

UNDERSTANDING THE MARRIAGE COVENANT

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A covenant is a formal agreement that is legally binding. A covenant is a commitment between two or more people.

A deed of covenant is written, signed and sealed, in most cases with blood. It can be institutionalized by a pillar or alter, object or anything, in marriage it is institutionalized by the giving and receiving of rings.

A covenant is an undertaking. A covenant usually involves two or more people. The marriage covenant is between a man and woman as husband and wife to share their lives together till death separates them.

Every legal marriage is bound by the marriage covenant. The vow to live together with another as husband and wife is what is called the marriage covenant; and it should be upheld.

God is a witness to every legal marriage covenant and wants all who are married to know he witnessed their marriage and wants them to keep their marital vows.

Mal 2:14

14 You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

NIV

It is possible to enter into a marriage covenant without actually loving the person you are marrying. It is also essential that you know that a marriage covenant is legal and binding whether you married out of love or coercion or pressured by parents, family or running from unpleasant circumstances. Every marriage covenant is legal and binding. So, you don't get married when you don't mean to stay in the marriage.

The marriage covenant requires close scrutiny for deep understanding which will in turn promote faithfulness from all in a marriage.

THE MARRIAGE COVENANT MADE IN CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

The Minister asks the bridegroom:

"AB, will thou have this woman to be thy lawful wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love, honour and keep her, in all circumstances, and forsaking all others. Keep thyself only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?"

The bridegroom answers:

“I will.”

Then the minister asks the bride:

“CD, will thou have this man to be thy lawful wedded husband, to live together after God’s ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love, honour and obey him, in all circumstances, and forsaking all others. Keep thyself only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?”

The bride answers:

“I will.”

The bridegroom shall then take the Bride’s right hand in his own right hand and repeat after the Minister:

“I call on this person’s here present to witness that I, AB do take you CD, to be my lawful wedded wife; to have and to hold from this day forward, in all circumstances to love and cherish, till death do us part according to God’s Holy, and thereto I give you my hand in marriage.”

The bride shall also repeat after the Minister:

“I call on this person’s here present to witness that I, CD do take you AB, to be my lawful wedded husband; to have and to hold from this day forward, in all circumstances to love and cherish, till death do us part according to God’s Holy ordinance, and thereto I give you my hand in marriage.”

ANALYSIS

1. The Marriage covenant is to share your life together with your partner till death separates you.
2. The covenant is to live together after God’s ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony – You covenanted to live your marital life in accordance with the word of God on marriage.
 - The word of God should serve as the foundation upon which your marriage is built.
 - The Bible becomes your text book for successful marriage.
 - Your marriage will be in accordance with God’s way and will and not your tribe, community or generally accepted ways and principles.
3. You covenanted to love, honour and keep your spouse, in all circumstances.
 - You will never for any reason refuse to love, honour and keep your spouse.
 - In case of the unexpected happening, you will still love, honour and keep him or her as your spouse.
 - In case of Loss of job or business, bankruptcy, deformity, illness and others, you will still love, honour and keep your spouse.

4. The covenant is to forsake all others and keep thyself only unto your spouse, so long as ye both shall live.
 - Another affair outside the two of you is not permitted.
 - You covenanted to be disciplined enough to keep your marriage bed undefiled.

IT'S ALL ABOUT TRUST

Looking at the above marital vows, it is very clear that the couple has committed themselves to living together as husband and wife till death separates them. They have also promised to be faithful to each other and not to have love affair with another as long as they both are alive.

Covenants like this, is made in absolute trust in one another. If I don't trust my wife, I will not marry her or enter the marriage covenant with her. Trust is the key word here. It therefore means that when a man or woman enters into this covenant, he or she must prove faithful and trustworthy by keeping to the marriage covenant as entered into by both. Breaking the marriage covenant is evil and not expected of believers no matter the reason given for it.

Heb 13:4

4 Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

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1 Cor 7:10-11

10 To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. 11 But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

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Marriage must be respected by all in it and those outside of it. The married should respect their marital vows and keep the marriage bed pure and undefiled. No one should seek an affair with a married man or woman. Those married should not think of divorce but strive to keep their marriage covenant and stay happy together till death separates them. This calls for hard work and commitment on the part of all in the marriage. Never do anything that will make your partner to stop trusting you. Prove yourself trustworthy.

KNOWLEDGE IS IMPORTANT

To keep the marriage covenant one needs a good knowledge of one's partner for effective and happy relationship.

1 Peter 3:7

7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

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Knowledge is very powerful and useful in all relationship. Without knowledge, a lot of blunders will be made. Offence is inevitable when knowledge is absent. Ignorance makes one stumble. In fact, the word of God declares that ignorance is the real reason why marriages like other endeavours of man fail.

Hos 4:6

6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge:

KJV

When a spouse lacks knowledge of his or her partner, then destruction of the marriage is inevitable. The devil is not the real culprit when a marriage fails. God declared it is ignorance, which is a product of man's unwillingness to study his, or her spouse to know all there is to be known. The school of success in marriage demands that couples take out time to diligently search out all that is necessary about their partners in order to get along well.

We are enjoined to walk with one another according to knowledge. What I know that offends my spouse should be avoided because I already know that it offends her. What I know that she loves, I should endeavour to do more to create the peace that is required for my marriage to flourish. My knowledge about my spouse's temperament and character is supposed to equip me on how to respond to her rather than react. Two wrongs cannot make a right. With understanding, things work better. To get along well therefore, I need to work with knowledge I have about my spouse, and not just push it aside. It is dangerous to know something and not use it. The bible calls it sin.

1 John 1:7

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

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Walking in the light of what we know enhances fellowship. Just as you cannot fellowship with somebody in total darkness, so you cannot fellowship with your wife or husband successfully without light (knowledge). Darkness is a symbol of confusion. To relate in total ignorance of your spouse and what he or she is expecting of you will bring confusion. And where there is confusion, destruction is inevitable. To disregard what you know about the personality you are married to is foolishness and an invitation to crisis.

Your spouse is not like any other person you know or have known in time past. It will be fatal for your marriage when you attempt to relate with him or her the way you related with the other fellow. Character, habits, desires, likes, dislikes, philosophy, vision, temperament and expectations differ from person to person. This you must take into account when you want to compare your spouse with another. In fact, the scripture teaches that it is not good.

2 Cor 10:12

12 We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.

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GET ALONG WELL

To keep the marriage covenant with your partner, you need to make every effort to get along well with each other and avoid anything that can take away sweetness from your marriage and cause you to go out and have an affair with another or quit your marriage for any reason.

BASIC STEPS TO GETTING ALONG WELL

1. Agree that you need a good working understanding of the person you are married to.

Courtship time is never enough to get to know your partner well enough. Do not forget that people are constantly changing in character, behaviour, tastes and desires. What used to be your husband's hobby or best food could change with time. This understanding will keep you busy studying and re-studying your spouse. There are times in marriage it seems you no longer understand the one you are living with. This is a sign that your partner has the tendency to always change. God designed it so, to keep us busy learning and re-learning about our spouse, and make the relationship to be dynamic and challenging; and help us not to take our marriage for granted.

2. Create ample time to study and observe your spouse.

Acquisition of knowledge is serious business. Give it time, and it will yield for you marital bliss. We learn by observation, meditation, solving problems by asking questions about the problems, and studying books about marriage and human behaviour. Give it time, and it will yield for you priceless dividends.

3. Determine to apply what you have discovered about your spouse and how to relate with him or her.

Knowledge possessed and not used is a wasted knowledge and a sin.

4. Exercise self-control on your part.

Relationship is all about give and take. Much as you are expecting your partner to bear with you, you must be willing to make some concessions. You must be willing to give away some rights and some privileges to make for peace and some smooth running of your home. In the face of provocation or offence, manifest self-control and the love of Christ that covers a multitude of sins.

5. Listen to complaints of your spouse about you.

It is important that couples listen to one another and accept each other's explanations when they are given. It is also important that admittance must be made of wrongs done.

It should not be explained away. Corrections must be made when necessary. The feelings of your partner must be taken into account.

6. Work on yourself to improve your own life.

As much as you are expecting your spouse to change in certain areas, you also must make effort to change in areas of complain for permanent peace to reign in the home.

7. Practice forgiveness as quickly as you are offended.

Forgiveness is the healing balm of relationships. Without it, no relationship will survive. No matter the offence, forgive as God through Jesus Christ forgives you.

8. Concentrate on what pleases your spouse to heal the wounds of the past and steady your marriage.

9. Have a vision of a beautiful home.

Keep it in view and pursue it with all your heart. It will come to pass.

10. Separate yourself from any relationship that you have that is having a negative influence on your marriage.

Friends are influence. Those who speak into your life matter a great deal to your marriage. Those who speak into your life mould your future. Those who influence your actions are building your character negatively or positively. Watch it.

11. Prayerfully handle all matters in your marriage.

Look up to God to help you relate with your spouse, especially when it is difficult for you. The Holy Spirit is our teacher; he will teach you how to tackle your peculiar situation. Look up to him always. Never take laws into your hands. Never stop depending on God for help. Pray regularly for your spouse to become like Christ daily. It will help.

CONCLUSION

The marriage covenant should be kept by all in marriage. It should motivate you to get along well with your spouse and shun anything that can kill your love for each other. Your marriage covenant should keep you focused on your marriage and keep you from being distracted by others you may find attractive. It is common knowledge that when a marriage is not yielding the desired result, those in it seeks happiness, friendship and consolation outside their home. As a result, they get themselves entangled in an adulterous relationship.

To avoid breaking your marriage covenant, it is important that you do everything you can and is necessary to make your marriage sweet, exciting and worth keeping and protecting. Never forget that God who says He was a witness to your marriage is always watching both of you.

Be faithful to your spouse no matter what happens. Love yourself and love your spouse also.

WORD OF WISDOM

- 1. Do not forget that people are constantly changing in character, behaviour, tastes and desires. What used to be your husbands hobby or best food could change with time. This understanding will keep you busy studying and re-studying your spouse.**
- 2. Knowledge possessed and not used is a wasted knowledge and a sin.**
- 3. You must be willing to give away some rights and some privileges to make for peace and some smooth running of your home.**
- 4. As much as you are expecting your spouse to change in certain areas, you also must make effort to change in areas of complain for permanent peace to reign in the home.**
- 5. Concentrate on what pleases your spouse to heal the wounds of the past and steady your marriage.**
- 6. Friends are influence. Those who speak into your life matter a great deal to your marriage. Those who speak into your life mould your future. Those who influence your actions are building your character negatively or positively. Watch it.**
- 7. Look up to God to help you relate with your spouse, especially when it is difficult for you. The Holy Spirit is our teacher; he will teach you how to tackle your peculiar situation. Look up to him always.**
- 8. To avoid breaking your marriage covenant, it is important that you do everything you can and is necessary to make your marriage sweet, exciting and worth keeping and protecting.**