
Covenant Relationships



God's intention, even His divine expectation, is for each marriage to be a **Commitment for Life** between one man and one woman. Biblical love in the marriage and family is based on the relationship between Christ Jesus and His Church. This is the supreme example of the committed love that a husband and wife are to follow in their relationship with each other.¹

...submitting to one another in the fear of God. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Eph. 5:21-33 (NKJV)

This Commitment for Life is a Covenant. And this Covenant is both before God and with God. The design is for lifetime companionship with your spouse.² This companionship is designed by God to provide for mutual help and to unify you and your spouse in every aspect of life.

1. Malachi 2:14; Proverbs 2:11-19; Mark 10:6-9

2. Gen 2:24



WHAT IS COVENANT?

Biblical Covenant is a solemn agreement between two parties which invites God, as a third party participant, to establish by His presence and Word the parameters, benefits, responsibilities and liabilities for the relationship. Contracts are governed by civil law, while biblical covenant is governed by God. While today's culture views marriage as a civil contract between two parties including pre-nuptial agreements, God designed and instituted the marriage commitment, and He has retained governing authority. Marriage should be a covenant based on God's Word and His presence, and is intended to last a lifetime.

There are actually only a few passages in scripture which specifically address the marriage relationship. Yet, this relatively small portion of scripture provide all that is necessary to understand God's exalted view of marriage.

Gen. 1:27-28, 2:18-25; Malachi 2:14; Matt. 19:3-6; Mark 10:6-9; I Cor. 7:2-5, 10-16, 27-40; Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; Titus 2:4-5; Heb. 13:4; I Pet. 3:1-9

A major key to realizing God's blessing in the marriage covenant is personal integrity. **Integrity** • is:

- described as being of the same substance throughout.
- practiced as doing whatever it takes to keep your word or do what is right.
- based on Deuteronomy 6:4 and Matthew 5:48

“Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one.” (NKJV)

“Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”¹ (NKJV)

God expects us to be people of integrity! We are instructed to put away guile and deceitfulness. We are expected to keep our word, our commitment, our portion of the covenant. Yes, we are strengthened by God's grace and His Word, but the responsibility rests upon us to be transformed by that grace and through His Word.

Culturally, there are many enemies of integrity, enemies which seek to rob us of the blessings of wholeness and authenticity. It is easy to be conformed to the patterns of thinking of this age. We need to learn to recognize the enemies of integrity and defeat them.

1. Perfect = *teleios*, meaning complete, or whole

• See Chapter Appendix



ENEMIES OF INTEGRITY

1. A Pre-occupation With Dysfunction

Everything has a label. Labels are much easier to manage than the substance they attempt to describe. Today, our paradigm and our vocabulary are full of phrases which diminish personal responsibility under the guise of **dysfunction**. While the term, “dysfunctional family” may describe a collection of problems (chronic unemployment, substance abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional and mental illness) - it **is not** biblically adequate to describe a person’s state of being. It is not an excuse for bad behavior which is remedied by repentance rather than therapy. All the reasons or excuses that promote the cultural label of dysfunction are biblically identified as sin.

2. A Romance with Idealism •

The roots of idealism rest in our romance with “if only” and the “someday”. “If only I had a better job.” “If only someone would love me.” “If only I had married so-and-so.” “Someday my ship will come in.” “Someday when life settles down...” “If only I were prettier, wealthier, healthier, younger, older, better educated,” etc.

Idealistic thinking is an imaginary world of what life could or should be. It is a daydream which persistently continues, based on wishes and unrealistic expectations. It is only interrupted by the occasional nightmare of disappointment and dashed expectations. But soon, a new imagination takes its place. Or just as devastating, cynicism replaces the idealism — but the imagination continues.

3. Double-mindedness and Divided Hearts

- James 1: 6-8: 4:8
- Psalm 12:2
- Hosea 10:2

Double mindedness is the state of holding to conflicting opinions or holding to one particular opinion, but acting in a contrary manner.

• See Chapter Appendix

Scripture refers to the divided heart within the context of idolatry: split loyalties between God and some other thing, idol, idea, etc. Split loyalties affect the integrity of the marriage covenant most obviously when one partner puts self-interest above the interest of the marriage or the covenant partner's needs and desires.

VOWS AND AGREEMENT

Vows are broken due to a lack of personal integrity. Broken vows and broken promises damage the covenant and compromise its integrity.

A marriage cannot endure unless a solid framework is built upon a trustworthy foundation.

Restoration is imperative to protect the foundation of the marriage. There are two major steps in the restoration of the covenant's integrity:

1. Submit. Ephesians 5:21 says; *submitting to one another in the fear of God. (NKJV)*

This submission is *mutual submission*. In and with fear of God, both parties submit to each other. We might define this submission as *cooperation*. In other words, *do whatever it takes* to restore trust and wholeness. Biblical New Testament submission is NOT one party cowering under the authority of another. Rather it is coming "under" authority to cooperate. In the case of Ephesians 5:21, the authority is scripture. Both parties come under the authority of scripture in mutual cooperation.

2. Agreement. **Matthew 18:19-20** *"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."* (NKJV)

RESPONSE VERSES REACTION

A reaction[•] is based on PAST actions. It is a breakdown in our character and integrity. A response[•] is not based on a past action, it is based on the pledge or promise (vows) made in the covenant. We must habitually choose to respond according to our covenant rather than react to our spouse's failures or perceived failures. The fear of God (which is the beginning of wisdom) should draw us back to the promises made in our covenant agreement – both the marriage vows AND the scriptural imperatives of covenant with God and each other.

Reactions of anger, fear, jealousy or envy all reveal cracks in our integrity: areas of unforgiveness, unyieldedness, etc. The prescription for this kind of upset or breakdown is acknowledgement and repentance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & REPENTANCE

“I declare that there has been a breakdown in my life concerning _____. I choose to forgive _____ and release this situation completely. I choose to do whatever it takes to flow in covenant, trust and commitment. Lord Jesus, give me grace to forgive, release and love. I choose to agree with you today. I further declare a breakthrough into the land of unlimited possibilities. I will not be a slave to anger, bitterness or upset, but choose to walk in your liberty of love.”

SUMMARY

Marriage is designed as a covenant where each partner makes life-long commitments as an act of trust and self-expression, each giving themselves into the other's charge. This Covenant is expressed through words -- our vows.

Vows are made before God and are a declaration stated before witnesses that authorize the spouse the right to expect or to claim the performance of these promises. This covenant is not a mere contract with terms or conditions, but an unconditional “till death us do part”. In order to keep this covenant in place, integrity is required on each one's part. Keep your words.

[•] See Chapter Appendix



"The conversation of our lives should reflect something higher than the mere continual workings of past experience!"

AFFIRMATION

HOLDING HANDS WITH SPOUSE

I choose now to covenant with Jesus, to put Him first in my life and in my relationships. I accept full responsibility for having a godly marriage and to do all things to fulfill my part of the covenant. This covenant is not for a limited term but it is eternal, made with and before The Eternal God. This is a life-changing covenant. I acknowledge that it will affect my entire life, all of my relationships with others, my spouse and my family. I choose to uphold a covenant lifestyle established this day _____. Amen

**APPENDIX**

Idealism: *Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia Deluxe: i-de-al-ism* (i del izim) *n.* [Fr *idealisme* or Ger *idealismus*] **1.** Behavior or thought based on a conception of things as they should be or as one would wish them to be; idealization **2.** A striving to achieve one's ideals **3.** Imaginative treatment in art that seeks to show the artist's or author's conception of perfection; representation of imagined types, or ideals: cf. REALISM **4.** *Philos.* Any of various theories which hold that: *a)* things exist only as ideals in the mind rather than as material objects independent of the mind (cf. REALISM) *b)* things in the material world are actually manifestations of an independent realm of unchanging, immaterial models or forms (cf. Materialism)¹

Integrity: *Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia Deluxe: in-teg-ri-ty n.* [[LME *integrite* < L *integritas* < *integer*: see INTEGER]] **1.** The quality or state of being complete; unbroken condition; wholeness; entirety **2.** The quality of being unimpaired; perfect condition; soundness **3.** The quality or state of sound moral principle; uprightness, honesty, and sincerity²

React: (re akt) *vi.* [[<LL *reactus*, pp. of *reagere* < L *re-*, again + *agere*, to ACT]] **1.** To act in return or reciprocally **2.** To act in opposition **3.** To act in a reverse way; go back to a former condition, stage, etc. **4.** To respond to a stimuli; be affected by some influence, event, etc. **5.** *Chem.* To act with another substance in producing a chemical change -- *vt.* To cause to react; specif., to produce chemical change³

Re-pond (ri spand) *vi.* [[ME *responden* < OFr *respondre* < L *respondere* < *re-*, back + *spondere*, to pledge: see SPONSOR]] **1.** to answer; reply **2.** to act in return, as if in answer **3.** to have a positive or favorable reaction [an infection that *responded* to treatment] **4.** *Law* to be answerable or liable --*vt.* to say in answer; reply --*n.* **1.** *Archit.* an engaged column, pilaster, etc. supporting an arch **2.** *Eccles.* old term for RESPONSE --*SYN.* ANSWER⁴

1. Excerpted from *Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia Deluxe*. Copyright © 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997 The Learning Company, Inc. All rights reserved.
2. Ibid
3. Ibid
4. Ibid