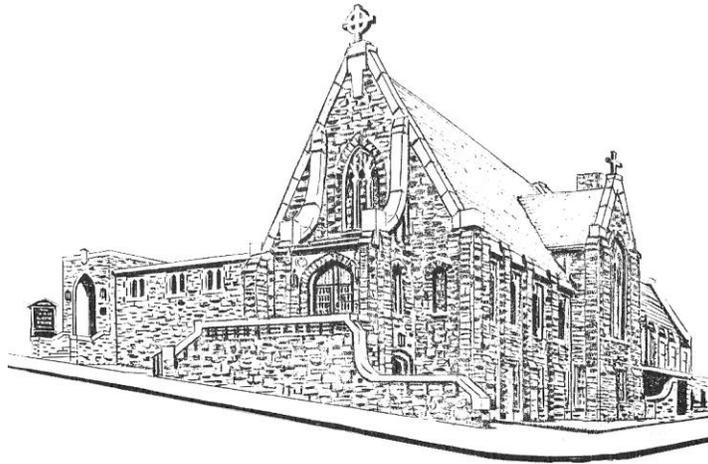


The Celebration and Blessing
of a
Marriage
at



Christ Episcopal Church
Bluefield, West Virginia

O gracious and everliving God, you have created us in your image: Look mercifully upon this couple who come to you seeking your blessing, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep the promises and vows they make; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

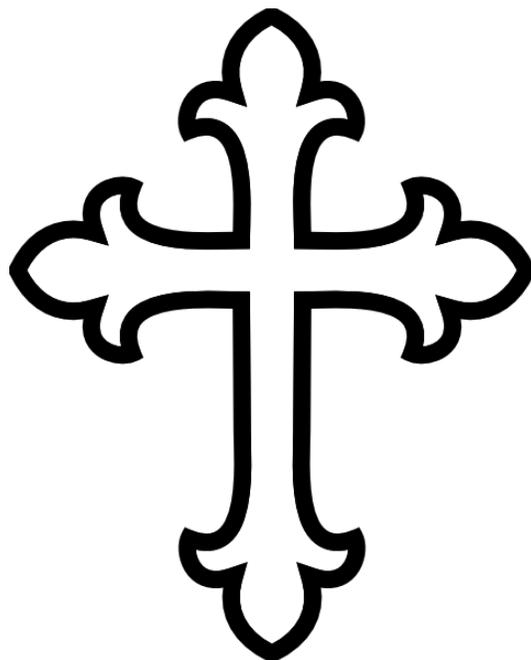
Book of Common Prayer, page 425

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Introduction

Congratulations to both of you on your decision to make this important commitment to each other in the presence of God, your friends and family and the wider community of faith!

Christian marriage is both a sacrament of the church and a vocation for Christians. Sacrament and vocation are of primary importance, so your co-operation is needed in making your wedding at the Church a holy and joyful worship service.

Marriage is also a wonderful opportunity for people who may have drifted away from the church to return, and in many cases to re-connect with a Christian family for fellowship, education and the support of a worshipful community.

We have prepared this booklet to assist you in working with us as a team: to know what we expect from you, and what you can expect from us as you prepare for your wedding day. Certain practices must be followed from your initial contact with the church until you recess down the aisle as a married couple. In turn, the clergy, music director, and wedding coordinator all look forward to helping you in any way possible to insure that your wedding day is as joyful and meaningful as you hope it will be.

The Sacrament and Vocation of Holy Matrimony

Sacrament: Christians hold that a wedding is a solemn public covenant between two individuals in the presence of God. It is distinguished from the secular understanding of weddings in that the presence of God and the sacramental nature of marriage is foremost in the service.

The ministers of the sacrament are the couple, and not the presiding clergy. Technically, you will not be married by the clergy, but, instead, will marry one another. The function of the priest is to preside at the service and, on behalf of God and the congregation, to pronounce the nuptial blessing. As you prepare for reception of this Holy Sacrament in partnership with the clergy person who will preside at your ceremony, you will come to see that much of the day revolves around this understanding.

In our society, virtually any couple who wishes may present themselves to a legal authority and have their union sanctioned by the state government. While clergy are licensed by the State of West Virginia to perform this function, the church holds that this is of secondary importance to reception of this sacrament. This means that there is a distinction between "The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage" at the church, and the rest of the events traditionally surrounding the celebration of a marriage. It is important to keep this distinction in mind as we proceed.

Vocation: Many people are called to commit to a loved one in marriage, but not everyone is called to the vocation of Christian marriage. Vocation in the church means that a person, or in this case, the couple, perceive that God is calling them to a relationship through which they will serve one another and grow in their faith in God and commitment to Jesus Christ. Not all weddings are necessarily focused on this concept of vocation. At Christ Church, only those who recognize and celebrate the concept of vocation are encouraged to be wed in or through our parish.

Weddings at Christ Church

The Episcopal Church requires that at least one of the couple be a baptized Christian, that the marriage be attested to by at least two witnesses; and that the marriage conform to the laws of the State of West Virginia and to the Canons of the Episcopal Church. This sacrament is celebrated both for couples of different and the same sex.

Christ Church offers our services to those who are active members of our parish and to their children or grandchildren, members of other Episcopal churches who for some reason require a different location, or anyone actively exploring Christ Church as their parish home.

The Episcopal Church does allow for marriage of divorced persons. However, if one or both of you has been married once before, the process requires consent of the Bishop after recommendation by the clergy. *Ninety days* is needed between the time of your first meeting with the clergy and your confirmation of the wedding date, in order to do the work necessary to obtain the Bishop's approval.

Preparing for your Wedding

First Steps

While many couples seek to first establish a wedding date with the church, the actual first step is for the couple to set an appointment with the clergy. At this appointment the requirements listed above are first explored. It is helpful if this appointment takes place approximately *six months before* the planned marriage date to allow time for counseling and preparation.

Should the requirements for marriage at Christ Church be met, the priest will then receive basic information about the couple, outline the process, and discuss fees and the wedding date.

Participation of Additional Clergy

If the validation of the marriage by another religious denomination and/or the participation of a member of the clergy from that denomination is desired, then arrangements assuring that support and/or participation should be initiated as soon as possible.

Pre-Marital Counseling

At least three sessions with a priest or other clergy person from Christ Church form the basis of the preparation for marriage and the celebration event.

1. Introductions. Review of process and Declaration of Intention
2. Exploring areas of life and marriage
3. Planning the service.

The pre-marital counseling may be arranged with a member of the clergy or counselor in another city or religious denomination chosen in consultation with Christ Church's clergy. A letter stating that such counseling has been done is required at least *thirty days prior to the ceremony*. Counseling provided by Christ Church clergy must also be completed at least thirty days prior to the ceremony.

The Marriage Celebration: An Act of Worship

Because the celebration of marriage is first and foremost an act of Christian worship, it is subject to the same standards as the weekly liturgies at Christ Church. This has implications for a number of aspects of the marriage celebration such as music, flowers, photography, etc. The clergy in charge will be the final authority for any special requests.

The Marriage Service

The traditional marriage service is found in the *Book of Common Prayer* (1979) of the Episcopal Church on pages 423-432. In 2015 this service was amended to make the language gender neutral to allow for same gender couples to receive the sacrament. Either service may be used depending upon preference. Variations may also be made for inter-faith marriages. During the pre-marital counseling the priest will review the service with the couple.

The Holy Communion

The Holy Eucharist (or Holy Communion) is the principal act of Christian Worship on the Lord's Day and for other major celebrations in the Church. It is the sacrament commanded by Christ for the continual remembrance of his life, death, and resurrection, until his coming again. In the Holy Eucharist our union with Christ and with one another is strengthened making this sacrament particularly appropriate for the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage.

While not required in the Marriage Service, the Holy Eucharist is recommended for those couples for whom this great sacrament of the Church has meaning. When the Holy Eucharist is part of the Marriage service it constitutes the second half of the service and is the first communion of the newly married couple.

Music

Please see page 8 for information related to music in the wedding service.

Flowers

Flowers add beauty and dignity to the wedding service. Floral arrangements can, however, become a distraction to the events of the day, and due to the narrowness of the chancel area of the church, can become an obstacle. For these reasons it is necessary for Christ Church to moderate the floral arrangements provided for the service.

The Christ Church Altar Guild is responsible for all flowers. Floral arrangements may be requested in any color or variety, depending on the tastes and desires of the couple. The Altar Guild, in consultation with our contracted florist, can advise you of the costs associated with your preferences.

Two arrangements may be sat behind the altar. These are traditionally called "Altar Flowers" and are of a similar variety to those used during regular worship services. Additionally, two arrangements are permitted on the chancel rail. These "Chancel Rail Flowers" can be of a larger design than the Altar Flowers. No additional arrangements can be permitted.

In the case of a Saturday wedding, the couple may wish to leave the flowers for the use of the church on Sunday and should indicate at an early time if they desire to do so.

Photographs and Videotaping

Photographs may be taken at any time. *However, we ask that no flash photos - by either the wedding photographer or guests - be taken during the service (which begins with the processional music).* Flash photography is disruptive and distasteful to the worship experience.

A video camera may be used during the service and we have a location in the chancel that seems to work quite well.

The appointed photographer and/or person videotaping the celebration should meet with the clergy one-half hour prior to the service to discuss placement and procedures during the service.

Posed photos in the church may be taken – with flash - before or after the service.

Receptions in Rowley Hall

Following the wedding it is often customary to gather for a time of fellowship and celebration of the happy occasion. Rowley Hall is available to those who would like to utilize the space for such an event. Use of the space is subject to any building use policy in effect at the time. Due to the nature and customary demands of the event, food or refreshments cannot be provided by the parish. The clergy can direct you to catering opportunities that are familiar with the facility.

Order of Service Bulletins

The parish office will provide an order of service bulletin to guests. Many guests to an Episcopal wedding are unfamiliar with the *Book of Common Prayer*. Providing a bulletin detailing the service and noting the appropriate responses demonstrates the importance placed on the act of worship in a wedding and is an essential act of hospitality toward guests.

Additional Considerations

The church building will be open 2 hours prior to the service and one hour after, allowing ample time for preparation and photographs. Other arrangements can be made out of necessity.

Aisle Cloths are permitted for the services but are not supplied by the parish.

We recommend the use of bird seed or soap bubbles instead of rice and confetti as the couple leaves the church at the end of the service because of the difficulty of removal of these items and the danger to birds and animal life.

The whole of the church building is available for use by the bridal or grooms party for preparations. Once you have decided the rooms or spaces you require it is important to make these preferences known to the clergy, purely for his or her planning purposes.

Marriage License

The marriage license must be obtained by the couple from the Mercer County Clerk. This license will be signed by the officiating clergy, and the two required witnesses, following the ceremony. It must be returned to the Clerk's office for recordation. For more information on how to obtain a marriage license, or related procedures, please call the Mercer County Clerk's Office at 304-487-8311.

Music

Music is often an integral part of the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage and adds to the joyful nature of the worship service.

Our Organist and Choirmaster will work with you to make sure that the music chosen for your marriage service is appropriate for the occasion and enhances the worship experience.

Music for the wedding should be appropriate for use in the church. Because this is a worship service, modern popular music or music deemed overly "secular" is more appropriate at the reception.

The organist at Christ Church will be the organist at all weddings; or, should he or she not be able to be present at the service, a person whom he or she appoints.

Should you wish a soloist to sing, the organist is often aware of persons who can perform this function. Sung music is also chosen in consultation with the organist.

Instrumental music other than organ is also a possibility, and such decisions should be made in consultation with the clergy and organist.

Should you wish vocal or instrumental music, they should make an appointment with the organist *at least one month prior* to the marriage date to allow time for the learning and practice of the music.

Due to the sacred nature of the occasion, pre-recorded music is never appropriate.

Marriage Service Expenses

	For Members and Their Immediate Family*	For Non-Members
<u>Regular Fees</u>		
Use of the Church**	\$50	\$500
Clergy Fee***	\$0	\$0
Organist****	\$0	\$250
Order of Service Bulletin	\$0.25 per	\$0.50 per
Use of Rowley Hall	\$100	\$500

* *A member is a "communicant in good standing" as the term is defined by the Episcopal Church and is determined through the parish register listing on the date of application for the wedding. Briefly, this means that the member is active in the worship life of the congregation and also gives financially to God through the ministry of the congregation.*

** *"Use of" fees for members are related solely to the stipend provided to the sexton for cleaning or preparation purposes.*

*** *There is never a fee by our clergy to officiate at any service. However, honorariums are accepted and are at the discretion of the couple. Visiting clergy assisting in the marriage at the couple's request should be contacted to see if any fees are expected.*

**** *It is important to note that any fees associated with the Organist listed here covers the basic services of a typical wedding. More elaborate requests or detailed work with other performers may necessitate additional compensation. This matter may be taken up directly with the Organist.*

Please note that no couple otherwise eligible to be married in Christ Church should be excluded from doing so on the basis of finances.

Part or all of the fees listed above may be waived in cases of need.

Traditional Musical Selections for Weddings

Preludes

Canon in D	Pachelbel
Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring	J.S. Bach
Dona Nobis (from the Sixteenth Mass)	Mozart
The King of Love <i>St. Columba</i>	Irish Hymn Melody
Voluntary	Handel
Thanks Be to Thee	Handel
With Trumpets and Horns from <i>Water Music</i>	Handel
The King of Love My Shepherd Is	Gounod
Lord of Love Unfailing	Haydn
Peace and Love and Joy	Rosenmuller
Ave Verum	Gounod

Processionals or Recessionals

Ode to Joy	Beethoven
Trumpet Tune	Purcell
Trumpet Voluntary <i>The Prince of Denmark</i>	J. Clarke
Now Thank We All Our God	Kaufman
Fanfare for the King's Supper <i>Rondeau</i>	Mouret
Prelude from <i>Te Deum</i>	Charpentier
Break Forth Into Joy	Bach
Allegro Vivace from <i>Water Music</i>	Handel
Credo	Haydn
The Heavens Declare His Glory	Beethoven
Festal March from <i>Rinaldo</i>	Handel
March from the <i>Occasional Oratorio</i>	Handel
Westminster Abbey	Purcell

Hymns:

350	"O God of love, to thee we bow"	<i>St. Mary Magdalene</i>
351	"May the grace of Christ our Savior"	<i>Halton Holgate</i>
352	"O God, to those who here profess their vows"	<i>Caithness</i>
353	"Your love, O God, has called us here"	<i>Wareham</i>
362	"Holy, holy, holy"	<i>Nicaea</i>
376	"Joyful, joyful, we adore thee"	<i>Hymn to Joy</i>
410	"Praise, my soul, the King of heaven"	<i>Lauda anima</i>
516	"Come down, O Love divine"	<i>Down Ampney</i>
517	"How lovely is thy dwelling place"	<i>Brother James' Air</i>
518	"Christ is made the sure foundation"	<i>Westminster Abbey</i>
587	"Come my Way, my Truth, my Life"	<i>The Call</i>

Please note that musical selections in weddings are interchangeable according to preference. Other choices are, of course, possible but must be approved by the Organist.

Lessons Appointed for Use

From the Old Testament

Genesis 1:26-28 -- 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." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 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, 15-24 -- 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, 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; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground-- 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. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 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. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; 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." Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." 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. 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. 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. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 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." Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Song of Solomon 2:10-13; 8:6-7 -- My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. 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. 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.

Tobit 8:5b-8 -- 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." They both said "Amen."

From the New Testament

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 -- 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. 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. 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. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 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. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. 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. 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. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Ephesians 3:14-19 -- I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. 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, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 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 -- Be imitators of God, as beloved children, 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. Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. 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. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, 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. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

Colossians 3:12-17 -- As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 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. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 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. 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 -- Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. 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. 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. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. 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.

The Psalms

Psalm 67 Deus misereatur

May God be merciful to us and bless us, show us the light of his countenance and come to us. Let your ways be known upon earth, your saving health among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide all the nations upon earth. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you. The earth has brought forth her increase; may God, our own God, give us his blessing. May God give us his blessing, and may all the ends of the earth stand in awe of him.

Psalm 127 Nisi Dominus

Unless the LORD builds the house, their labor is in vain who build it. Unless the LORD watches over the city, in vain the watchman keeps his vigil. It is in vain that you rise so early and go to bed so late; vain, too, to eat the bread of toil, for he gives to his beloved sleep. Children are a heritage from the LORD, and the fruit of the womb is a gift. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them! he shall not be put to shame when he contends with his enemies in the gate.

Psalm 128 Beati omnes

Happy are they all who fear the LORD, and who follow in his ways! You shall eat the fruit of your labor; happiness and prosperity shall be yours. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house, your children like olive shoots round about your table. The man who fears the LORD shall thus indeed be blessed. The LORD bless you from Zion, and may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. May you live to see your children's children; may peace be upon Israel.

The Gospel Lessons

Matthew 5:1-10 -- When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:13-16 -- Jesus said to the crowd, "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. "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. 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. 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 7:21,24-29 -- Jesus told the crowd, "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. 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. 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. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell-- and great was its fall!" Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Mark 10:6-9,13-16 -- Jesus said, "From the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. 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. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

John 15:9-12 -- Jesus said to his disciples, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 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. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.