

Joshua Chang & Nathalie Kiersznowski

Weddings require a lot of paperwork. People have to gather documents, write reports, and fill out forms. Those attending a wedding enjoy a visual and immersive experience: the beauty of the church, the formal dress of the wedding party, the sound of lovely music, and the assembly of cheerful people. The paperwork takes place behind the scenes. Even before their wedding day, Joshua and Nathalie had to deal with many details to complete their education and secure a job. Now familiar with the tech industry and sources of renewable energy, their lives show how plenty of paperwork need not involve paper. You can communicate through electronics and preserve the world through nature.

It's especially appropriate that they chose among the bible readings for their wedding day a passage from the Book of Prophet Jeremiah. God promises his people a new covenant. He had struck the original agreement with Moses on Mount Sinai, famously carving the commandments into rock. Paper was inaccessible on the mountain, and rock showed the permanence of the covenant God was making. He entered a relationship with his chosen people not out of any duty or any need for self-protection, but just out of love. Humans have nothing we can offer God, but, in love, God still desires our faithfulness and praise.

Of course, the history of that covenant tells how the people did not remain faithful: They fell away, worshipped other gods, and trusted provocative sources that ultimately did not satisfy. The people paid a steep price for this: exile from their homeland, destruction of their property, death among their families and friends. Only in time, after a period of repentance, did they return to the original covenant with the Lord. That was when Jeremiah the prophet shared the Lord's word with the people. His message? Even though they had walked away from a covenant written on rock, God had remained faithful. God intended to renew that loving relationship. The Lord said through Jeremiah, "The days are coming... when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel.... It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers.... But this is the covenant which I will make.... I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Notice the medium God chose on which to write this new covenant: not on rock, not in binary digits, not on trees, not in water, not even on paper. God wrote the new covenant onto the hearts of the people he loved. He wanted them to live in love with him.

The Catholic Church recommends this passage as one of the options for a wedding. It shows how the covenant between husband and wife participates in the covenant between God and his people. Joshua and Nathalie, you both grew up very strong in your faith in Christ, so you have already experienced God's covenant of love on your individual hearts. Today, because of that experience, you have the tools to enter a formal relationship that starts from love, lives in love, and renews love every day.

We thank you for the testimony of your faith in God and of your love for your partner for life. In both of these you challenge each of us to practice love of God and love of neighbor, the covenant that God wrote on our heart.

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