

Wedding One: The Choice

Notes for couples

Although this wedding appears to be written for a woman named Miriam and a man named Cody, these two names and genders are no more than examples. They were very late additions to the wedding. The ceremony is equally appropriate for opposite sex couples, female couples, and male couples. If you're considering using it, I urge you to try reading it aloud with your partner, then swap roles and read it again. You might be surprised to discover what role expresses you best.

This ceremony is meant to be read aloud, not memorized.

If you decide to use this ceremony, please go to [Using a Ceremony You Find Here](#) for more information.

At a glance

Who: Female, male, or opposite-sex couple

Where: Most of the ceremony can be performed indoors or outdoors, but in the beginning the couple should be outdoors and the guests should stand outside or find excellent windows.

When: Any season, any time of day

Number of participants other than couple: 1 officiant and 1 or 2 optional stagehands

Procession: Procession by couple only

Music: Please use it!

Synopsis

This wedding is for doubting Thomases, worrywarts, and individuals who wavered before firmly deciding to marry. In it, the two partners approach the guests from different directions. They discuss choosing a certain partner in terms of settling down in a certain place. They consider the unlikelihood of deciding to marry any one of the billions of people on earth. They conclude that their feelings of attachment will make their unlikely decision the best one, as long as they work to truly become one another's soul mate. To end the ceremony, they jump forward together, making a "leap of faith" into an unknown marriage.

Ceremony

Approach

Officiant: "Miriam and Cody traveled through many places they might have settled before they chose to settle each where they had found the other. Today we will see them walk separately one last time through the wide space full of possibilities and we will see them convene at this one spot where we have gathered. We will witness their final choice to marry one another. First please follow me to watch Miriam and Cody approach." ¹

The guests follow the officiant outside or to some other place where they can see the two partners walking toward them from a distance.

The two partners approach the guests from two different directions. In most settings, one partner should approach from the guests' right, the other from the guests' left. If it's evening, both partners hold lanterns or other lights; these can be so bright that the partners are fully illuminated or so dim that only the lanterns themselves are visible. Both partners begin walking toward the guests from the far side of buildings, trees, hills, or the open horizon – somewhere beyond the guests' range of vision. (I would love to see this walk performed on an open plain, especially around sunset.) They walk until they come into view, still at some distance from the guests if possible. Then they continue walking toward the guests.

The partners shouldn't worry about the time it takes them to approach – they should walk slowly, considering this their wedding procession. Each partner might veer off the path to the guests once or twice or might at least regard something the guests can't see, looking off into the distance or putting her/his face to a shop window. One partner might hesitate, meander, or veer off the direct path more than the other.

If the guests are already sitting in the place where they will observe the wedding, the partners should simply end their walks in the performance space in front of the audience. If the wedding is inside a building or the partners must pass the guests to reach their destination, they should use two different paths as much as possible, and they should continue in their original directions as long as they can.

The partners arrive at the spot where they will perform the wedding. If it's dark, they hang their lanterns to illuminate the ceremony.

¹ *If the ceremony is located where everyone can see the partners arrive, this sentence should be replaced with, "Now let's watch them approach."*

Officiant (if necessary): "Please be seated for Cody and Miriam's wedding." *The officiant leaves the performance area.*

Dialogue

When the guests are in place, Miriam and Cody turn to each other and embrace. Then Miriam sits down on a chair. Another chair faces this chair but Cody does not sit yet. The two chairs face each other to some degree, yet angle toward the guests.

Cody: "I'm ready to choose you."

Miriam: "Please be sure. You could walk to anyone. There are six billion people on earth. Think how your pilgrimage to me would look from an airplane – such a short path, and so arbitrary. A passenger would wonder, why did he stop at that building² instead of some other? The land rambles on beyond me in every direction."

Cody: "I know. But I chose to come to you. I choose to stop here."

Miriam: "Besides all the people you might marry, why stop your walk where any person lives? Why move in to one person's house, and spend so much time craning your neck and squinting your eyes to follow the tiny events of these few inches [*indicates her own face, expression*], and these [*indicates her own head*], and these [*her own heart*]? That space spilling out in every direction [*indicating the place they walked*], that vast space mocks your choice."

Cody: "Any choice I made, that vast space would mock. Wherever I stopped, my reason for stopping would be lost from a distance, and my choice would look ridiculous. I'm stopping here."

Miriam: "I'm so glad you've come."

Cody sits in the empty chair.

Miriam: "I love you. Love pressures me to marry you but I don't know if I should. You warm me. Your body feels like a home – no, it feels like the core, the heart, of a home, the hearth, as in a traditional home where the hearth heated and cooked and gave life. You pull me home. When you're a few inches away I forget my task, I want only to bury my head in your chest. I hope marrying you is not just a way to hide from the space of all that possibility."

Cody: "But how does it feel when you come to me and bury your head?"

² "Building" can be replaced with "tent," "field," or some other appropriate word or phrase.

Miriam: "It's hard to describe. When I bury my head or hold you, it feels perfect. It's like feeling right through your skin to the life that warms your skin, like being drawn in deeper than your skin towards some ultimate depth that should lie in the earth's core, yet it's mine to encircle."

Cody: "If holding me feels perfect, then why not stop walking? Why keep searching, what do you seek?"

Miriam: "Holding you can feel perfect when I'm lucky. Some nights I can't feel my home in you, some nights I can't feel much. And working by day to form a good life – when I stand up from holding you... there must be a person somewhere who would raise my odds of success in that work, a person whose odds of success I would raise. Maybe someone who was born wishing everything I wish. Someone whose life's work was my life's work. But I love you. How could I leave you to search on for some person who mirrored me or fit me better? Every sleep on my journey I would move farther and farther from the only bed where I could settle, and I would toss and turn and find no peace."

Cody: "Yes, you told me this worry before, I remember. Listen. Here's my answer. You say that love tethers you to me, that love will tether you to any house where I live. Marry me. Settle deeper in toward my core over the years, settle deeper into our marriage, into the home we share. When you live with me, you can bury your eyes and your troubles in me as you fall to sleep, you can feel this deep love we've been granted, and if I am your earth, you can wake nourished by me. Don't believe that marriage is the end of work and change. Whenever you wake, work with me. Make the life you want. Mold me for that life if I'm not yet made for it."

Miriam: "Yes, I see. If love would tether me to that building where you lived, maybe love can solve the question of where my home and center and hearth should be. Maybe I can move into that house³ and let that house fill my vision, let that house become more important for me than every place I might have walked to. And still that house need not be a heaven from the day we move into it in order to merit such attention. We can work together on transforming that house into a heaven."

Cody: "Your heaven and mine both. You say you worry that my passions are not your passions, so maybe we won't want the same heaven. Teach me to feel your passions. I'll teach you to feel mine."

Miriam: "Wouldn't it be good if slowly you found some new way of loving what I loved, some way that was different from mine? You could teach your way to me. After a long while of course – I know at first you'll be bored by some of my favorite games and efforts [*optional substitution for "some of my favorite games and efforts": Miriam should name one to three activities that she*

³ *If the partners are uncomfortable with the suggestion that they don't already live together, Miriam can say, "Maybe I can move into the house of our marriage..."*

loves. They can be her work, her hobbies, or less formal, well-recognized activities. She can name activities she already engages in alone or those she wants very much to try but that her partner has little wish to try. She should name her passions, not just what she does to unwind, and she should name activities she really does want her partner to participate in. Some examples are "talking," "long, deliberate talks," "programming," "video games," "saving rivers," "research," "reading," "tennis," "ritualizing our days.]", but the gravity you feel drawing you close to me will give you patience to seek love for what I love."

Cody: "This must all sound like gobbledeegook, but I understand it. They [*indicating the audience*] must not understand, anymore. If we're really lucky they're following the sense, but I doubt they follow the beauty filling all these clumsy words. We do though."

Miriam: "Yes. It thrills me to plan with you. And I want to watch you. You're just one among billions of people, but already you fill my eyes as you will never fill even the eyes of your friends. If you can teach me how it is that you love what you most love to do [*optional substitution for "what you most love to do": Miriam should name one to three of Cody's passions, using the directions above*], I'll learn to see you engaged in it. Then I won't want just to bury my head in your chest, in your heart – I'll want to back up from you, to open my eyes and see the beauty you've shown me in every limb and knuckle of your soul."

Cody: "But don't just watch my enchantment with my games and efforts from outside! Play with every part of me!"

Miriam: "Oh, I even want to spend some days backed up watching your enchantment with me. Some days I want to forget that your love for me seems natural. I want to back away and see your love as one more ridiculous passion in this space I traveled to find you. It's a strange decision to marry me, you know. To commit firmly to this unlikely choice of one person among so many. No one here understands. They aren't choosing to spend their sleep and meals and sickness and health with me."

Cody: "And yet you won't back too far from me. I won't just look crazy to you, as maybe I look to them. Only to you will I look crazy and beautiful."

Miriam: "You look beautiful now, committing firmly to this unlikely choice."

Cody: "But listen to me this time. I don't want you just to watch my enchantment from outside. I want you to take part in what I do and love taking part."

Miriam: "I will learn to, slowly. I hope you can wait."

Cody: "Then, someday, instead of just being pulled toward my heart, you'll be entwined with my every limb."

Miriam: "Maybe even my own passions and joys will be entwined with yours. You know what the proper response to so much entanglement with another person would be?"

Cody: "What?"

Miriam: "Love. Love! And yet we have love now, already when we're only drawn to share a home⁴, already when we're only drawn toward each other, not entangled as hopelessly as we will be."

Cody: "We have love now when you only wish I was the perfect companion for you. A magic, sourceless love."

Miriam: "And the goal is to justify it! To become such fine companions to each other that the only fitting way to feel that companionship would be love. To entwine our souls so completely and complexly that the only fitting way to feel such entanglement would be love."

Cody: "And to create a heaven out of our shared house so that afterwards we can say, yes, we were right to marry, to settle for the rest of our lives into a home together."

Miriam: "Still, these are our highest hopes. We'll fail to achieve so many of them, probably. I dream of making our home a heaven, I dream of even our daily dinners being candlelit feasts of communion, but I don't see how they will be. We'll probably never think of any cure to the tedium of eating again every few hours every day. Who are we to change the way the minutes of homely life feel? Maybe we should feel blessed if our meals are boring – that means we have time to feel boredom in between hassles and disasters."

Cody: "I haven't told you yet – I've been worrying too whether I can remold myself into your perfect companion. What if my form is already hardened?"

Miriam: "And yet I think you will listen when I tell you my wishes. If we both listen and try, we have a chance."

Cody: "How can our work fail entirely? If I fail to mirror you as you wish I would, or if our days together droop dull no matter what we try, our shared failure will entangle us. If you cry with me, or even if you slam the door against me in frustration at our failure, you'll be involving yourself with me more deeply by your action. And if we don't decisively fail or succeed, if we just keep struggling together, if every month you bring me a slightly different description of the heaven you hope for, and if you learn over time how to offer your fiercer wishes with no harm to my most fragile ones –"

Miriam: "That struggle will entwine us. I hope we can find the discipline to work. My wish to

⁴ *Optional addition: "for life"*

bury my head in your heart might make it that much harder to stand and try."

Cody: "We're taking that risk too. At least we have love."

Miriam: "Assuming it lasts."

Cody: "Love has only deepened so far. And with all this work, if our love fades, we can work to revive and intensify it."

Miriam: "There are risks though. I mean, we don't know what our odds are of creating a perfect marriage, or even of creating a good marriage. But we know that success is not certain, it's only possible at best. Maybe our odds are very low. Yet if we choose to marry, we stake the only lives we have on that mere possibility of a beautiful marriage."

Cody: "I only came here today because I was ready to commit to that possibility."

Miriam: "You're crazy. You're wonderful. There must be some other partner who would raise your odds of success."

Cody: "Probably. Still I'm ready to marry you."

Miriam: "I think I'm ready too. Ready to cross into marriage."

Cody: "Ready to make the leap of faith."

Miriam: *[Smiling.]* "That's a silly way to put it. I wanted to cross in a leap because I didn't know how you could lift me over the threshold while I lifted you."

Cody: *[Jokingly]* "We should have enough time together to debate interpretations of what we did today. Maybe not to conclude on one, though."

Miriam rises, trying to settle from giddiness into serious intention. Miriam takes Cody's hand.

Miriam: "When I walked to reach you, I took the final steps I hope to take altogether alone. I'm ready to make the leap to marriage together with you."

Cody rises.

Cody: "I'm ready to marry you. I'm ready to leap with you."

Miriam takes Cody's hand.

Miriam: "Then come."

They walk to the nearby point where they will jump. They set down their scripts and do whatever they must to prepare for the jump.

The Jump

The officiant returns to the performance area.

Officiant: "On your mark. Get set. Jump!"

The partners jump.

Cody and Miriam *together as they jump or land:* "I marry you."

If this is a legal marriage, the officiant might shout as the partners land, "I pronounce you spouses for life/ husband and wife!" If this is a legal Canadian marriage, the officiant might hand the partners their scripts so that they can say the words that legally bind them. These words become more festive when they're hurried by partners who are sitting in a heap on the floor.

Celebratory music, live or recorded, can be cued for the moment when the partners land. Whether or not there is music, the couple might ask a few guests in advance to mark the end of the ceremony by clapping, throwing confetti or birdseed, popping champagne or shooting blanks, or rushing them and dancing informally. The officiant should encourage others to join them if everyone hesitates. The guests have not witnessed this ceremony dozens of times, so they might need such cues to recognize its end.

How to perform this ceremony

Except for its beginning and ending, this wedding consists solely of dialogue. The walks that begin the ceremony are described in the script, but the ceremony's end requires more elaboration.

Jumping

To conclude the ceremony, you and your partner will jump forward into your marriage. You can simply jump forward, or you can jump through a doorway, over a hole, or holding ropes. These possibilities are described in further detail below.

Take care in choosing the direction and location of your jump. You should be visible to the guests both before and after you jump. Decide whether you will jump toward the guests, away from the guests, or to their right or left. Consider the symbolism and practical issues of jumping each possible direction. Also be careful in choosing the location of your jump. This ceremony emphasizes spatial placement and movement, and it asks you to jump into a space that is identified with your marriage. Therefore you should create a meaningful relationship between the routes by which you approach the site, the places you sit during the ceremony, and the location and direction of your jump. Try to head in one general direction during your ceremony: for instance if one of you will walk southwest to the wedding site and the other will walk southeast to the site, arrange to jump south together at the end of the ceremony.

At no point in the ceremony prior to your jump should you cross into the space where you'll land. For instance, say that you plan to jump off a stage toward your guests, and you will face south when you jump forward. In this case, you should not walk in front of the stage (that is, in the audience's area) before you jump, so you will need to enter the stage from backstage or from behind. Also, if possible, you should each approach the building from the north, east, or west, so that you don't pass through any place that might be identified with the space of your marriage before you jump.

Possible jumps

1. Simply jump forward holding hands. This will be a small jump unless you're both practiced long-jumpers – consider it a human-sized jump. It will be big enough for both of you to fall down, laughing and hugging, newly married.

Here are three recommendations that can be used separately or together to make this jump dramatic:

A. Jump through an arch or some other door-like structure. Make sure the arch does not obstruct the view of your ceremony up to this point; one of the best ways to do this is to ask some friends to carry the arch out to you when you're ready to jump. If you use an arch, its visibility makes it especially important that you place it (and your jump) meaningfully in relation to the places you

walk, sit, and stand throughout the ceremony. Prior to the jump, neither of you should pass through the arch or by any other means into the space you'll jump into. No guest should accidentally pass through the arch either, so be careful if you use an actual door to a building or room.

B. Jump over a hole, gully, or small ditch if you're outdoors, or over some similar crevice indoors. Jumping over a hole (or ditch) dramatizes the jump as a "leap of faith," a crossing over a chasm of doubt and uncertainty. Don't pick a ditch that's too wide to cross easily. If you use a hole in combination with an arch, make certain that you can clear both the hole and the arch in an easy jump. An arch on the far side of the hole might look best, but it will also be most difficult to cross.

C. Set up a marriage bed, a couch, or even a souped-up crash pad where you will land after jumping. You might hint to your friends that you would like this bed decorated. Many cultures have long traditions of decorating marriage beds. Perhaps the world's most common adornment for marriage beds is flowers, either whole or in petals.

2. One variation of the jump for those of you of African descent is to jump together over a broom placed on the ground or held a foot off the ground by one or two of your friends. A plain broom that you will actually use for sweeping in the future can be especially meaningful. While there is some evidence that this tradition has roots in both Africa and Celtic Europe, the custom is now a treasure of the African-American community, so please don't appropriate it lightly if neither of you is black.

3. If you can manage it, swinging on a rope would be dramatic – especially if you swing over a long distance. I have not swung across a large room on a rope since grade school gym class, so I can't advise on how to set up this rope. Outdoors, a rope swing hanging from a sturdy branch might work, with or without a tire or board seat. Just remember to test your rope adequately before the ceremony, and don't bother using a rope if it seems hazardous or hard to control. You don't want to spend the week after your wedding with a sprained ankle, and you don't want this jump to fizzle either.

In order to swing far, you'll probably have to mount a stand and jump off, clinging to your rope. When you reach the far side of your arc, you will have to actively jump off the rope. Swing together on a single rope if you can. Another good option is to swing side by side on two ropes. Or you could swing one after the other, but remember to enlist a friend to pass the rope back to the second partner. You will probably find it too difficult to pass through any small arch on a rope, but you could pass between two marked and decorated poles or something similar to mark your entrance into the marriage state. Just make sure to place the poles far outside any possible arc your rope might make.

If you swing on a rope, you will need a crash pad to land on. Use a mattress or decorate your

landing place as if it were your marriage bed.

However you choose to jump, practice! Make sure that screwing up the gesture is unlikely and that injury is nearly impossible.


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