



Rev. Ann Fuller

Rituals of Reconciliation

I would love to call these "rituals of realistic expectations," but that might be too long to put in a banner at the top of the page. They might sound depressing in the context of a wedding ceremony, but guests absolutely adore these rituals--particularly the married guests. These rituals demonstrate the couple has a realistic view of marriage and are prepared to resolve conflict in a compassionate and fun way.

- Bell of Truce
- Letter and Wine Box Ceremony
- Rose Ceremony

Bell of Truce

This is a great light-hearted contemporary ritual recognizing the reality of married life. There are inevitable moments of disagreement and conflict in every marriage. This ritual provides the couple with a built-in "repair attempt," an opportunity to gracefully shift the attention from what seems wrong at the time to the reasons why the couple chose to wed in the first place. I once adapted this ritual to become the "water pistol of truce." If you already have a playful way of diffusing tension in your relationship, why not ritualize it within your wedding?

(Bride) and (Groom) have an expectation of marriage as realistic as it is romantic and wish to express this within the context of their wedding ceremony with this bell of truce. Bells have long been associated with weddings as their joyous tones announce good tidings. I present this bell to (Bride) and (Groom) and ask them to give the bell a hardy ring while thinking lovely thoughts about one another and their future life together.

<couple rings bell>

(Bride) and (Groom), keep this bell in your home to remind you of your wedding day. When arguments arise, and they will, put this bell to its best use. One of you should ring the bell to call a truce. Its sound will remind you of your wedding vows, conjure up the happiest memories from this day and help you resolve our differences lovingly and compassionately.

Letter and Wine Box Ceremony

This is a fun ritual I have seen done with both professional and homemade kits. One couple made a box with a nail for each guest to hammer, thereby including everyone present in the ceremony. This would probably get a bit tedious with more than about twenty guests.



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A box, a bottle of wine, and love letters are all you need though I've seen kits include the glasses and a corkscrew as well. Some boxes are sealed with a key while others use hammer and nails. Non-drinkers can modify this ritual with just the letters and perhaps a cherished item reminding them of their courtship.

(Bride) and (Groom) have a view of marriage as realistic as it is romantic and have chosen to demonstrate the strength of their commitment and dedication within the context of their wedding ceremony. This box contains a bottle of wine and a love letter from each to the other. The letters describe the good qualities they find in one another, the reasons they fell in love, and their reasons for choosing to marry. The letters are sealed in individual envelopes and they have not seen what the other has written.

(Bride) and (Groom), should you ever find your marriage enduring serious hardships, you are to open this box, sit and drink the wine together, then separate and read the letters you wrote to one another when you were first united as a couple. By reading these love letters you will reflect upon the reasons you fell in love and chose to marry each other this day.

Our hope is, however, you will never have reason to open this box. If this is the case, you are to open this box to share and enjoy on your tenth anniversary. Please seal the box.

<couple seals the box>

Our prayer for you today, is you shall have no cause to open it until (date of tenth anniversary)!

Rose Ceremony

This is a touching exchange acknowledging the reality of marriage's difficulties when words sometimes fail. The bride and groom exchange roses, symbolizing the giving and receiving of their love throughout their marriage. The ceremony explains how to use the rose and its symbolism during those inevitable low points in the marriage when we must find the strength and compassion to forgive one another.

(Bride) and (Groom), the rose has long been considered a symbol of love and a single rose says, "I love you." So it is highly appropriate you have chosen to exchange a single rose as you begin your life as husband and wife.

<they exchange roses>

(Bride) and (Groom), it may seem you have not done much at all. You held one small rose - and now you stand before us holding another. However, you have both given and received one of the most valuable and precious gifts of life; the gift of true and abiding love within the devotion of marriage. You also make a commitment to select a place in your future homes, a special place for roses.



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On each anniversary you may take a rose to that sanctified space as a recommitment to your marriage, and a recurring promise this marriage will be based upon love.

It is often easiest to hurt those we love most and easiest to be hurt by them as well. In every marriage there are times when it is difficult to find the right words. We are at a loss to express our desire to apologize and forgive, to tell our loved ones how much we need them or how much pain we are in. When this happens, leave a rose at the place you have designated and that rose will tell the other "I love you still." May the you have the grace to accept the rose for words that cannot be found or spoken and remember the love and hope you both share today.

(Bride) and (Groom), when you share the roses to come, remember love brought you to this time and place. It is love which makes this a glorious union and it is by your love you will find the compassion and commitment for your marriage to endure in beauty, strength and delight.

<bride and groom place the roses in a vase>