



Rituals

“Rituals have long been used to honour cultural and personal traditions and turning points. They provide a way to reinforce connection between people in the family, the community or on a spiritual level.”

(Sally Cant - The Heart and Soul of Celebrancy)

Rituals are a fabulous way to use symbolism to convey a message both to one another and to your guests. A ritual doesn't have to be something completely over the top. The simple exchanging of rings is a ritual. The following are some examples of the types of rituals you may like to think about including in your ceremony:

- Unity Candles
- Unity Bouquet
- Sand Ceremony
- Palm Ceremony
- Hand Fasting
- Pebbles Ceremony
- Rose Ceremony
- Butterfly Release
- Dove Release

UNITY CANDLES

Three candles are placed on the table. The two side candles are each lit (sometimes by the parents of each partner) representing the individual lives of each partner. The centre candle is lit by both partners during the ceremony, signifying their new life together as "One". (Unfortunately, the Unity Candle ceremony is often impractical outdoors, as the flames are easily extinguished by the wind. Couples may instead wish to use the sand ceremony, or the unity bouquet ceremony.)

Wording for the lighting of tapers by the parents:

_____ & _____ are going to light their Unity Candle, a symbol of their marriage relationship. The candles from which they light it have been lit by their mothers to represent their lives to this moment.

The lights, representing the faith, wisdom, and love they have received from their parents, are distinct, each burning alone. _____ & _____ will light the centre candle to symbolise the union of their lives. As this one light burns undivided, so shall their love be one.

From now on, your thoughts shall be for each other rather than for your individual selves. Your joys and sorrows shall be shared alike. May the radiance of this one light be a testimony of your unity. May this candles burn brightly as a symbol of your commitment to each other and to your union.

Wording if extinguishing the tapers:

As _____ & _____ together light the centre candle, they will extinguish their own candles, thus letting the centre candle symbolise the union of their lives. As this one light cannot be divided, neither will their lives be divided.

This flame represents your commitment to each other and to a lasting and loving marriage. The Unity Candle symbolises the new family you are now forming from your past lives. Now you both are charged with keeping this flame bright for the rest of your days.

Wording if you're prefer to leave your tapers lit:

_____ & _____ come into their marrage relationship as individuals and they do not lose their identity simply because they are married. Rather they use their individuality to create and strengthen the relationship of marriage. Therefore, the three candles remain lit, one for each of them and one for their marriage.

This flame represents your commitment to each other and to a lasting and loving marriage. The Unity Candle symbolises the new family you are now forming from your past lives. The flames you light it with both burn brighter when joined together. Now you both are charged with keeping this flame bright for the rest of your days.

THE UNITY BOUQUET

Like the Unity Candle, the Unity Bouquet is a similar concept, which does not involve a flame which might go out in a draft. The Mothers of the couple are each escorted into the room with a bouquet of flowers, which they place in a side vase before being seated, representing the life of their family member who is going to be married. The Officiant says that the flowers represent the ways in which each partner has blossomed and grown, up until this point in their life. The partners are then instructed to place their flowers together into one larger vase, creating a very special "unity bouquet". Although each bouquet, and each life were beautiful alone, they are even more beautiful together. (The choices selected in this ceremony can have a dramatic effect. For example, if the groom's family carries baby's breath or lavender, and the bride's family carries roses, the bouquet is stunning when combined. Practice combining artificial flowers at the rehearsal, and make sure no one involved is allergic to the real thing!)

SAND CEREMONY

The Sand Ceremony represents the joining of two lives into a new dimension of unity. It is similar to the Unity Candle ceremony. Instead of each partner having their own candle, each partner has a vial of sand which represents their childhood and life before marriage. During the ceremony, each partner pours his or her sand into a larger vial to represent their new status as a married couple. Some couples use two different colours of sand, which make a third colour when joined. Partners may wish to use sand from a lake or ocean close to where they grew up, or where they spent meaningful vacations together.

Following is some examples of wording that can be used around the sand ceremony:

Today this relationship is symbolised through the pouring of these two individual containers of sand, one representing you _____ and all that you were, all that you are, and all that you will ever be, and the other representing _____, and all that you were and all that you are, and all that you will ever be. These two containers of sand are now poured together into one, representing the combining of your individual lives into one. And just as these grains of sand can no longer be separated and poured again, so will your marriage be.

These separate containers of sand represent your lives up to this moment, individual and unique.

I now invite you to combine your individual containers of sand into one larger container. As you combine your sand together, your lives also join together as one. Just as these grains of sand can never be separated and poured again into the individual containers, so will your marriage be.

Like the colours of the rainbow we are all different and special, valuable and precious. Therefore it is only fitting that you be shown as an important part of this marriage - after all marriage is largely about family. These containers of sand represent each of you and your importance in this family. I will ask each of you to not pour some of your sand into the jar. The sand has now been joined together and can not be isolated. These grains of sand can never separated and poured again into the individual containers, so will your family be a moulding of 6 individual personalities, bonded together. You are joined together today, not only non marriage, but also as a family.

As "insert child's name" adds her sand, we are reminded that though we are all different people, it is our individuality which adds the unique colour to the tapestry of the family.

Like the sands poured before it, these sands will also mix and be unable to be separated.

_____ & _____ will now finish adding their sands showing that "insert child's name" will always be at the centre of their heart surrounded by the love and family here today.

PALM CEREMONY

_____, please hold _____ hands palms up, so you may see the gift that they are to you.

These are the hands of your best friend, young and strong and vibrant with love, that are holding yours on your wedding day, as he promises to love you all the days of his life.

These are the hands that will work along side yours, as together you build your future, as you laugh and cry, as you share your innermost secrets and dreams.

These are the hands that will passionately love you and cherish you through the years, for a lifetime of happiness.

These are the hands that will countless times wipe the tears from your eyes: tears of sorrow and tears of joy.

These are the hands that will comfort you in illness. and hold you when fear of grief engulfs your heart.

These are the hands that will tenderly lift your chin and brush your cheek as they raise your face to look into his eyes, eyes that are filled completely with his overwhelming love and desire for you.

_____, please hold _____ hands palms up, so you may see the gift that they are to you.

These are the hands of your best friend, smooth, young and carefree, that are holding yours on your wedding day. as she pledges her love and commitment to you all the days of her life.

These are the hands that will massage tension from your neck and back in the evenings after you've both had a long hard day.

These are the hands that will hold you tight as you struggle through difficult times.

These are the hands that will comfort you when you are sick, or console you when you are grieving.

These are the hands that will passionately love you and cherish you through the years, for a lifetime of happiness.

These are the hands that will give you support as she encourages you to chase down your dreams. Together as a team, everything you wish for can be realised.

HANDFASTING CEREMONY

_____ & _____, I ask you to turn and look into each other's eyes and hold hands.

Will you honour and respect one another, and seek never to break that honour?

"We will" (First cord/ribbon is draped over the hands)

And so the binding is made.

Will you share each other's pain and seek to ease it?

"We will" (Second cord/ribbon is draped over the hands)

And so the binding is made.

Will you share the burdens of each other so that your spirits may grow in this union?

"We will" (Third cord/ribbon is draped over the hands)

And so the binding is made.

Will you share each others laughter and look for the brightness and positive in each other?

"We will" (Fourth cord/ribbon is draped over the hands)

And so the binding is made.

----- & -----, as your hands are bound together now

So your lives and spirits are joined in a union of love and trust

Above you are the stars and below you is the earth

Like the stars, your love should be a constant source of light

And like the earth, a firm foundation from which to grow.

Note: The cords can be 4 different colours to symbolise the 4 elements/seasons, or any virtues/values that you specially wish to make part of your marriage.

BLESSING TO BE SAID OVER CLASPED HANDS

These are the hands of your best friend, young and strong and full of love for you, that are holding yours on your wedding day, as you promise to love each other today, tomorrow and forever.

These are the hands that will work alongside yours, as together you build your future.

These are the hands that will passionately love you and cherish you through the years, and with the slightest touch, will comfort you like no other.

These are the hands that will hold you when fear or grief fills your mind.

These are the hands that will countless times wipe the tears from your eyes; tears of sorrow, and tears of joy.

These are the hands that will tenderly hold your children.

These are the hands that will help you to hold your family as one.

These are the hands that will give you strength when you need it.

And lastly, these are the hands that even when aged, will still be reaching for yours, still giving you the same unspoken tenderness with just a simple touch.

THE ROSE CEREMONY

(In the Rose Ceremony, the two parties give each other a Rose. Two roses are all that is necessary. The Rose Ceremony is placed at the end of the ceremony just before the declaration)

In the past, the rose was considered a symbol of love and a single rose always meant only one thing - it meant the words "I love you." So it is appropriate that for your first gift as a married couple, that gift would be a single rose.

Please exchange your gift.

In some ways it seems like you have not done anything at all. Just a moment ago you were holding one small rose - and now you are holding one small rose. In some ways, a marriage ceremony is like this. In some ways, tomorrow is going to seem no different than yesterday. But in fact today, just now, you both have given and received one of the most valuable and precious gifts of life - one I hope you always remember - the gift of true and abiding love within the devotion of marriage.

Plus (optional)

_____ and _____, where ever you make your home in the future - pick one very special location for roses; so that on each anniversary of this truly wonderful occasion you both may take a rose to that spot both as a recommitment to your marriage - and a recommitment that this will be a marriage based upon love.

In every marriage there are times where it is difficult to find the right words.
It is easiest to hurt who we most love. It is easiest to be most hurt by who we most love.

It might be difficult some time to words to say "I am sorry" or "I forgive you"; "I need you" or "I am hurting". If this should happen, if you simply can not find these words, leave a rose at that spot which both of you have selected - for that rose than says what matters most of all and should overpower all other things and all other words.

That rose says the words: "I still love you."

The other should accept this rose for the words which can not be found, and remember the love and hope that you both share today.

_____ and _____, if there is anything you remember of this marriage ceremony, it is that it was love that brought you here today, it is only love which can make it a glorious union, and it is by love which your marriage shall endure."

BUTTERFLY RELEASE

According to an American Indian Legend - if anyone desires a wish to come true they must first capture a butterfly and whisper that wish to it. Since a butterfly can make no sound, the butterfly can not reveal the wish to anyone but the Great Spirit who hears and sees all. In gratitude for giving the beautiful butterfly its freedom, the Great Spirit always grants the wish.

So, according to legend by making a wish and giving the butterfly its freedom, the wish will be taken to the heavens and be granted.

We have gathered to grant _____ & _____ all our best wishes and are about to set these butterflies free in trust that all these wishes will be granted.

Wings

You have given me wings with which to fly
Now I breathe in deep and spread them wide
as we lift off from the silken petals
into the wind where the butterflies glide.

DOVE RELEASE

Our white doves are the symbol of Love, Peace and Hope. They pair for life, and at the end of each day they return to the same home for the night. As _____ & _____ release these doves, we ask you, their family and friends, to witness this very symbolic gesture, which heralds the beginning of their new life together.

_____, we wish you love that, like the doves, continues to soar. We wish you peace as you work together to develop a home. And we join in your hope for a long and happy marriage.

Like a married couple, the doves are not obliged to be by each other's side for every hour of every day. In the evening however, whether their day's journey has been together or apart, both doves return to the same home for the night. _____ & _____, as the doves fly they will carry our wishes for peace, love and hope for your future life together.

_____ & _____ are now going to release two white pigeons, that are meant to represent doves. They will fly upwards, maybe circle above us, and then fly home together, as a pair. This symbolises our newly wed couple setting off on their journey in life together, in harmony. _____ & _____, we wish for you that your life together will be long, rich and rewarding. May your marriage carry with it all the wonderful qualities that the white doves represent.