

**Weddings at
Emmanuel Episcopal Church
Athens, Georgia**



Produced by the Clergy

And

The Wedding Committee

Of Emmanuel Episcopal Church

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This material is also available on our website at

www.emmanuel-athens.org

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your engagement! This booklet is designed to help you plan your marriage at Emmanuel Episcopal Church in accordance with the canons (rules) of the Episcopal Church and the customs of Emmanuel. Our goal is to make this event a memorable and spiritually rich experience for you and your families. When the Rector or his/her assistant(s) has agreed to preside at your wedding or given permission for another Episcopal priest to do so and your \$200.00 deposit is on file the Celebration and Blessing of your marriage will be placed on the parish calendar. (Please see page 6 of Summary of Fees.)

THE MARRIAGE CANONS OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Episcopal Church Marriage Discipline, from the Constitution & Canons of the Episcopal Church, 1991,

Title I, Canons 18 & 19

1. Every member of the clergy of this Church shall conform to the laws of the State governing the creation of the civil status of marriage, and also to the laws of this Church governing the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony.
2. Both parties must have the right to contract a marriage according to the laws of the State
3. Holy Matrimony is a physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman, entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind, and will, and with the intent that it be lifelong.
4. Both parties freely and knowingly consent to such a marriage, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to identity of a partner, or mental reservation.
5. At least one of the parties has received Holy Baptism.
6. Both parties shall be instructed as to the nature, meaning, and purpose of Holy Matrimony by the member of the clergy or that they have received such instruction from persons known by the member of the clergy to be competent and responsible.
7. There shall be present at least two witnesses to the solemnization of marriage.
8. The member of the clergy shall have required that the parties sign the Declaration of Intention.
9. It shall be within the discretion of any member of the clergy of this Church to decline to solemnize any marriage.
10. Any member of this Church whose marriage has been annulled or dissolved by a civil court may apply to the Bishop for a judgment as to his or her marital status in the eyes of the Church. Such a judgment may be recognition of the nullity, or of the termination of the said marriage.

PREPARING FOR YOUR WEDDING

PREMARITAL COUNSELING

The Canons of the Church require the clergy to counsel prospective marriage partners in Christian marriage and living. The clergy of Emmanuel Church are happy to schedule this pastoral opportunity with you. We meet with you as often as necessary to help you prepare for a fruitful marriage, usually 3-5 sessions lasting one hour and a half each.

If either the Bride or Groom is unable to be present for counseling prior to the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage, with the consent of the officiating priest they may arrange to receive their counseling from another qualified person. This person will certify to our clergy that the counseling requirements have been fulfilled.

If you have had a previous marriage set aside by law your officiating priest must obtain permission from the Bishop of the Diocese to officiate at your wedding.

WITNESSES

The minimum number of persons required at a wedding is five (5): the Officiant, bride, groom, and two witnesses. The same individuals sign the parish register following the marriage service. This provides a legal record to be kept at the parish in addition to the certificate of marriage which is signed and sent to the county office.

MARRIAGE LICENSE INFORMATION

No marriage may be solemnized without first obtaining a Marriage License from any Georgia county courthouse. The Clarke County Marriage License Office address is: Athens Clarke County Probate Court, 325 East Washington Street Room 215, Athens GA 30601. Telephone: 706-613-3320. Both parties must be present and be able to prove their identity. A blood test is no longer required. The license is good for 6 months after it is issued. We strongly suggest procuring the license as soon as you are within the 60 day limit. Please deliver your marriage license and any balance due on your fees to the parish administrator by 9:00 AM on the last business day before your rehearsal. We do not conduct a rehearsal without these items in place.

The Officiant will sign the marriage license and return it to the issuing county. Should you desire a copy of the marriage certificate you must request it from the county which has it on file and one will be mailed to you.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT WEDDINGS AT EMMANUEL

THE WEDDING COORDINATOR

JoAnn Yates is the chair of the Parish Wedding Committee and may be reached at (706) 548-5954. Once your wedding is scheduled she will assign one of the committee members to direct your wedding in a manner consistent with the traditions of the Church.

Outside bridal consultants may be helpful in connection with the reception and other matters, but the Liturgy and related church arrangements are the sole responsibility of the clergy and Parish Wedding Director. A wedding rehearsal is required, no more than 5 days in advance of the wedding. In most cases the officiating priest will direct the rehearsal and the Wedding Director will be there to assist. It is essential that all members of the wedding party be on time for the rehearsal (plan at least 10 minutes in advance). The rehearsal will last one hour. It is usually held the day before the wedding in advance of other festivities, preferably early in the evening. If any persons other than the wedding party are present, they should take seats in the rear of the church so that the presider can easily identify the wedding party and the rehearsal can proceed without delay.

Plan transportation to the rehearsal with rush hour traffic in mind. Football weekends and weddings do not mix well.

SEATING CAPACITY

The church seats 320 people in the main church. The two small side chapels hold 18 each and the choir seats 28 for a total of 384. There are 20 rows of pews with a center aisle and two side aisles.

If pews are to be reserved for special guests, the parish wedding director should be informed of this before the rehearsal. The bride's family and friends are seated on the left facing the altar; the groom's on the right. Comfortable seating is eight (8) adults to a pew.

FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

The church furnishings and architecture focus attention on the altar table as the symbol of God's presence. It is at this center that the couple exchanges their vows before God and God's Church. This elegant and simple setting does not require elaborate decoration. (See photo on the cover). The flowers at the High Altar are arranged by the Flower Guild. Wedding flowers are considered gifts to the church and will remain in the church for use the following Sunday.

The Altar Guild will prepare the altar and place new candles in the candelabra.

Bows may be placed on the ends of the reserved pews. The number of reserved pews varies with each wedding. The wedding director will assist you in placing the pew bows. Your florist may make the bows and deliver them to the church along with the bridal bouquets.

The Wedding Director can be most helpful in suggesting both basic and additional decorations. **No tacks, nails, adhesives or any other materials which might damage the church property may be used.**

MUSIC

Music Guidelines for Weddings at Emmanuel Church

Music is an integral part of celebrative church liturgy. Therefore, adequate and serious attention is given to it, as well as to the words of the liturgy. As is the liturgy itself, a church wedding is primarily a community affair, not a private or personal rite. Hence, the overall effect and theological implications of the words and music you select are an extremely important part of your premarital plans and discussions.

The selection of all music is done in consultation with the Director of Music. We do not use the Bridal Chorus from Wagner's *Lohengrin* ("Here comes the bride") or the Mendelssohn Wedding March from *A Mid-Summers Night Dream*; however, the Director of Music will be happy to provide you with an ample list of alternatives from which you may choose. The Music Director must approve any requests for music not on the list.

The use of a soloist is permitted, provided the following conditions are met:
The selection has been approved by the Director of Music.
The selection will be performed during the prelude, *before* the liturgy begins.
The text of the selection is from Holy Scripture, from the Book of Common Prayer, or from texts congruent with them.

The following are options for use of music *during* the liturgy:

1. While it has become customary in most places to use organ voluntaries for the processional and recessional, a congregational hymn may be sung at either or both of these times instead.
2. A congregational hymn may be sung after the Declaration of Consent and before the Ministry of the Word. The Hymnal provides Hymns 350, 351, 352, and 353 for marriages. Other hymns may also be appropriate. Please discuss other options with the Director of Music.
3. In the Episcopal Church, a Psalm is often included as part of the scripture lessons. This Psalm may be chanted. Appropriate Psalms are 67, 127, and 128. It should be noted that, without the aid of a choir to lead the singing, the chanting of a psalm may be problematic. Please discuss this option with the Director of Music.
4. A congregational hymn may be sung before the reading from the Holy Gospel.

5. The Lord's Prayer may be sung or chanted congregationally at its appointed place in the prayers (p. 428; or p. 364 if there is a celebration of the Holy Eucharist). Once again, a choir may be needed for this option.
6. If there is to be a celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the following may be sung: the Sanctus, the Lord's Prayer, and the Agnus Dei (or another Fraction Anthem).
7. If there is to be a celebration of the Holy Eucharist, a congregational hymn may be sung during the Communion time.

Please contact the Director of Music (Scott Goodwin) at least three months before the date of your wedding in order to schedule a consultation. He may be reached at

706 543-1294 x212 (Church) or
706 206-9764 (Cell)

PHOTOGRAPHS

A wedding is a public worship service at which two people marry each other. Our policies in regard to photographers and videographers are designed to protect the marriage ceremony from the tendency to turn the liturgy into a media event.

We ask that no photographs, even ones without flash, be taken during the Liturgy by anyone including guests. We do allow ONE photo without flash as the bride and her escort enter the church at the very beginning of the Liturgy. Similarly one photo without flash may be taken during the retiring procession at the conclusion of the liturgy. We will gladly pose for any pictures to recreate scenes from the liturgy following the service.

Outdoor photography may be done at anytime, weather permitting. Other areas remain locked until a member of the church staff arrives. When taking photographs inside the church prior to the wedding, please conclude your photography 45 minutes before the service.

We permit photographs at the altar after the wedding.

The only suitable place for a video camera is behind the organ pipe screen in the choir area.

It is very helpful for the photographer to have a clear agreement with the couple as to what photographs are desired. **It is the couple's responsibility to inform the photographer of these policies.** To assist the couple, a brief note detailing the policies regarding photographs can be printed for presentation to the photographer.

Please do not ask for any exceptions to these policies. Our long experience indicates that our current policies protect our traditions and sacred space as well as the dignity of the bridal party.

RICE, BIRDSEED OR PAPER ROSE PETALS

Please do not throw anything at the bridal couple anywhere on the church property. Flower girls may gently strew artificial petals during the entrance rite. Live flowers damage the carpet and are not allowed.

RECEPTIONS AT EMMANUEL

The Common Room is available for receptions and may be engaged when your application is accepted. The fee is \$500.00 with a \$250.00 deposit. No alcoholic beverages are allowed on the premises. Music and dancing are appropriate. You and your caterer are responsible for returning the hall to its original condition.

SUMMARY OF FEES

Standard fee for Member	\$750.00
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Inactive members when they become active members who meet legal and canonical minimums may have their marriage celebrated.

(Wedding fees include the use of the church, candles, and services rendered by the staff, church musician, and sexton. All fees are due and payable no later than 9:00 a.m. on the last business day before the rehearsal. The services of the Parish Wedding Directors, Altar Guild, and Flower Guild are offered as a gift and ministry to the Glory of God and are free of charge.)

*\$200.00 deposit is required at time of approval by the Rector – a \$100.00 refundable if no damages are occurred.

Optional Fees

Reception in Common Room	\$750.00
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*\$250.00 refundable deposit (if no damage is occurred) required at time of approval by the Rector

*Soloist / Instrumentalist (not included in wedding fee. Fee is to be paid by person responsible for wedding cost. All instrumentalist or Soloist fees are worked out at time of planning music and are to be made payable to them directly.)

*An appropriate offering to clergy is suggested

ON THE DAY ITSELF

A maximum of four hours is allowed for each wedding. Wedding parties may arrive up to two hours in advance of the Liturgy and remain for up to one hour following it for photographs. Since another Liturgy may well proceed or follow your event these times are not extended. The minimum time between weddings is also four hours.

If the bride and her attendants wish to dress at the church, they may use the church parlor for this purpose. There is no appropriate place for the groom and his attendants to dress at the church. Parents and other important members of the family should plan to arrive no later than 30 minutes prior to the Liturgy.

ALCOHOL POLICY

It is important for all participants to have rested and eaten appropriately before the ceremony. While the entire weekend is rightfully festive in tone, after the marriage ceremony is the appropriate time to celebrate. Consumption of alcoholic beverages or any type of non-prescription drug should be avoided until then. It is never appropriate for members of the wedding party to consume alcohol on the church property.

The clergy reserve the right to exclude intoxicated persons from participating in the liturgy, or to refuse to preside at the marriage if the participants are intoxicated.

PLANNING THE SERVICE

OFFICIANT

Normally the clergy of Emmanuel Church will officiate at the marriage Liturgy. If you would like another Episcopal Priest to preside (relative or friend) this is easily accommodated with the rector's permission. If you would like another clergy person included in the service, please discuss it with the Priest person you are working with. We are glad to extend an official invitation to him or her. Beyond that, you are responsible for paying whatever fees they require. These fees are in addition to the fees paid to Emmanuel.

SEATING THE GUESTS

The ushers escort guests down the aisle to the pews, beginning from the front pew nearest those reserved for the respective families. Immediately before the Liturgy begins, the groom's mother (if present),

and then the bride's mother (if present) will be escorted to their pews by the usher designated at the rehearsal. After this time no more guests will be seated by an usher.

THE PROCESSION

A full liturgical procession from the rear of the church includes a crucifer, the clergy, groomsmen, groom's witness and groom, bridesmaid, the bride's witness and bride. If a presentation in marriage is desired, both sets of parents (or their designees) may escort the bride and groom in procession. It is an increasingly common custom for the groom and bride to present themselves for marriage and to escort each other in procession. Lengthy spaces between persons will be avoided.

In our experience children under the age of five (5) who function as flower girls or ring bearers rarely enhance a wedding. We ask you not to invite very young children for these roles.

THE LITURGY

The form for THE CELEBRATION AND BLESSING OF A MARRIAGE, begins on page 422 of The Book of Common Prayer. It is the liturgical norm in the Episcopal Church. The rubrics (directions in red writing or italics in black and white writing) are to be followed exactly. When the rubrics say "may," they are permissive or optional. Where they say "shall," they are prescriptive. The clergy are glad to discuss those details at the time the service is planned.

The Book of Common Prayer makes it clear that the celebration of the Holy Eucharist is a normative part of any wedding rite. All persons are welcome to receive Holy Communion. A clear invitation is issued during the Liturgy, as well as instructions on how to receive Communion.

A wedding rite with several hymns, two bible readings, a short homily, and Eucharist lasts about 35-45 minutes.

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE READINGS

Please read all of the following biblical selections carefully. You are not limited to these choices and are certainly free to choose others which are close to your heart and mind. Please share these choices with the clergy. The Priest you are working with will assist you in your selections.

From the Old Testament:

Genesis 1:26-28 (NRSV) (Male and female God created them)

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." {27} So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. {28} God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

Genesis 2:4-9, 2:15-24 (NRSV) (A man cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh)

{4} These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, {5} when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up- for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; {6} but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground- {7} then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. {8} And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. {9} Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. {16} And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; {17} but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." {18} Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." {19} So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. {20} The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner.

{21} So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. {22} And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. {23} Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken." {24} Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Song of Songs 2:10-13; 8:6-7 (NRSV) (Many waters cannot quench love)

My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; {11} for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. {12} The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. {13} The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. {7} Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned.

From the Apocrypha

Tobit 8:5b-8 (New English Bible) (That she and I may grow old together)

Tobias said: 'We praise thee, O God of our fathers, we praise thy name for ever and ever. Let the heavens and all thy creation praise thee for ever. Thou madest Adam, and Eve his wife to be his helper and support; and those two were the parents of the human race. This was thy word: "It is not good for the man to be alone; let us make him a helper like him." I now take this my beloved to wife, not out of lust but in true marriage. Grant that she and I may find mercy and grow old together.'

From the New Testament:

1 Corinthians 13 (NRSV) (Love is patient and kind)

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. {2} And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. {3} If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. {4} Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant {5} or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; {6} it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. {7} It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. {8} Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. {9} For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; {10} but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.

{11} When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. {12} For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. {13} And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Ephesians 3:14-19 (NRSV) (The Father from whom every family is named)

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, {15} from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. {16} I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, {17} and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. {18} I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, {19} and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 5:1-2; 21-33 (NRSV) (Walk in love, as Christ loved us)

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, {2} and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. {22} Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. {23} For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. {24} Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. {25} Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, {26} in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, {27} so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind-yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. {28} In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. {29} For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, {30} because we are members of his body. {31} "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." {32} This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. {33} Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

Colossians 3:12-17 (NRSV) (Love which binds everything together in harmony)

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. {13} Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. {14} Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. {15} And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. {16} Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. {17} And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

1 John 4:7-16 (NRSV) (Let us love one another for love is of God)

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. {8} Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. {9} God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. {10} In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. {11} Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. {12} No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. {13} By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. {14} And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. {15} God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. {16} So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

From the Gospels:

Matthew 5:1-10 (NRSV) (The Beatitudes)

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. {2} Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: {3} "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. {4} "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. {5} "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. {6} "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. {7} "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. {8} "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. {9} "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. {10} "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:13-16 (NRSV) (You are the light . . . Let your light so shine)

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. {14} "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. {15} No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. {16} In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Matthew 7:21, 7:24-29 (NRSV) (Like a wise man who built his house upon the rock)

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven." Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. {25} The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock.

{26} And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. {27} The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell-and great was its fall!" {28} Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, {29} for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Mark 10:6-9 (NRSV) (They are no longer two but one)

But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' {7} 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, {8} and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. {9} Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." Mark 10:13-16 (NRSV) People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. {14} But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. {15} Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." {16} And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

John 15:9-12 (NRSV) (Love one another as I have loved you)

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. {10} If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. {11} I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. {12} "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.