

*Note: This couple and I personally wrote most of this ceremony, including the vows. They followed a family tradition that started over 90 years ago and were married while standing on a "marriage rug."*

Who presents this woman to be married to this man? **Father:** Her mother and I do.

### **Commencement**

Welcome! Love is a miraculous gift, and a wedding is a celebration of that magic, and that's what we're here to do today. We are gathered together to be overjoyed for and with Rachel and Michael, who are so wonderfully suited to one another that it's a pure delight for the rest of us to see how ebulliently happy two people can be. When we think of love we sometimes talk about people who "deserve" one another. Not only do Rachel and Michael deserve one another, but they are a perfect match, a pair, a fit, two hybrid peas in a pod; and their marriage, far from being something they have had to work hard to achieve, was pure inevitability. They were given to one another and fell so deeply in love that they had no choice. They are the embodiment of true romance which, matured, becomes true love. They are the example of love that in its lightheartedness dissolves the notion of love as hard work. They are the promise of possibility, the expectation of joyful surprise. We're here to celebrate, to honor, to laugh, to dance, and to be glad because the inevitable has happened. Love is alive and well in the land. Rachel and Michael are here to prove it, and we are here to celebrate with them.

### **Dedication**

Rachel and Michael, we are here today to celebrate your commitment and publicly affirm your love for one another. You have discovered that you are soul mates; you believe you were once one in the universe. Then, as you were blessed with being, you were split in two and sent on a journey to seek out your other halves.

A wedding is a celebration of the commencement of a new chapter in your journey together, and marriage is the formal expression of that life-long commitment, friendship, and love. But marriage is more than a union of two persons. It is also a combining of two families, two cultures, two traditions. And today you are continuing a family tradition of being married while standing together on this rug. *(to guests:)* Ninety years ago, Rachel's great grandparents were married in a garden, in Turkey, now called Syria, on this wedding rug. Jasper Paul and Johanna Munson started a tradition of marital good luck, and this rug has been passed down through the generations, from one family member to the next, for couples to stand on, on their wedding day. A photograph of each couple has been placed in an album; and every single couple who was married on this rug is still married.

Marriage is what you make of it. Your future is a mystery, but whatever it holds, whatever you undertake together will bring you inestimable joy, and the love you share can truly help to change the world. In presenting yourselves here today to be joined in marriage, you perform an act of faith. This faith can grow and develop and last, but only if you both decide to make it so. A lasting and growing love is not guaranteed by any ritual.

Life's problems will test you, and life's successes will lift you up. Stress and misfortune are bound to happen at some point; but if you support each other 100%, you'll be a strong team.

You will have someone to lean on, someone who'll rub your back, or your feet, someone to give you a hug and tell you it's going to be ok. If you can recognize each other's needs and compromise, together you will find a sense of personal freedom, as well as personal responsibility. Working together, you will find in each other companionship and love, understanding and compassion, challenge and agreement. Individually, neither of you are perfect. Perfection lies in the two of you loving and working together, as equal partners.

### **I Love You ~Roy Croft**

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 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.

### **Vows**

Rachel and Michael, you have invited us to witness the happiness that you have found in each other. Are you ready to make the pledges to which you commit yourselves to one another in love? **Both:** Yes!

Do you, Michael, take Rachel to be your wedded 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, 'til death do you part? With your whole heart and with your earnest and complete devotion, do you give her your love? **Michael:** I do!

*repeat*

**Michael:** Rachel, marriage to me is spending the rest of my life with my soul mate. I fell in love with you because I felt like with you, I had found my other half. In marrying you, I promise

to be myself, and never be anything else but that. I promise to let you be yourself as well. I promise to be equal partners in our marriage, to respect our differences, and to use those differences as building blocks instead of obstacles.

Do you, Rachel, take Michael, to be your wedded 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, 'til death do you part? With your whole heart and with your earnest and complete devotion, do you give him your love? **Rachel:** I do!

*repeat*

**Rachel:** Michael, no other person could ever make this journey through life more special, more meaningful, more powerful, more precious than you, my kindred spirit, my soul mate. In marrying you, I promise to be nothing less than the best person I can be. I promise to be willing to compromise and to care for you above all else. I promise to try to recognize when I'm not at my best, and be willing to compromise. I promise to love you with a whole and open heart for the rest of our lives.

### **Blessing and Exchanging of Rings**

What tokens do you offer that symbolize your acceptance of these vows? These rings are a symbol of the unbroken circle of love. Love, freely given, has no beginning and no end. Love, freely given, has no giver and no receiver - for each is the giver and each is the receiver. May these rings remind you always of the love you share on this day.

**Michael:** I give you this ring as a symbol of my eternal, everlasting love and commitment.

**Rachel:** I give you this ring as a symbol that I am part of your journey, and you are part of mine.

### **Blessing**

Marriage is the joining of two people – the union of two hearts. It lives on the love you give each other and never grows old, but thrives on the joy of each new day... Marriage is love. May you always be blessed in your hearts with the wonder of this special day. May you always be able to talk things over, to confide in each other, to laugh with each other, to enjoy life together, and to share moments of quiet and peace, when the day is done. May you be blessed with a lifetime of happiness.

### **Pronouncement of Marriage**

In as much as you have consented together in this ceremony to live in wedlock and have witnessed your vows in the presence of this company, by the giving and receiving of rings, it gives me great pleasure to now pronounce that you are husband and wife!

You may kiss the Bride!

And now, it is my honor and joy to introduce to you, for the first time as husband and wife~ Mr. and Mrs. Michael Jones! Congratulations!