

WEDDING CUSTOMARY

St. Philip's Episcopal Church
205 Moore Street; PO Box 10476
Southport, North Carolina 28461
910-457-5643

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your upcoming nuptials. This is a very exciting time in your life together and St. Philip's is pleased that you are considering a church wedding. Before you decide, you should know how the church views this service and what the requirements are.

The Church views Holy Matrimony as a sacrament, because you are asking God's blessing upon your marriage. By being married in the church, you are also choosing to be a part of a community of faith that will support and nurture you in your married life.

Please read the following wedding policy carefully, and if you wish to continue the discussion about being married at St. Philip's please call the church office (910-457-5643) to schedule an appointment.

OVERVIEW, GETTING READY

The basics:

- Weddings at St. Philip's are scheduled at the discretion of its rector; other clergy may officiate subject to the rector's approval. Persons being married in St. Philip's Episcopal Church must meet the requirements of the Canons of the Episcopal Church and the Laws of the State of North Carolina.
- Customarily, at least one of the marriage partners must be an active member of St. Philip's, or closely related to an active member. An active member is defined as a person who attends worship regularly and is a financial contributor of record.

Scheduling:

- The couple must first talk with the clergy about the wedding **before** any other plans are finalized.
- Because a wedding at St. Philip's involves the participation of many church staff and volunteers, and because weekend dates fill quickly, we ask for sufficient advance notice – several months is the norm.
- Weddings are typically held on Saturdays, with the time of the ceremony between 10 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. This allows the Altar Guild, Church Liaison, and the Sexton ample time to

prepare for and rearrange after the wedding. If there is more than one wedding in the church on a given date, they must be scheduled at least four hours apart. Dates and times are scheduled on a first-come first-served basis and are reserved with a check for the full fee (see fee schedule below).

- By long standing tradition, Episcopalians do not schedule weddings during Lent (the time before Easter), or Advent (the time before Christmas).

Requirements and Expectations:

- There are also some basic rules for marriage within the Episcopal Church: at least one of the partners must be a baptized Christian; the ceremony must be attested to by at least two witnesses; and the marriage must conform to the laws of the State and the canons of this Church.
- We also expect that you will engage in careful preparation for marriage with one of our clergy or in a process the rector has approved. Because the needs of individual couples vary, the time required for premarital counseling also varies, with both the bride and the groom present.
- A “Declaration of Intent”, which follows, must be signed by both parties to the marriage at a time prior to the marriage.
- In situations in which one of the partners is living out of town, it is usually possible to make arrangements for counseling to be done by an Episcopal priest elsewhere. Those arrangements need to be made as early as possible with the rector. A written evaluation from the priest who has conducted the counseling will be needed.
- Canon Law requires the consent of a bishop before Episcopal clergy can solemnize the marriage of anyone who has been divorced. It is our wisdom that there is a real need for time—generally a year—for a divorced person to work through the 'death' of the former marriage; the grief, forgiveness and learning, both secular and religious, from past experience. In addition, the bishop will need thirty (30) days in which to respond to the priest's request to solemnize the marriage. The couple must, therefore, have had several counseling sessions and given the priest photocopies of their divorce decree(s) no later than sixty (60) days before the wedding date.
- You will need to obtain a valid marriage license from the N.C. Register of Deeds' office before your marriage can be performed. Please plan to bring the marriage license to the Church office before the Sunday prior to the wedding. The priest cannot officiate without the license. The priest will sign the license after the ceremony. The newly married couple are responsible for filing the license with the appropriate agency.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE CEREMONY

Rehearsal:

- The Church Liaison is charged with the responsibility of assisting the officiating priest with all arrangements for the wedding. Outside consultants may consult with the clergy, but since a celebration of marriage is one of the sacraments of our church, outside consultants are not permitted to direct the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony.

- A wedding information form, obtained from the rector, should be completed by the couple well in advance of the wedding date, to help us prepare for the details of the ceremony. All questions and coordination must take place prior to the rehearsal.
- In order to give the wedding party the opportunity to become familiar with the service and at ease during the worship service itself, we hold a rehearsal on the preceding day with **all** the participants in the coming ceremony present. The officiating priest, assisted as necessary by the Church Liaison, will be responsible for the rehearsal. Except in unusual circumstances, rehearsals will be scheduled to begin promptly at 5 p.m. the day before the wedding, and end promptly at 6 p.m. The entire service will be rehearsed. It is important for all members of the wedding party to attend and for everyone to be on time. The clergy and the Church Liaison are only expected to be in attendance at the rehearsal for one hour.
- In order to avoid possible delays, any rehearsal dinner should be scheduled for after the rehearsal.

GUIDELINES FOR THE CEREMONY

Marriage Service:

- **The Marriage Service:** Because marriage is a sacrament of the church, the officiating clergy has final responsibility for determining the appropriateness of all arrangements and details. The service itself will be conducted according to “Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage” as found in the Book of Common Prayer. No substitutions or amendments are permitted beyond what the service allows. This includes a unity candle, the giving of roses to parents or other rituals. This will be agreed upon in advance by clergy and the couple during the marriage preparation sessions.
- **The Clergy: With the approval of the rector,** a couple may invite an Episcopal priest from another parish, or diocese to officiate or assist in the ceremony.
- **The Liturgy:** The service itself will be designed by the officiating clergy in partnership with the couple during marriage preparation sessions.
- **The Holy Eucharist:** Since the marriage service is a worship service involving the whole congregation, a celebration of the Holy Eucharist is often included. The decision to have the Eucharist will be made by the couple with the advice and counsel of the officiating priest.
- **The Wedding Music:** Wedding music at St. Philip’s should be sacred in nature, meaning your music selections should come from the vast collection of classical music which was written specifically for use in the church. The use of secular or pop culture music is not permitted.

The bride and groom must contact St. Philip’s Organist and Choirmaster, Debbie Skillman, for a music consultation at least six (6) to eight (8) weeks before the wedding. She will either advise you about other musicians who may do your wedding if she is unavailable, or, if she intends to play for your wedding, she will assist you in the selection of music and can supply a list of additional instrumentalists, if desired. The

Organist and Choirmaster will play at all weddings with music, unless she waives this right. There is a fee for her services (see below). Musicians in addition to the Organist and Choirmaster are welcome to participate in the service with her approval. Should the organist be required to work as an accompanist for instrumentalists or singers, rehearsals will be required, necessitating an additional fee.

Decoration of the Church:

- **Decoration of the Church:** The general principle to keep in mind is that a wedding is a worship service in which we seek to worship God with beauty and simplicity.
- **The Flowers:** The only flowers permitted at a wedding are two vases of altar flowers (such as those arranged by the Flower Guild every weekend for Sunday services) and flowers fixed to the pews along the center aisle.

Couples will be expected to provide their own flowers. These arrangements for flowers inside the Sanctuary may be made through the St. Philip's Flower Guild. It is expected that the wedding flowers are the property of the church, and they will remain in the Church for worship services on the following Sunday. The Sunday bulletin will identify the flowers as given in thanksgiving for the marriage. After services, they will then be delivered to the sick and shut-in. The couple should contact the Parish Administrator to arrange for the flowers' delivery.

- **The Altar & Aisle:** The liturgical color for a wedding is white, the color of joy and celebration. Pew markers may be supplied by a florist at the time of reserving the wedding date. Aisle runners are hazardous and are not permitted.

Photography:

- **Photography:** While the Church is sensitive to the desire of the couple to preserve this important moment in their lives, it is also concerned that the dignity and reverence of the service be maintained, and that family and friends' experience of worship not be compromised. The cooperation of both partners and the entire wedding party is sought and appreciated.
- The dignity of a wedding service requires that no flash pictures may be taken during the service. Likewise, no movements of the photographer or camera snaps, clicks, etc. shall be permitted to interrupt or distract from the ceremony. One video camera may be set up in the balcony with equipment that requires no additional lighting, remote microphones or remote cameras.

Photographs may, of course, be taken either before or after the wedding. The time allotted for photographs after the service will have to be limited in order for the Altar Guild to set up for Sunday Services.

- **Photography Sessions prior to the Wedding:** Photos cannot begin at the church more than two hours before the wedding and sessions cannot conflict with other weddings held at St. Philip's on the same day.
- **Photography Sessions following the Wedding:** Extended photography sessions after the

service can be difficult for the wedding guests waiting for a reception and for the Altar Guild and the sexton, who need to prepare the Church for Sunday. The wedding party and photographers must vacate the church one hour the wedding has concluded.

Before and after the Service:

- **Dressing at the Church:** We currently have no parish house, so the wedding party must make other arrangements for pre-service dressing and so forth. Smoking or drinking of alcoholic beverages on our premises is not permitted. Someone in the wedding party should remove all personal belongings from the back of the church immediately after the wedding and assure that all is left as the wedding party found them. The parish cannot be responsible for lost or stolen items.
- **The Guest Book:** Please plan to have your guest book at the reception rather than the church.
- **Pets, Rice, Confetti, Bird Seed & Bubbles:** Pets may not attend the wedding ceremony. Rice and confetti are not to be thrown at or on the wedding couple on church property. Birdseed and bubbles may be used ONLY out of doors.
- **Alcohol and Drug Policy:** The drinking of alcoholic beverages or the use of any drug by the Bride or Groom or members of the wedding party is prohibited before both the rehearsal and the wedding. Evidence of intoxication or other impairment will result in the ceremony being cancelled.
A wedding cannot take place when any of those in the wedding party are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. It is not our intent to embarrass anyone. We remind you this is a place of worship. Please act accordingly and abide by our guidelines. We thank you for your cooperation.
- **Traffic:** If the size of the wedding indicates the need for a traffic officer, one may be obtained by calling the City of Southport Police Department. As a rule, cash is expected for payment.
- **Following the Service:** Responsibility rests with the wedding party to restore all facilities used to the same conditions in which they were prior to the wedding. This includes any rooms used prior to, during or immediately after the rehearsal or wedding.

Fees:

- **Church Donations & Fees:** It is expected that all fees will be paid when the marriage license is brought to the Church on the Sunday prior to the wedding. They must be paid prior to the rehearsal. This should be coordinated with the Church Liaison.
- **Use of Church (Sanctuary, Chapel of the Cross)**
For members who have made a pledge: \$0
For non – Pledging members and non-members: \$2,500
This fee must be paid at the time the wedding date is reserved, to hold the date.
- **Discretionary Gift for the Needy:** In thanksgiving for their marriage, couples are

expected to contribute \$200 to the parish Discretionary Account for the Needy..

- **Music**

Organist & Choirmaster fee: \$ 275.00

Soloist fee: varies depending on soloist.

** An additional fee will be added for extra rehearsal time with the organist. Extra Rehearsal with soloist \$50.00 for any increment of time up to an hour**

- **Church Liaison** - \$200.00 – The Liaison is responsible for scheduling the wedding, rehearsal, opening and closing the church and answering any questions prior to and during the wedding. The Liaison will also attend the rehearsal and wedding to provide coordination for the event.

- **Flowers**

Couples should contact the Flower guild through the church office to coordinate with the florist who will be providing the flowers.

- **Sexton's Fee:**

The Sexton receives a minimum of \$100

Conclusion:

After having read our policy; if you are interested in continuing the conversation about having your wedding at St. Philip's, we look forward to talking with you. If you decide to choose another venue, we understand, and please accept our best wishes as you move forward with the search for your wedding location.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PAGE

Signing below indicates that you have read, understand and accept the practices and policies described in the Wedding Customary.

Bride _____
Print name

Bride _____ Date _____
Signature

Groom _____
Print name

Groom _____ Date _____
Signature

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage

(BCP pg 423)

At the time appointed, the persons to be married, with their witnesses, assemble in the church or some other appropriate place.

During their entrance, a hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

Then the Celebrant, facing the people and the persons to be married, with the woman to the right and the man to the left, addresses the congregation and says

Dearly beloved: We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony. The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life by his presence and first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. It signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, and Holy Scripture commends it to be honored among all people.

The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Therefore marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

Into this holy union *N.N.* and *N.N.* now come to be joined.
If any of you can show just cause why they may not lawfully be married, speak now; or else for ever hold your peace.

Then the Celebrant says to the persons to be married

I require and charge you both, here in the presence of God, that if either of you know any reason why you may not be united in marriage lawfully, and in accordance with God's Word, you do now confess it.

The Declaration of Consent

The Celebrant says to the woman

N., will you have this man to be your husband; to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

The Woman answers

I will.

The Celebrant says to the man

N., will you have this woman to be your wife; to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

The Man answers

I will.

The Celebrant then addresses the congregation, saying

Will all of you witnessing these promises do all in your power to uphold these two persons in their marriage?

People

We Will.

If there is to be a presentation or a giving in marriage, it takes place at this time. See [page 437](#).

A hymn, psalm, or anthem may follow.

The Ministry of the Word

The Celebrant then says to the people
The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Let us pray.

O gracious and everliving God, you have created us male and female in your image: Look mercifully upon this man and this woman who come to you seeking your blessing, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep the promises and vows they make; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Then one or more of the following passages from Holy Scripture is read. If there is to be a Communion, a passage from the Gospel always concludes the Readings.

Genesis 2:4-9, 15-24 (A man cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh)
Song of Solomon 2:10-13; 8:6-7 (Many waters cannot quench love)
Tobit 8:5b-8 (*New English Bible*) (That she and I may grow old together)

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (Love is patient and kind)
Ephesians 3:14-19 (The Father from whom ever family is named)
Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33 (Walk in love, as Christ loved us)
Colossians 3:12-17 (Love which binds everything together in harmony)
1 John 4:7-16 (Let us love one another for love is of God)

Between the Readings, a Psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said. Appropriate Psalms are 67, 127, and 128.

When a passage from the Gospel is to be read, all stand, and the Deacon or Minister appointed says
The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to...

People Glory to your, Lord Christ.

Matthew 5:1-10 (The Beatitudes)

Matthew 5:13-16 (You are the light...Let your light so shine)

Matthew 7:21,24-29 (Like a wise man who built his house upon the rock)

Mark 10:6-9,13-16 (They are no longer two but one)

John 15:9-12 (Love one another as I have loved you)

After the Gospel, the Reader says

The Gospel of the Lord.

People Praise to you, Lord Christ.

A homily or other response to the Readings may follow.

The Marriage

The Man, facing the woman and taking her right hand in his, says

In the Name of God, I, *N.*, take you, *N.*, to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.

Then they loose their hands, and the Woman, still facing the man, takes his right hand in hers, and says

In the Name of God, I, *N.*, take you, *N.*, to be my husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.

They loose their hands.

The Priest may ask God's blessing on a ring or rings as follows

Bless, O Lord, this ring to be a sign of the vows by which this man and this woman have bound themselves to each other; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The giver places the ring on the ring-finger of the other's hand and says

N., I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (*or* in the Name of God).

Then the Celebrant joins the right hands of husband and wife and says

Now that N. and N. have given themselves to each other by solemn vows, with the joining of hands and the giving and receiving of a ring, I pronounce that they are husband and wife, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder.

People Amen

The Prayers

All standing, the Celebrant says

Let us pray together in the words our Savior taught us.

People and Celebrant

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

If Communion is to follow, the Lord's Prayer may be omitted here.

The Deacon or other person appointed reads the following prayers, to which the People respond, saying, Amen.

If there is not to be a Communion, one or more of the prayers may be omitted.

Let us pray.

Eternal God, creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation, and giver of all grace: Look with favor upon the world you have made, and for which your Son gave his life, and especially upon this man and this woman whom you make one flesh in Holy Matrimony. *Amen.*

Give them wisdom and devotion in the ordering of their common life, that each may be to the other a strength in need, a counselor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy. *Amen.*

Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their spirits in your Spirit, that they may grow in love and peace with you and one another all the days of their life. *Amen.*

Give them grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their fault, and to seek each other's forgiveness and yours. *Amen.*

Make their life together a sign of Christ's love to this sinful and broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair. *Amen.*

Bestow on them, if it is your will, the gift and heritage of children, and the grace to bring them up to know you, to love you, and to serve you. *Amen.*

Give them such fulfillment of their mutual affection that they may reach out in love and concern for others. *Amen.*

Grant that all married persons who have witnessed these vows may find their lives strengthened and their loyalties confirmed. *Amen.*

Grant that the bonds of our common humanity, by which all your children are united one to another, and the living to the dead, may be so transformed by your grace, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven; where, O Father, with your Son, and the Holy Spirit, you live and reign in perfect unity, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Blessing of the Marriage

The people remain standing. The husband and wife kneel, and the Priest says one of the following prayers

Most gracious God, we give you thanks for your tender love in sending Jesus Christ to come among us, to be born of a human mother, and to make the way of the cross to be the way of life. We thank you, also, for consecrating the union of man and woman in his Name. By the power of your Holy Spirit, pour out the abundance of your blessing upon this man and this woman. Defend them from every enemy. Lead them into all peace. Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle about their shoulders, and a crown upon their foreheads. Bless them in their work and in their companionship; in their sleeping and in their waking; in their joys and in their sorrows; in their life and in their death. Finally, in your mercy, bring them to that table where your saints feast for ever in your heavenly home; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

or this

O God, you have so consecrated the covenant of marriage that in it is represented the spiritual unity between Christ and his Church: Send therefore your blessing upon these your servants, that they may so love, honor, and cherish each other in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The husband and wife still kneeling, the Priest adds this blessing

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favor look upon you, and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace; that you may faithfully live together in this life, and in the age to come have life everlasting. *Amen.*

The Peace

The Celebrant may say to the people
The peace of the Lord be always with you

People And also with you.

The newly married couple then greet each other, after which greetings may be exchanged throughout the congregation.

When Communion is not to follow, the wedding party leaves the church. A hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

At the Eucharist

The liturgy then continues with the Offertory, at which the newly married couple may present the offerings of bread and wine.

[Preface of Marriage](#)

At the Communion, it is appropriate that the newly married couple receive Communion first, after the ministers.

In place of the usual postcommunion prayer, the following is said

O God, the giver of all that is true and lovely and gracious:
We give you thanks for binding us together in these holy
mysteries of the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Grant that by your Holy Spirit, *N.* and *N.*, now joined in Holy
Matrimony, may become one in heart and soul, live in fidelity
and peace, and obtain those eternal joys prepared for all who
love you; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

As the wedding party leaves the church, a hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

St. Philip's Episcopal Church

Wedding Information Sheet

Wedding Date _____

Location Sanctuary Chapel of the Cross

Bride

Full Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home _____ Cell _____ Work _____

DOB _____ Place of Birth _____

Baptized Y N Confirmed Y N Denomination _____

Have you been married before? Y N Date finalized _____

Groom

Full Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home _____ Cell _____ Work _____

DOB _____ Place of Birth _____

Baptized Y N Confirmed Y N Denomination _____

Have you been married before? Y N Date finalized _____

Address after the ceremony _____

Declaration of Intent

We, _____ and _____

Desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the book of common Prayer.

We believe that the union of husband and wife in heart, body and mind, is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord.

And we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God's help thereto.

Signature of Groom _____

Signature of Bride (Maiden Name) _____

Date _____

Wedding Liturgical Worksheet

Bride's Full Name _____

Groom's Full Name _____

Wedding date _____ Time _____

Rehearsal Date _____ Time _____

Location Sanctuary Chapel of the Cross

Florist _____ Phone _____

Photographer _____ Phone _____

Organist _____ Phone _____

Music for seating _____

Procession In

_____ Liturgical (All attendants enter down the aisle behind the cross)

_____ Formal (Groomsmen enter from the side; bride attendants enter down the aisle.)

Number of Groomsmen _____ Ringbearer? Y N

Number of Bridesmaids _____ Flower Girl? Y N

Music for procession _____

Music for bride's entrance _____

Service Option

Presentation in marriage? Y N Presenter _____

First Lesson _____ Read by _____

Psalm _____ Read by _____

Second Lesson _____ Read by _____

Gospel Lesson _____

Holy Eucharist? Y N Eucharistic Prayer _____

Blessing preference 430 or 431

Music for procession out _____

Other _____

The following are suggested readings from the Book of Common Prayer

Old Testament

Genesis 1:26-28

Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’

Genesis 2:4-9, 15-24

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.’

Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.’ So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at

last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.’ Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Song of Solomon 2:10-13; 8:6-7

My beloved speaks and says to me: ‘Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of one’s house, it would be utterly scorned.

Tobit 8:5b-8

So she got up, and they began to pray and implore that they might be kept safe. Tobias began by saying, ‘Blessed are you, O God of our ancestors, and blessed is your name in all generations for ever. Let the heavens and the whole creation bless you for ever. You made Adam, and for him you made his wife Eve as a helper and support. From the two of them the human race has sprung. You said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make a helper for him like himself.” I now am taking this kinswoman of mine, not because of lust, but with sincerity. Grant that she and I may find mercy and that we may grow old together.’ And they both said, ‘Amen, Amen.’

New Testament

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Ephesians 3:14-19

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body. ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

Colossians 3:12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

1 John 4:7-16

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

Psalm

Psalm 67

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,

Selah

that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.

Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth.

Selah

Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.
May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him.

Psalm 127

A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.
Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labour in vain.
Unless the LORD guards the city,
the guard keeps watch in vain.
It is in vain that you rise up early
and go late to rest,
eating the bread of anxious toil;
for he gives sleep to his beloved.

Sons are indeed a heritage from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the sons of one's youth.
Happy is the man who has
his quiver full of them.
He shall not be put to shame
when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Psalm 128

A Song of Ascents.

Happy is everyone who fears the LORD,
who walks in his ways.

You shall eat the fruit of the labour of your hands;
you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you.

Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house;
your children will be like olive shoots
around your table.

Thus shall the man be blessed
who fears the LORD.

The LORD bless you from Zion.

May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.

May you see your children's children.

Peace be upon Israel!

Gospel

Matthew 5:1-10

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

‘Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:13-16

‘You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. ‘You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Matthew 7:21, 24-29

‘Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord”, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

‘Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!’

Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Mark 10:6-9, 13-16

But from the beginning of creation, “God made them male and female.”“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.’

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.’ And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

John 15:9-12

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.