

How to Lead a Marriage Service

Question 1: What are main parts of your marriage service?

- Prayer of Thanksgiving
 - We thank God for the couple, their families and their friends.
- Teaching about Christian Marriage
 - We read from the Bible and briefly remind everyone what God wants for every marriage and family.
- The Marriage Promises
 - The couple promises to love and care for one another for as long as they live.
- The Marriage Declaration
 - The pastor declares to their families and the community that they are married.
 - They sign the marriage certificate.
- Prayer of Blessing
 - We ask God to bless their marriage with the joy of companionship and the gift of children.

Question 2: What does the order of your marriage service look like?

- The entrance of the Bride
 - The pastor, the groom, relatives and wedding guests arrive first and wait for the arrival of the Bride and her parents.
 - The father (and sometimes also the mother), close relative or guardian (if the bride's parents have died) escort the bride to the front of the church where the pastor and the groom are waiting. The bride stays with the father until the groom promises to look after her.
- Prayer of Thanksgiving
 - We sing a song of praise to God.
 - We offer the prayer of thanksgiving:
 - Heavenly Father, thank You so much for Paul and Mary. (when you translate this, please use names from your own culture) Today, we join them in giving You thanks for all the blessings of life they have already experienced - especially the blessing of family and friends.
 - Thank You for each one of their family members and relatives - especially their parents, their grand parents and their ancestors before them. Today, two families will be joined together by this marriage. Please pour out your blessings on both their families and all their friends. We ask this in Jesus Name. Amen!
- Teaching about Christian Marriage
 - Read a short passage from the Bible.
 - Give a short message to remind the people what God wants for every marriage and family.
- The Marriage Promises
 - Pastor: Paul, here, in God's presence and in the presence of your families and friends, I ask you: do you take Mary to be your wife for as long as you live? No one can be sure what life will be like in the future. Together you may be rich or poor, you may experience

sickness or good health, sometimes you may have quarrels and disagreements - whatever happens - do you promise to love her, protect her and honour her through all the joys and difficulties of life? Do you promise to be a faithful husband to her and not seek for sexual pleasure with others as long as you are both alive?

- Paul: With God's help, I do.
- Pastor: Mary, here, in God's presence and in the presence of your families and friends, I ask you: do you take Paul to be your husband for as long as you live? No one can be sure what life will be like in the future. Together you may be rich or poor, you may experience sickness or good health, you may have quarrels and disagreements - whatever happens - do you promise to love him, protect him and honour him through all the joys and difficulties of life? Do you promise to be a faithful wife to him and not seek for sexual pleasure with others as long as you are both alive?
- Mary: With God's help, I do.
- Pastor: Who gives Mary to be married to Paul?
- Father of the bride or guardian: "I do". The father gives his daughter's hand to the groom and joins their hands together: "Paul, please take good care of our daughter."
- Paul (taking both Mary's hands) : Here in the presence of God, our families and friends, I, Paul, take you Mary to be my wife. It does not matter what happens in the future - we may be rich or poor, we may be sick or in good health, through all the joys and difficulties of life, as long as I am alive, I promise to always love you, protect you and honour you.
- Mary (taking both Paul's hands) : Here in the presence of God, our families and friends, I, Mary, take you Paul to be my husband. It does not matter what happens in the future - we may be rich or poor, we may be sick or in good health, through all the joys and difficulties of life, as long as I am alive, I promise to always love you, protect you and honour you.
- The Exchange of Rings
 - Paul: Mary, I give you this ring as a sign of my promise that I will always love you, protect you and honour you.
 - Mary: Paul, I give you this ring as a sign of my promise that I will always love you, protect you and honour you.
- The Declaration of Marriage
 - Pastor: (addressing the people) Family members and friends of Paul and Mary - you have heard the promises that this couple have made to each other - will you do everything you can to support them in their marriage?
 - People: Yes!
 - Pastor: Paul and Mary - because you have made these promises to each other, by the authority given to me both by the government of Singapore and the church of Jesus Christ, I declare that you are husband and wife - in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together - let no one separate. (At this point, the husband unveils his bride and gives her a kiss.)
- The Prayer of Blessing

- (Couple kneels before the cross - holding hands)
- Pastor: It is not easy for us to understand the full meaning of the cross of Jesus. It is both a sign of great pain and great love. He endured the pain of the cross because of His great love for us. The cross teaches us that you cannot separate love and pain - they are together. The more you love someone - the more pain that person can cause you. Paul and Mary - because you love one another so much - you will also cause one another great pain. Like our Lord Jesus - your love for one another must be strong enough to bear the pain of loving.
- Let us pray: Dear Lord - thank You so much for Paul and Mary - they have enough experience to know that life is a mixture of joy and sorrow. We do not know what trials and difficulties they will face in the future. When problems come - help them to hold on to each other and find a solution together. We pray that the pain and sorrow of life will not destroy their love for each other - instead - following Your example - the pain and sorrow will make their love deeper and stronger.
- We also pray that You will bless their marriage with much happiness, laughter, togetherness and harmony. May they experience the wonder and the joy of true friendship. And if it is according to Your will, at the right time, we pray that You will bless their marriage with children - so that the blessing of their families may be passed on to the next generation. We ask this in Jesus' Name - Amen!
- They sign the marriage certificate with the witnesses.
- We sing a final song of praise.
- The pastor closes with a final prayer of blessing.

Question 3: What are some other suggestions for conducting a good marriage service?

- I always try and share the leading of the service with an assistant because I want to train leaders.
- Keep the service as short as possible. I suggest 30 to 45 minutes. There will usually be many non-Christians present. If your service is too long, they may find it boring.
- This is a good opportunity to remind the community about God's plan for marriage and family - but do not preach too long - 5 minutes will do.

Question 4: What are some Scripture readings for marriage services?

- Matthew 19:3-6
- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- Ephesians 5:21-33
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-7