

## A very Special Valentine's Day

Dear family and friends,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you and thank you for coming tonight to celebrate with us the wedding of our daughter Aseel to Paul and make this night a very special one for all of us.

People like Aseel who are perfectionists, usually have difficulty making important decisions. The greatest German philosopher Goethe, who had unshakable confidence in man's intellect and rationality, once said: "Errors are hastily made decisions." But after Aseel and Paul knew each other for some 8 years, I can assure you that Aseel have made the right decision and that the bride and groom are on their way to a happy marriage and a wonderful life.

On occasions like this one, people usually say, he gave his daughter away. For us however, we are not giving our daughter away but getting a new son, and in the process, sharing our daughter with Paul's family, the new addition to our fairly large and growing one.

A year ago, we had two daughters and one son, Aseel, Haneen and Kareem. But when Haneen and David got married last year, the family grew and a new son was added. And as of today, Paul has joined our family. So, welcome Paul in our home and in our hearts.

In few years, Kareem will also get married and the family will grow again; a new daughter will be added and the number of sons and daughters will have doubled without much effort on our part. We may even have by then a few grandchildren to give us a new perspective on life and bring us more happy days and exciting moments.

Before I got married and Aseel was born, I was a free man who had little to worry about. But after Aseel entered our life, no plans could be made or even thought of without thinking of her current and future needs. In fact, as soon as she was born, Aseel became the organizing principle of our life. And for taking so much of our freedom away, Aseel gave us much joy and excitement that cannot be valued, forgotten or replaced.

Children, my friends, are like little birdies; you love them and play with them, and they love you and try to entertain you. However, they waste no time before they start jumping and dancing around you. And the minute you get addicted to their little, sweet tricks, they look at you with beautiful smiles and twinkling eyes and say; we are ready to fly on our own; navigate the blue skies and turbulent seas; explore the world and experience all that it has to offer. A few tears of joy come down your cheeks, but before you wipe them and open your eyes again, you will find out that they had already taken off.

If you look at the eyes of Aseel and Paul tonight, you will notice the confidence they have to fly without fear, enjoy the experience of life without hesitation, and live the dream of a lifetime. So, join me in wishing the newly weds, Aseel and Paul, a wonderful marriage, a joyful journey, and a most productive life together. And now, let me wish each one of you a happy Valentine's Day.

February 14, 2005