. Invested in our future and the nurture of our love.  
*Author Unknown*

### **Reading 50: Perfect Love**

Everyone longs to give themselves completely to someone. To have a deep soul relationship with another, to be loved thoroughly and exclusively. But God to the Christian says, "No, not until you're satisfied and fulfilled and content with living, loved by Me alone and giving yourself totally and unreservedly to Me, to have an intensely personal and unique relationship with Me alone.  
"I love you, My child, and until you discover that only in Me is your satisfaction to be found, you will not be capable of the perfect human relationship that I have planned for you. You will never be united with another until you are united with Me -- exclusive of anyone or anything else, exclusive of any other desires or belongings.  
"I want you to stop planning, stop wishing, and allow Me to bring it to you. You just keep watching Me, expecting the greatest things. Keep learning and listening to the things I tell you. You must wait.  
"Don't be anxious and don't worry. Don't look around at the things you think you want. Just keep looking off and away up to Me, or you'll miss what I have to show you.  
"And then, when you're ready, I'll surprise you with a love far more wonderful than any you would ever dream. You see, until you are ready and until the one I have for you is ready, I am working this minute to have both of you ready at the same time, and until you are both satisfied exclusively with Me and the life I've prepared for you, you won't be able to experience the love that exemplifies your relationship with Me, and this is perfect love.  
"And dear one, I want you to have this most wonderful love. I want you to see in the flesh a picture of your relationship with Me, and to enjoy materially and concretely the everlasting union of beauty and perfection and love that I offer you with Myself. Know I love you. I am God Almighty, believe and be satisfied." *Author Unknown*

### **Reading 51: Eskimo Love Song**

You are my husband [wife]  
My feet shall run because of you  
My feet dance because of you  
My heart shall beat because of you  
My eyes see because of you  
My mind thinks because of you  
And I shall love because of you.

### **Reading 52: The Seven Blessings from The New Jewish Wedding**

"We acknowledge the Unity of all within the sovereignty of God, expressing our appreciation for this wine, symbol and aid of our rejoicing.

We acknowledge the Unity of all within the sovereignty of God, realizing that each separate moment and every distinct object points to and shares in this oneness.

We acknowledge the Unity of all within the sovereignty of God, recognizing and appreciating the blessing of being human.

We acknowledge the Unity of all within the sovereignty of God, realizing the special gift of awareness that permits us to perceive this unity and the wonder we experience as a man and a woman joined to live together.

May rejoicing resound throughout the world as the homeless are given homes, persecution and oppression cease, and all people learn to live in peace with each other and in harmony with their environment.

From the Divine, source of all energy, we call forth an abundance of love to envelop this couple. May they be for each other lovers and friends, and may their love partake of the same innocence, purity, and sense of discovery that we imagine the first couple to have experienced.

We acknowledge the Unity of all within the sovereignty of God, and we highlight today joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride, delight and cheer, love and harmony, peace and companionship. May we all witness the day when the dominant sounds through the world will be these sounds of happiness, the voices of lovers, the sounds of feasting and singing.

Praised is love; blessed be this marriage. May the bride and bridegroom rejoice together."

*Anita Diamant*

### **Reading 53: Patience from God Whispers**

Steady yourself. Living takes time.  
Each moment is a moment to be lived.  
Each emotion is to be felt.  
We are here in this world to learn and grow.  
Fear can teach. Confusion instructs. Sadness informs.  
Love elevates.  
Take the time to experience each breath.  
Especially the ones that make you want to run.  
Patience. Steady.  
Rush and race banish joy and peace.  
There is wonder to experience if you take the time.  
Step softly and deliberately.  
What lingers much be lived and  
Once lived completely passes in its own time.  
To force the natural rhythms of life  
Is to deny yourself of the  
Divine wisdom in each experience.  
*Karynd Kedar*

### **Reading 54: From The Gayan of Hazrat by Inayat Khan**

To know the pain of too much tenderness.  
To be wounded by your own understanding of love;  
And to bleed willingly and joyfully.  
To wake at dawn with a winged heart and give thanks for another day of loving;  
To rest at the noon hour and meditate love's ecstasy;

To return home at eventide with gratitude;  
And then to sleep with a prayer for the beloved in your heart and a song of praise on your lips.

### **Reading 55: Love One Another**

Love one another, but make not a bond of love  
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.  
Fill each other's cup, but drink not from one cup.  
Give one another of your bread, but eat not from the same loaf.  
Sing and dance together and be joyous,  
but let each one of you be alone,  
Even as the strings of a lute are alone  
though they quiver with the same music.  
Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping;  
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.  
And stand together yet not too near together;  
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,  
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.  
*Khalil Gibran*

### **Reading 56: Love Reflects Love in Return**

"The love of God,  
Unutterable and perfect,  
flows into a pure soul the way light rushes into a transparent object.  
The more love we receive,  
the more love we shine forth;  
so that,  
as we grow clear and open,  
the more complete the joy of loving is.  
And the more souls who resonate together,  
the greater the intensity of their love for,  
mirror-like,  
each soul reflects the other."  
*The Divine Comedy by Dante*

### **Reading 57: Love**

Love is a friendship that has caught fire.  
It is quiet understanding, mutual confidence, sharing and forgiving.  
It is loyalty through good and bad.  
It settles for less than perfection,  
and makes allowances for human weakness.  
Love is content with the present.  
It hopes for the future and it doesn't brood over the past.  
It's the day-in and day-out chronicle of irritations, problems,  
compromises, small disappointments, big victories,  
and working toward common goals.  
If you have love in your life,  
it can make up for a great many things you lack.  
If you don't have it, no matter what else there is,  
it is not enough, so search for it, ask God for it, and share it!  
*Author Unknown*

### **Reading 58: Eternity**

I smile whenever I recall  
The special moments we have had;  
Walking always hand in hand  
Through the good times and the bad.

Sometimes, I think it is a dream --  
The love you give me could not be;  
But then when you are in my arms  
There's no mistake in its purity.  
Whether I'm with you or far away,  
My thoughts are always drawn to you  
Like a compass needle pointing North  
To a love much more than true.

Of all the people on this Earth --  
How lucky can a person be;  
To have found the likes of you, my love,  
With whom to share eternity!  
*Ara John Movsesian*

### **Reading 59: I Will Be Here**

If in the morning when you wake,  
If the sun does not appear,  
I will be here.  
If in the dark we lose sight of love,  
Hold my hand and have no fear,  
I will be here.

I will be here,  
When you feel like being quiet,  
When you need to speak your mind I will listen.  
Through the winning, losing, and trying we'll be together,  
And I will be here.  
If in the morning when you wake,  
If the future is unclear,  
I will be here.  
As sure as seasons were made for change,  
Our lifetimes were made for years,  
I will be here.

I will be here,  
And you can cry on my shoulder,  
When the mirror tells us we're older.  
I will hold you, to watch you grow in beauty,  
And tell you all the things you are to me.  
We'll be together and I will be here.  
I will be true to the promises I've made,  
To you and to the one who gave you to me.  
I will be here.  
*Steven Curtis Chapman*

### **Reading 60: The Bargain**

My true love hath my heart, and I have his,  
By just exchange one for another given:  
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss,  
There never was a better bargain driven:  
My true love hath my heart, and I have his.

His heart in me keeps him and me in one,  
My heart in him his thoughts and senses guides:  
He loves my heart, for once it was his own,  
I cherish his because in me it bides:  
My true love hath my heart, and I have his.  
*Sir Philip Sidney*

**Reading 61: Love**

And in Life's noisiest hour,  
 There whispers still the ceaseless Love of Thee,  
 The heart's Self-solace and soliloquy.  
 You mould my Hopes, you fashion me within ;  
 And to the leading Love-throb in the Heart  
 Thro' all my Being, thro' my pulse's beat ;  
 You lie in all my many Thoughts, like Light,  
 Like the fair light of Dawn, or summer Eve  
 On rippling Stream, or cloud-reflecting Lake.  
 And looking to the Heaven, that bends above you,  
 How oft! I bless the Lot that made me love you.  
*Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

**Reading 62: If Thou Must Love Me, Let It Be for Naught**

If thou must love me, let it be for naught  
 Except for love's sake only. Do not say  
 'I love her for her smile -her look -her way  
 Of speaking gently -for a trick of thought  
 That falls in well with mine, and certes brought  
 A sense of pleasant ease on such a day' -  
 For these things in themselves, Beloved, may  
 Be changed, or change for thee, -and love, so wrought,  
 May be unwrought so. Neither love me for  
 Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry -  
 A creature might forget to weep, who bore  
 Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!  
 But love me for love's sake, that evermore  
 Thou may'st love on, through love's eternity.  
*Elizabeth Barrett Browning*

**Reading 63: Yet, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed**

Yet, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed  
 And worthy of acceptation. Fire is bright,  
 Let temple burn, or flax; an equal light  
 Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank or weed:  
 And love is fire. And when I say at need  
 I love thee . . . mark! . . . I love thee-in thy sight  
 I stand transfigured, glorified aright,  
 With conscience of the new rays that proceed  
 Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low  
 In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures  
 Who love God, God accepts while loving so.  
 And what I feel, across the inferior features  
 Of what I am, doth flash itself, and show  
 How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.  
*Elizabeth Barrett Browning*

**Reading 64: The Good-Morrow**

I wonder by my troth, what thou and I  
 Did, till we loved? were we not wean'd till then?  
 But suck'd on country pleasures, childishly?  
 Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?  
 'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be;  
 If ever any beauty I did see,  
 Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

And now good-morrow to our waking souls,  
Which watch not one another out of fear;  
For love all love of other sights controls,  
And makes one little room an everywhere.  
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone;  
Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown;  
Let us possess one world; each hath one, and is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,  
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;  
Where can we find two better hemispheres  
Without sharp north, without declining west?  
Whatever dies, was not mix'd equally;  
If our two loves be one, or thou and I  
Love so alike that none can slacken, none can die.  
*John Donne*

### **Reading 65: True Love**

Truelove is a sacred flame  
That burns eternally,  
And none can dim its special glow  
Or change its destiny.  
True love speaks in tender tones  
And hears with gentle ear,  
True love gives with open heart  
And true love conquers fear.  
True love makes no harsh demands  
It neither rules nor binds,  
And true love holds with gentle hands  
The hearts that it entwines  
*Author Unknown*

### **Reading 66: I Carry Your Heart with Me**

I carry your heart with me (I carry it in my heart)  
I am never without it (anywhere  
I go you go, my dear; and whatever is done  
by only me is your doing, my darling)  
I fear no fate (for you are my fate, my sweet)  
I want no world (for beautiful you are my world, my true)  
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant  
and whatever a sun will always sing is you.  
here is the deepest secret nobody knows  
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud  
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life;  
which grows higher than the soul can hope or mind can hide)  
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart.  
I carry your heart (I carry it in my heart)  
*EE. Cummings*

### **Reading 67: The Passionate Shepherd to His Love**

Come live with me and be my love,  
And we will all the pleasures prove  
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,  
Woods, or steepy mountain yields.  
And we will sit upon rocks,  
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,  
By shallow rivers to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses  
And a thousand fragrant poises,  
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle  
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;  
A gown made of the finest wool  
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;  
Fair lined slippers for the cold,  
With buckles of the purest gold;  
A belt of straw and ivy buds,  
With coral clasps and amber studs;  
And if these pleasures may thee move,  
Come live with me, and be my love.  
The shepherds's swains shall dance and sing  
For thy delight each May morning:  
If these delights thy mind may move,  
Then live with me and be my love.  
*Christopher Marlowe*

### **Reading 68: Untitled poem by Brian Bihari**

My love, my heart, my soul is my gift to you  
Your smile, your love is the only reward I would want  
Precious, like a gem made by angels to shine forever  
Releasing the passion inside me that burns for you  
Intertwining our destinies, so that we two soul mates  
Now and forever, can live out our hopes and dreams  
Creating our own bond of life, to overcome the challenges  
Explore the mysteries, and to enjoy life as it should be  
Sharing the peace and love, that everyone looks for  
So in the end I want nothing, because I have everything I need

### **Reading 69: "Resignation"**

I love you because the Earth turns round the sun  
because the North wind blows north sometimes  
because the Pope is Catholic and most Rabbis Jewish  
because winters flow into spring and the air clears after a storm  
because only my love for you despite the charms of gravity  
keeps me from falling off the Earth into another dimension

I love you because it is the natural order of things  
I love you like the habit I picked up in college  
of sleeping through lectures or saying I'm sorry  
when I get stopped for speeding  
because I drink a glass of water in the morning  
and drink coffee through the rest of the day  
because I take my coffee black and my milk with chocolate  
because you keep my feet warm through my life a mess

I love you because I don't want it any other way  
I am helpless in my love for you  
It makes me so happy to hear you call my name  
I am amazed you can resist locking me in an echo chamber  
where your voice reverberates through the four walls  
sending me into spasmodic ecstasy

I love you because it's been so good for so long  
that if I didn't love you I'd have to be born again  
and that is not a religious statement  
I am pitiful in my love for you

The Dells tell me Love is so simple the thought though of you  
sends indescribably delicious multitudinous thrills throughout and through-in my body

I love you because no two snowflakes are alike and it is possible if you stand tippy-toe  
to walk between the raindrops

I love you because I am afraid of the dark and can't sleep in the light  
because I rub my eyes when I wake up in the morning and find you there  
because you with all your magic powers were determined that I should love you  
because there was nothing for you but that I would love you

I love you because you made me want to love you  
more than I love my privacy my freedom my commitments and responsibilities  
I love you `cause I changed my life to love you because you saw me one Friday  
afternoon and decided that I would love you  
I love you I love you I love you

For who is there that loves and knows  
The secret powers by which he grows?  
Were knowledge all, what were our need  
To thrill and faint and sweetly bleed?

Then seek not, sweet, the If and Why  
I love you now until I die:  
For I must love because I live  
And life in me is what you give.  
*Nikki Giovanni*

### **Reading 70: Barter**

Life has loveliness to sell,  
All beautiful and splendid things,  
Blue waves whitened on a cliff  
Soaring fire that sways and sings,  
And children's faces looking up,  
Holding wonder like a cup.

Life has loveliness to sell,  
Music like a curve of gold,  
Scent of pine trees in the rain,  
Eyes that love you, arms that hold,  
And for your spirit's still delight,  
Holy thoughts that star the night.

Spend all you have for loveliness,  
Buy it and never count the cost;  
For one white singing hour of peace  
Count many a year of strife well lost,  
And for a breath of ecstasy  
Give all you have been, or could be.  
*Sara Teasdale*

### **Reading 71: Love's Philosophy**

The fountains mingle with the river,  
And the rivers with the ocean;  
The winds of heaven mix forever,  
With a sweet emotion;  
Nothing in the world is single;  
All things by a law divine  
In one another's being mingle:  
Why not I with thine?

See! the mountains kiss high heaven,  
And the waves clasp one another;  
Now sister flower would be forgiven  
If it disdained its brother;  
And the sunlight clasps the earth,  
And the moonbeams kiss the sea:  
What are all these kissing's worth,  
If thou kiss not me?

*Percy Shelley*

### **Reading 72: 'Love'**

I love you,  
Not only for what you are,  
But for what I am  
When I am with you.  
I love you,  
Not only for what  
You have made of yourself,  
But for what  
You are making of me.

I love you  
For the part of me  
That you bring out;  
I love you  
For putting your hand  
Into my heaped-up heart  
And passing over  
All the foolish, weak things  
That you can't help  
Dimly seeing there,  
And for drawing out  
Into the light  
All the beautiful belongings  
That no one else had looked  
Quite far enough to find.

I love you because you  
Are helping me to make  
Of the lumber of my life  
Not a tavern  
But a temple;  
Out of the works  
Of my every day  
Not a reproach  
But a song.

I love you  
Because you have done  
More than any creed  
Could have done  
To make me good,  
And more than any fate  
To make me happy.  
You have done it  
Without a touch,  
Without a word,  
Without a sign.  
You have done it  
By being yourself.  
*Roy Croft*

### Reading 73: The Colour of My Love

I'll paint a sun to warm your heart,  
knowing that we'll never part.  
I'll draw the years, all passing by  
So much to learn, so much to try.  
I'll paint my mood in a shadow blue,  
Paint my soul to be with you.  
I'll sketch your lips in shaded tones,  
Draw your mouth to my own.  
I'll trace a hand to wipe your tears  
And trace a look to calm your fears.  
A silhouette of dark and light  
To hold each other oh so tight.  
I'll paint the stars in the evening sky,  
Draw the light into your eyes,  
A touch of love, a touch of grace,  
To softly fall on your moonlit face.  
And with this ring our lives will start,  
Let nothing keep our love apart.  
I'll take your hand to hold in mine,  
And be together through all time.  
*David Foster, Arthur Janov*