

<b>OLD TESTAMENT READINGS</b>
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*1. A reading from the book of Genesis:*

The Lord God said, "It is not good for man to live alone. I will make a suitable companion to help him." So he took some soil from the ground and formed all the animals and all the birds. Then he brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and that is how they got their names. So the man named all the birds and all the animals; but not one of them was a suitable companion to help him.

Then the Lord God made the man fall into a deep sleep and while he was sleeping, he took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the flesh. He formed a woman out of the rib and brought her to him.

Then the man said, "At last, here is one of my own kind - Bone taken from my bone, and flesh from my flesh. "Woman" is her name because she was taken out of man.

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife, and they become one.

Genesis 2:18-24

*2. A reading from the book of Psalms:*

The Lord is my shepherd: I have everything I need. He lets me rest in fields of green grass and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.

He gives me new strength. He guides me in the right paths, as he has promised. Even though I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, Lord, for you are with me. Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.

You prepare a banquet for me, where all my enemies can see me; you welcome me as an honoured guest and fill my cup to the brim. I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life; and your house will be my home as long as I live.

Psalm 23

*3. A reading from the book of Psalms:*

I look to the mountains; where will my help come from? My help will come from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

He will not let you fall; your protector is always awake.

The Lord will guard you; he is by your side to protect you; The sun will not hurt you during the day, nor the moon during the night.

The Lord will protect you from all danger; he will keep you safe. He will protect you as you come and go now and forever.

Psalm 121:1-3,5-8

*4. A reading from the book of Psalms"*

If the Lord does not build the house, the work of the builders is useless; if the Lord does not protect the city, it is useless for the sentries to stand guard.

It is useless to work so hard for a living. getting up early and going to bed late. For the Lord provides for those he loves, while they are asleep.

Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a real blessing. The children a person has when young are like arrows in a soldier's hand.

Happy is the one who has many such arrows. He will never be defeated when he meets his enemies in the place of judgement.

Psalm 127

<b>NEW TESTAMENT READINGS</b>
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*5. A reading from St Paul's letter to the Church in Rome:*

So then, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you:

Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God- What is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.

Do not think of yourself more highly than you should. Instead, be modest in your thinking, and judge yourself according to the amount of faith that God has given you.

Hate what is evil, hold on to what is good. Love one another warmly... and be eager to show respect for one another. Work hard and do not be lazy. Serve the Lord with a heart full of devotion. Let your hope keep you joyful, be patient in your troubles, and pray at all times. Share your belongings with your needy fellow-Christians, and open your homes to strangers.

Ask God to bless those who persecute you- yes, ask him to bless, not to curse. Be happy with those who are happy, weep with those who weep. Have the same concern for everyone. Do not be proud, but make friends with humble people. Do not think of yourselves as wise.

If someone has done you wrong try to do what everyone considers go be good. Do everything possible on your part to live at peace with everybody. Never take revenge... instead, as the Scripture says;

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink". Do not let evil defeat you; instead, conquer evil with good.

Romans 12

*6. A reading from St Paul's letter to the Church in Colossae*

You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another. Whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else, you must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. And to all these qualities add love..

Allow the peace Christ gives guide you in the decisions you make...

And remember to be thankful... Let everything you do or say be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through him to God the Father.

Colossians 3:12-17

*7. A reading from St John's first letter,*

Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. And God showed his love for us by sending his only Son into the world, so that we might have life through him. Dear friends, if this is how God loved us, then we should love one another.

No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in union with us and his love is made perfect in us. We are sure that we live in union with God and that he lives in union with us, because he has given us his Spirit.

1 John 4:7-9,11-13

8. *A reading from Paul's letter to the Church in Corinth:*

If I had the gift of being able to speak in other languages without learning them, and could speak in every language there is in all of heaven and earth, but didn't love others, I would only be making a noise.

If I had the gift of prophecy and knew all about what is going to happen about everything, but didn't love others, what good would it do?

Even if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, I would still be worth nothing at all without love.

If I gave everything I have to the poor, and if I were burned alive for preaching the Gospel but didn't love others, it would be of no value whatever.

Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy, It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices when truth wins out. If you love someone you will be loyal to them no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, always stand your ground in defending him. Love never gives up. Its faith, its hope and its patience never fail. Love is eternal.

1 Corinthians 13:1-7

**A Reading on Love**

*N. and M. are now married, but a marriage is never established in a brief moment of time. Rather it is built up over the years as two people grow together. More than that, it has to be worked at by the couple. In the process there are certain qualities to be cultivated that make for an enriching and lasting relationship. These have been expressed in the Christian tradition by the words of the Apostle Paul. His thoughts on love provide a sound foundation for the marriage relationship to grow and flourish. Listen to what he wrote:*

*'Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad... when truth prevails.*

*Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen.*

*In this life we have three great lasting qualities - faith, hope and love. But the greatest of them is love.'*

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 & 13 (J.B.Phillips translation)

<b>GOSPEL READINGS:</b>
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9. *A reading from St Mark's Gospel:*

A teacher of the law....came to Jesus with a question: "Which commandment is the most important of all?"

Jesus replied, "The most important one is this, The Lord our God is the only Lord; Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

The second most important commandment is this: Love your neighbour as you love yourself. There is no other commandment more important than these two."

Mark 12:28-31

10. *A reading from St John's Gospel:*

There was a wedding in a town of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine had run out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine left."

"You must not tell me what to do," Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." Jesus' mother then told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

The Jews have rules about ritual washing and for this purpose six stone water jars were there, each one large enough to hold about 100 liters. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill these jars with water." They filled them to the brim, and then he told them, "Now draw some water out and take it to the man in charge of the feast." They took him the water, which now had turned into wine, and he tasted it. He did not know where this wine had come from (but, of course, the servants who had drawn the water knew); so he called the bridegroom and said to him "Everyone else serves the best wine first, and after the guests have had plenty to drink, he serves the ordinary wine. But you have kept the best wine until now!"

Jesus performed this first miracle in Cana in Galilee; there he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

John 2:1-11

*11 A reading from St Matthew's Gospel:*

Blessed are those who are convinced of their basic dependency on God, whose lives are emptied of all that doesn't matter, those for whom the riches of this world just aren't that important.

Blessed are those who know that all they are is a gift from God, and so they can be content with their greatness and smallness, knowing themselves and being true to themselves.

Blessed are those who wear compassion like a garment, those who have learned how to find themselves by losing themselves in another's sorrow.

Blessed are those who are hungry for goodness, those who never get enough of God and truth and righteousness.

Blessed are the merciful, those who remember how much has been forgiven them, and are able to extend this forgiveness into the lives of others.

Blessed are those whose hearts are free and simple, those who have smashed all false images and are seeking honestly for truth.

Blessed are the creators of peace, those who build roads that unite rather than walls that divide, those who bless the world with the healing power of their presence.

Blessed are those whose love has been tried, like gold, in the furnace and found to be precious, genuine and lasting, those who have lived out their belief, no matter what the cost or pain.

Matthew 5:3-10

Paraphrased by Marcia Wiederkehr O.S.B in *Seasons of Your Heart* (p.78)

**NON-BIBLICAL READINGS.**

1.  
 I know I've said before that I love you"  
 and have tried to tell you how much you mean to me -  
 but I wonder if you really know  
 how strong and sincere my emotions are  
 and how deeply touched I am by your feelings.

You are such a tender and special person,  
 and you make me feel "special"  
 just by .....  
 the way you talk with me,  
 and listen with me,  
 and share with me the warmth of your touch  
 and the desires of your heart.

I want to give so much in return.  
 For I do love you,  
 and I just wanted to let you know  
 how nice it feels inside when my smile is showing  
 and my heart is full  
 and my thoughts are all for you.  
 Laine Parsons

2.  
 Out of the wild exuberance of creation  
 throughout millions of years,  
 you two have appeared...Each of you unique,  
 distinctive, wondrously personal.

You have chosen to journey together  
 down this earth valley in the brief moment  
 of time that is yours.  
 From this day forward, you become a unit  
 of life that will bring forth futures.

You are both called into a new existence.  
 The old things have passed away;  
 a new heaven and a new earth is now  
 your dwelling place.

For the whole universe has come to each of you  
 in the form of a particular person who  
 has a unique love for you  
 and is beloved by you.

Ross Snyder from Inscape, reprinted in Celebrating Marriage by Doug Pratt (p.32)

3.  
 What then is love? Love is sensing the other as a Presence.  
 This is now the mode of your existence.

Love is receiving the feelings, thoughts,  
 intentions of the other into your own understanding.

Love is fidelity over the long haul.  
 'Entreat me not the leave thee,...  
 for wherever you go I will go'

in the battle for excellence, in the tension of differences, in the  
 travail of defeat, in the joy of being warmly human.

Love is body interfused with spirit..  
 united in ecstasy with another whole person....

Love is talking together....  
 Love is listening together...  
 Love is creating together...

Ross Snyder from Inscape,  
 reprinted in Celebrating Marriage by D. Pratt, Celebrating Marriage (p.33)

4.

There are two of us now to stay awake  
while the wind blows cold against the pane.  
Two of us to share.

There are two of us now to see  
the colours of the hills  
with their clinging flowers, shrubs and trees.  
We both believe in tomorrow,  
windy hills and flying gulls, and sandy beaches  
where Nature's gardens grow seeds of life.

There are two of us now.  
Four hands to pray  
or build castles of golden bricks,  
pick the flowers that we need  
to adorn altars of our creation.  
We both believe in tomorrow,  
smiling children, waterfalls  
and a bouquet of flowers.                      Anon  
from Celebrating Marriage by Douglas Pratt p.30

5.

Love gives naught but itself  
and take naught but from itself.  
Love possesses not nor would it be possessed;  
For love is sufficient unto love.

And think not you can direct the course of love,  
for love, if it finds you worthy,  
directs your course.

Love has no other desire but to fulfil itself.  
But if you love and must needs have desires,  
let these be your desires:

To melt and be like a running brook  
that sings its melody to the night.  
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 upon your lips.

Love is not blind, love is vision  
It can see what microscopes have never seen.  
Love does not need a magnifying glass  
It has clear eyes that see forever.

Macrina Wiederkehr O.S.B. from in Seasons of Your Heart (p.75)

You do not have to be afraid in love's presence.  
You will not be used or taken lightly  
or ignored, or laugh at.  
Your significance will be seen  
with the pure eye of truth.

So love needs no glasses...  
but love sees the spirit things  
the deep things of God that last forever.

You don't have to be afraid of loneliness  
in love's presence.  
For love has a way of filling you up  
yet never smothering you.  
Love does not greedily snatch you to itself,  
it breathes on you and gives you wings  
then lets you free.

Love's glance is sometimes gentle,  
sometimes stern.  
To fit your need, it falls on you  
like morning dew or like a lightning bolt  
but it is vision to the very end.

It sees the things we dare not see  
because we are afraid of sight.  
It sees the things we try to hide  
because we are afraid of light.

Love is vision  
and love is not afraid.

6

You were born together,  
 and together you shall be for evermore.  
 You shall be together when the 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 heaven 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 the 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  
 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          reprinted in Celebrating Marriage by Doug Pratt (p.31)

7.

I know you -  
 I have seen you weep, and you've seen sorrow touch my soul.  
 When laughter rises from your heart  
 I've leapt to join your song.

For with you ....  
 I have loved, angered, rested, & feared.

We've explored our lives and found  
 new worlds, new selves, new silences, & new distances  
 all waiting to be born through sharing.  
 In the creation of my newest life and my oldest history  
 your presence is now found.

At times we fight,  
 we throw small things and great sharp words,  
 and yet we do not break.

At times we push and goad,  
 we love, we support and we resist each other.  
 Then pausing look and see a new vista!  
 meaning born from struggle  
 joy from success  
 peace from security  
 and love - surpassing our shining selves.

You are all my wishes, all my speculations ... granted.  
 I know you. I am known. And in that certainty is freedom.