

Charge to Bride and Groom

While the call to worship is directed to the whole congregation, the charge is addressed to you. It is a preparation for the vows you are about to take. It may be omitted or replaced with a short meditation or sermon, a selected reading on marriage, or scripture. Some sample charges:

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- A. I charge you both, as you stand in the presence of God, to remember that love and loyalty alone will avail as the foundations of a happy and enduring home. If the solemn vows which you are about to make be kept permanently, and if steadfastly you seek to do the will of your Heavenly Father, your life will be full of peace and joy, and the home which you are establishing will abide through every change.
- B. _____ and _____, you are giving yourselves to each other in unselfish love. You will make a solemn vow to each other, a deliberate promise that come what may, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health you will be true and faithful to each other.
- This means thoughtfulness and patience, ready sympathy and forbearance, talking over and sharing your special interests. Thus you will learn to bear each other's burdens, making your life journey together one of radiant joy and hope.
- This service is far more than the exchange of solemn vows. It is one of blessing. It is only with God's help that you can steadfastly keep the promises you will here make to each other. The everliving Christ is here to bless and guide you. He will always be by your side to help you. The nearer you keep to God, the closer and dearer you will be to each other.
- C. In the presence of God and of these friends, I charge you, _____ and _____, to cherish a mutual esteem and love; to bear with each other's infirmities and weaknesses; to comfort each other in sickness, trouble, and sorrow, in honesty and industry to provide for each other; to pray for and encourage each other in the things which pertain to God; and to live together as heirs of the grace of God.
- But you can not do this alone. Trust in God, pray to him daily, give your talents to the church, find your place in its fellowship, and accept its ministries to inspire, to instruct, and to keep alive the love of God in your hearts which has brought you together and which sustains you.
- God is joining you together. He will seal you covenant with His. Thus you will be the instruments of his will and purpose for yourselves and for others. Your love is not your own; it is God's love implanted within you to which you in freedom have joyously responded. Now he will create out of your love something which did not exist before - a holy marriage. Marriage is more than your love for each other; it is God's holy ordinance; it is his act before it is yours. By the will of God you belong to each other until death will part you.
- D. _____ and _____, the covenant which you are about to make with each other is meant to be a beautiful and sacred expression of your love for each other. As you pledge your vows to each other, and as you commit your lives to each other, we ask that you do so in all seriousness, and yet with a deep sense of joy; with the deep conviction that you are committing yourselves to a dynamic growing relationship of trust, mutual support, and caring love.

E. Of all the men and women you have met, you have chosen each other as partners in life. To grow together in love, you will need to commit yourselves to each other freely and gladly. If you know of nothing, legal or moral, to forbid your vows, and wish now to commit yourselves to each other, indicate that by joining right hands. I call on you both, now in the presence of God and your friends and families, to give expression to the commitment you have made to each other.

F. _____ and _____, we want to remind you of the seriousness of the commitment you are about to make to each other. To pledge your life to another person in a lifelong relationship is an awesome, and yet beautiful, act. We want to hear from you your readiness to pledge your vows to each other, and so we ask...

G. *(An example of a larger charge, similar to what a meditation would be like.)*
I charge you both, as you stand here in this high moment of your lives, to remember that love and loyalty alone will stand as the foundations of a happy and enduring home. If the vows you make this day are kept, your life together will be full of joy and peace, and the home which you make shall abide through every unknown future.

In this new life together, I counsel you to recall ever anew the thrill of your early love. Cherish always the visions and hopes you have this day, and let them not be tarnished by common events or routine habit. Believe in your ideals for this marriage, and diligently pursue them, and they shall indeed become realities.

I charge you both to make your love for each other a growing part of your lives, feeding it from the very best resources of your living. You must grow to the point where each gains major satisfaction in giving happiness to the other. Give of yourself to the other, deeply and freely and generously, ever recalling the words of the poet who has said:

Love ever gives, forgives, outlives:

And ever stands with open hands.

And while it lives. It gives.

For this is love's prerogative:

To give--and give--and give.

Yes, it is also necessary to recognize that marriage is a relationship of two persons who are not always at their best, and even in these moments of human failing, I counsel you always to act with charity and compassion toward one another, sharing the spirit expressed in the Book of Ephesians: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another."

I would further charge you to understand, and constantly to strengthen, the spiritual basis of your love, recognizing that it is the most precious of all God's gifts to you, and that it must be nurtured until it attains to the state of perfect love which is intended by God for all people. Keep ever before you the words of the New Testament: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and in us shall his love be perfected." Keep your hearts and minds open to the inner working of his spirit, that you love for each other may become as his love for us, full and complete in every way.

And finally, I do charge and require you both to remember this day as the most sacred day in your lives--as the day in which you promised, before God and man, that in every way possible you would strive to bring each other life's greatest fulfillment.

H.

(Another example of a meditation charge.)

Hand in Hand you enter marriage, hand in hand you step out in faith. The hand you freely give to each other, is both the strongest and the most tender part of you body. In the years ahead you will need both strength and tenderness. Be firm in your ommitment. Don't let your grip become weak. And yet, be flexible as you go through change. Don't let your hold become intolerable. Strength and tenderness...Firm commitment and flexibility....of such is a marriage made, hand in hand: Remember this well!

Also remember that you don't walk this path alone. Don't be afraid to reach out to others when together you face difficulty. Other hands are there: friends, family, and the church. To accept an outreached hand is not an admission of failure, but an act of faith. For behind us, underneath us, around us all, are the outstretched arms of the One from Galilee. It is into his hand, the hands of God in Jesus Christ, that, above all else, we commit this union of husband and wife.

Hand in hand (couple, church, God) you enter marriage. Let us step out in faith. Amen.