

How Vital Are My Vows of Marriage?

Mark 10:9: (NASB) *What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.*



...And they lived happily ever after! This is such a promising and bliss-filled ending that is sought after and hoped for by so many. Who would not want the prospect of happiness and contentment as a recipe for their married life in all their coming days? The truth of the matter is that at the rate present-day society is going, this dream is a mere fantasy for most married couples. This sounds harsh, but the reality is, there are two things about marriage that most of us do not understand. First and foremost, it is not a love-driven relationship, but a commitment-driven relationship that is fed by love. Secondly, it is a lot of work. Though it sounds hard, even daunting, it is profoundly worth the effort! How hard should we be willing to keep this commitment? How unbreakable and important are the “‘til death do us part” vows we took?

First, the Bible is explicit regarding marriage. It is called a covenant, specifically a covenant of God. What does “covenant” mean in the Bible? Let’s start with the Old Testament word for covenant:

Covenant: Strong’s #1285 *beriyth*; a compact (because made by passing between pieces of flesh)

(Source: McClintock and Strong’s Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature) COVENANT: a mutual contract or agreement between two parties, each of which is bound to fulfill certain engagements to the other. The Hebrew word is derived... from the root... “he cut,” and taken to mean primarily “a cutting,” with reference to the custom of cutting or dividing animals in two, and passing between the parts in ratifying a covenant... In making such a covenant God was solemnly invoked as witness (Genesis 31:50), whence the expression “a covenant of Jehovah” 1 Samuel 20:8; comp. Jeremiah 34:18,19; and accordingly, a breach of covenant was regarded as a very heinous sin (Ezekiel 17:12-20).

Practically, this was a way to seal something in a very sacred way.

Throughout the podcast we will look at some covenants or promises of God and their seriousness and solemnity.

Here is an example of one of God’s covenants:

Genesis 9:11-13: (NASB) ¹¹*I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be eliminated by the waters of a flood, nor shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.* ¹²*God said, This is the sign of the **covenant <1285>** which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations;* ¹³*I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a **covenant <1285>** between Me and the earth.*

This is sometimes called the Rainbow Covenant. God put the rainbow in the sky after the great flood. He caused the deluge because of the spirit beings/fallen angels coming to earth and comingling with humanity which was not appropriate in His plan. When Noah and his family left the ark, God said to them: I will never flood the earth again, and here is the symbol of My promise.

This covenant was a generational dedication from God to all humanity. God’s solemn promise should give us great comfort.



This same word is used in the Scriptures when referring to marriage.

The first marriage:

Genesis 2:22-25: (KJV) ²²And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. ²³And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. ²⁴Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall **cleave <1692>** (cling) unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. ²⁵And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.



Therefore, shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife. Let's stop there and get an understanding of what that means because this has everything to do with the solemnity of marriage.

Cleave: Strong's #1692 *dabaq*; cling or adhere; figuratively, to catch by pursuit

One other use of this word:

Joshua 22:5: (KJV) But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and to **cleave <1692>** unto Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.

To **cleave** is to powerfully and intentionally hold onto. We are to cleave to our Creator, and with that same kind of intensity we want to cleave (stay close or attached) to our spouse. We are to **cleave** to God, which means to powerfully and intentionally follow His ways. Jehovah God instructed men to stay by the side of their wives, to the point where the two become one.



Why was man supposed to cleave to the woman and not the other way around?

There is a natural propensity for a woman to be nurturing. The Bible is very male-centered. Part of the curse from the garden of Eden experience with disobedience included that women were to be subservient to their husbands. Women would naturally cleave to their spouse, but men might not. Men needed extra instruction from God that their responsibility was to cleave (to stay close to, to protect and guard) their wives as though they were one flesh. He was to think of his wife as part of himself.

How do we know marriage is a covenant? Malachi tell us:

Malachi 2:13-14: (NASB) ¹³This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. ¹⁴Yet you say, For what reason? Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by **covenant <1285>**.

God hates divorce!

Malachi 2:16: (NLT) For I hate divorce! says the LORD, the God of Israel. To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife.

Divorce causes pain and suffering for everyone involved. Many divorced Christians have overwhelming guilt, whether they were divorced before they became a Christian or afterwards. Divorcees fall into a special category. Regardless of the circumstances of their divorce, they may be labeled failures or be thought of as damaged by a failed marriage. While there is a whole list



of things God hates, including lying in [Proverbs 6:16-19](#), knowing God specifically hates divorce is crushing for some people.



What do you say to those suffering with that guilt?

It really does depend on circumstances and what role the spouse played. The key is to take wherever we are, whatever has happened - whether it was before we came to the Lord or after - and decide from today forward to make new commitments to strongly cleave to the Lord God Almighty for His direction and providence to help work out our life. If we did something wrong, we then repent and ask for forgiveness; we proceed to live a life that shows our repentance. If a wrong was done to us, we have to learn how to forgive over time. Cleave to the principles of God and take steps forward.

God divorced Israel but brought her back with reconciliation:

Jeremiah 3:8: (NASB) *⁸And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a certificate of divorce...*

We will see later in this podcast how God forgave Israel again and again, and brought her back into a covenant relationship with Him.



Covenants are sacred and serious. We should **NEVER** enter any covenant relationship that we do not intend to keep or even have doubts about keeping.

To learn more about covenants:



It is not just about romantic evenings and sharing love, marriage needs a deeper and more profound base in commitment.

**We know that marriage is serious business,
but how serious in relation to our other commitments?**



This is an important question. Life is full of commitments and responsibilities that range from verbal agreements to signed contracts for services and ownership. With the vast number of obligations we enter into in life, where does marriage rate in terms of its requirements and need for attention?

The need for attention to marriage is often forgotten because of life's other demands and commitments. The vows of marriage are to be taken seriously



when we promise ourselves to our spouse. We *cannot forget* to pay attention to its needs. When we invite God to come, bless and oversee that promise, we had better be very serious about such a promise.



We wanted to add some practical marriage advice for us to note throughout this episode from those who have successfully been married a long time. We are going to call these Love Notes. You both have been successfully married a long time. Rick let's start with you. How are you and Trish able to make this work?



I was 21 when we got married, but I turned 22 the day after. I was a very young man. We've been married for over 40 years. For two-thirds of my life, I've been married. There's a lot to say, but I will give you one word that I truly believe has helped Trish and I navigate through all kinds of storms, stresses, trials and disciplines, and the word is **inclusiveness**. Christian Questions is a demanding scenario. To be doing this every single week and to work a job, to have raised a family, and to be an elder in our local Bible study group are all a challenge. And also, by God's grace, I end up being involved in lots of people's lives. One of the secrets for us has been for me to pause regularly and include my wife, Trish, in all of that stuff that's going on. I share with her the things I'm working on with other folks who have issues who are looking for some guidance and encouragement, and what's going on with CQ. I just stop and have her be a part of it. Some of us are wired to be in front. I'm a communicator. That's something God has blessed me with. Everybody is not able to express themselves in public, but my wife is wired to be that incredible support, and she gives me all kinds of pearls of wisdom in the background, and gives me things to think about that I would have never considered. So, inclusiveness doesn't just say pause and consider; it's pause, consider, share, learn and progress together. Inclusiveness, that's my word.



Here is another example of a covenant of God:

Genesis 17:7-8: (NASB) ⁷I will establish My **covenant <1285>** between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting **covenant <1285>**, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. ⁸I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

God promised Israel the land. They have it now and will never lose it!

(Source: The Israeli-Arab Peace Process and Bible Prophecy, booklet) Never before was an ancient nation destroyed, its people dispersed to the ends of the earth - and yet for centuries remained a separate and distinct people. Then, for that people to be regathered to its ancient homeland and re-established as a nation after nearly 2,000 years is a contradiction of time and logic. The rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948 was an unparalleled miracle of history.

Deuteronomy 30:1-3: (KJV) ¹And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, ²and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; ³that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee.



Ezekiel 11:17: (KJV) *Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.*

For the regathering of Israel to be predicted so long ago and then come true in modern times is remarkable! It is faith-strengthening to know that God does what He says He will do.

I choose you. And I'll continue choosing you over and over again, in a heartbeat. I'll always choose you. — Marriage.com

Marriage is designed by God to be a lifetime commitment:

Mark 10:2-9: (NASB) ²Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing him, and began to question him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife. ³And he answered and said to them, what did Moses command you? ⁴They said Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away. ⁵But Jesus said to them, Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. ⁷For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, ⁸and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.

Jesus said, it is NOT okay to divorce; make it work! We all have problems. The society we live in today makes it too easy for people to end their marriage instead of working at it. Sometimes there are legitimate reasons to divorce, but this conversation is focusing on the ideal and how to strive for the highest level of adherence to the promise we make.



The sobering truth is that marriage is the epitome of what any earthly commitment should be modeled after. This is an “I am all in for all time, under all circumstances” promise.

What did Moses command you? Moses never commanded divorce.

He *permitted* divorce and commanded that time be spent deliberately drawing up formal legal papers, a Certificate of Divorcement, to be given to the wife. Once given these formal papers, it protected the woman and allowed her an opportunity to survive in society in another household.

Moses allowed divorce, but Jesus explained that this was a step backward from God's original design that had been *from the beginning*. The principles never changed. Bible commentaries tell us the rabbis of Jesus' day had a saying, “If a man has a bad wife, it is a religious duty to divorce her.” Divorce was temporarily allowed only because of their *hardness of heart*. This would not be okay for the Christian.



The idea of the sacredness of marriage is carried through how God loved and cared for His people, Israel.

Isaiah 54:5: (Young's Literal Translation) *For thy Maker [is] thy husband, Jehovah of Hosts [is] His name...*

Jeremiah 3:14: (KJV) *Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you...*



For context and comparison, let's look at the call to follow Jesus as a disciple:

Luke 9:23: (NASB) *And he was saying to them all, If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.*

Romans 12:1: (NASB) *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*



Discipleship is an “I am all in, no matter the cost to my personal will, emotions and ways until the Lord takes me” promise.

Is there a difference between the promise of discipleship and the covenant of marriage?

Yes, there is a significant difference.

Marriage is a “covenant of God”:

Proverbs 2:11-12, 16-17: (ASV) *¹¹Discretion shall watch over thee; Understanding shall keep thee: ¹²To deliver thee from the way of evil, from the men that speak perverse things; ¹⁶To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the foreigner that flattereth with her words; ¹⁷That forsaketh the friend of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God:*

The covenant of her God - refers to the marriage covenant. It is saying, discretion and understanding will keep you from all kinds of evil - do not forget the covenant.

(Source: Matthew Poole) The covenant of her God; the marriage covenant; so called, partly because God is the author and institutor of that society and mutual obligation; and partly because God is called to be the witness and judge of that solemn promise and covenant, and the avenger of the transgression of it.

Here is another example of a different type of covenant of God.

A covenant of God between David and Jonathan, in the midst of great adversity:

1 Samuel 20:8: (ASV) *Therefore deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of Jehovah with thee: but if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldest thou bring me to thy father?*

King David kept the covenant (or promise) he made with Jonathan after his death. David said to the Jonathan's son *who is disabled in both feet...I will assuredly show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you yourself shall eat at my table regularly (2 Samuel 9:7).*

David continued to support Jonathan's family due to the serious covenant he made with him.

(Source: Wesley's Explanatory Notes) A covenant of the Lord - that is, a solemn covenant, not lightly undertaken, but seriously entered into, in the name and fear of God, and in his presence, calling him to be the witness of our sincerity therein, and the avenger of perfidiousness (lack of faithfulness, disloyalty or betrayal) in him that breaks it.

A covenant of God is deeply serious and should not be taken lightly. The marriage covenant is of the most serious in nature - serious to the point of “til death do you part.”



Marriage is the highest, longest-lasting commitment we can make between human beings!

Here are a few sad statistics:



According to the Pew Research Center, the divorce rate of Americans 50 years old and older has roughly doubled since the 1990s. Among those 65 and older, the divorce rate has roughly tripled since 1990. The term for this is “Gray Divorce.”

It is thought that this category is increasing due to three main reasons:

1. A greater life expectancy - people believe they still have time to find a better-suited partner, or they want to pursue their own interests and independence in their remaining years.
2. Changes in society - the attitude towards divorce and divorced people is more relaxed. Personal fulfillment and happiness are valued more highly than an unsatisfying marriage.
3. Postponed divorce - people wait until children are grown and out of the house or until certain retirement benefits begin.

When it is about personal happiness over keeping our commitment made before God, we need to second-guess ourselves. If we are following after God's will, He wants us to work through our issues and not run away from them.

Discipleship is a solemn vow of fidelity:

Psalms 116:12-15: (NASB) ¹²*What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me? ¹³I shall lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the LORD. ¹⁴I shall pay my vows to the LORD, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people. ¹⁵Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His godly ones.*

The next verse tells us this discipleship may cost us everything:

¹⁵*Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His godly ones.*

Discipleship is the highest commitment we as humans can make to God through Christ, whereas marriage is the highest, longest-lasting commitment we can make between human beings.



Jonathan: Jewel and I have been married for 33 years. I think respect and appreciation are the ingredients that keep a marriage together. When respect is lost for the husband, it falls apart. Without it, there is no hope in the relationship. For a wife, if she loses appreciation from her husband, the relationship can crumble. We need to be in the moment when together. Make time for conversations. She needs to be reminded continually of the value she brings to the marriage. Try to take burdens off of each other. Share the responsibilities in the home and don't compare who did what. When we see something needs to be done, we just do it. **Jewel:** It is important to understand and appreciate the weaknesses and strengths in each other so that you can help and encourage each other daily. We try daily to find a way to make each other's lives easier. The biggest thing that makes our marriage strong is working together for the same goal.



The marriage covenant is **witnessed by God** and is for the duration of our human lives. Discipleship is **answering the call of God and vowing** to follow His will through Jesus for all of eternity.

Looking at marriage this way is kind of scary. However, by taking it so seriously we are positioned for receiving its blessing.

**With so much work and seriousness in place,
how do we manage the tragedy of losing our spouse?**

Not enough can be said about trying to put such a tragic event in place. In these times of the COVID virus, many have unexpectedly lost their spouses. Just because we are Christians, we should not expect our sorrow and pain to simply be erased. We should instead look to God's mercy as we struggle through our loss.



Check out our **CQ Kids** video:

WHAT IS MERCY?

christianquestions.com/youtube

A happy marriage is a long conversation which always seems too short.

— **Andre Maurois, French writer**

Widows and orphans are the most vulnerable, and it is devastating that COVID-19 has made millions of them. There are many Scriptures that demand we pay attention to the widows. See Exodus 22:22-24, James 1:27, Isaiah 1:17 and 1 Timothy 5:3.



We would like to re-introduce Fred. He used to be “our guy behind the board” years ago when we were on the radio. We did a two-part series on perseverance and heard a lot from Fred about persevering through the difficulty of losing a spouse. We did not get to everything he said so we wanted to continue with his experience.





What is helpful now?

Julie: That loneliness, what can people do around you in order to help you with that? That's probably to include you in some things, but what if you don't want to go...?

Fred: Remember that the person is there. It kind of has to happen; life moves on. You can't always be in crisis mode. I remember when it first happened, when Sue died, the first month or so was pretty much a blur. I only remember pieces of it. It really didn't hit until probably the two-month mark. It's like, oh, this is real. What people can do is just remember that the Apostle Peter said remember the widows and orphans. Do that continually. Just remember because it's easy to forget about it when it's out of sight out of mind.

I have to participate in this - talk to people. And it's hard for me because I'm by nature introverted. People who are extroverted, they look at me and they don't understand that. They're like, just go out there and do it!

We need to pay attention to those suffering internally.



Our friend Florence will be celebrating her 100th birthday soon, and she unexpectedly lost her husband about 40 years ago. She gives us two pieces of advice:

1. She was overwhelmed with cards and casseroles coming all at once in the first month or two of her husband John's passing, and like Fred said, it was all a blur. She really needed cards in month eight, and year two and so on. She said people forgot and moved on with their lives, but this WAS her life, and she was now alone.
2. She found that people coming up to her felt awkward and refused to say his name, thinking it would upset her. But this was the man she loved and missed dearly! She WANTS to say his name. She WANTS to talk about him and their story. Just because he died did not mean his memory was erased, and not mentioning his name erases him.

Isaiah 41:10: (NASB) *Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*

After the loss of a spouse, we want to look for ways to reengage in life and find our focus in fellowship and Scripture. Loneliness is a powerful internal battle.

Being alone is an especially difficult and often silent trial that wears us down:

1 Peter 4:12-13: (NASB) *¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of his glory you may rejoice with exultation.*



Fiery ordeal - how we are purified. The depressing magnitude of the trial of loneliness needs the hopeful perspective that it is God's tool, a tool of purification. If it were up to us, we would love to pick the fire of our fiery trials. The problem is, we would choose the lukewarm water. It is God's tool in God's hand to give us His direction.

Think of the five widows Luke mentions and see how Jesus gives them prominence:

1. **The widow Anna**, a prophetess, was with Simeon in the Temple when he met the baby Jesus. She was 84 years old and talked about Jesus to everyone she could. Luke 2:36-38
2. **The widow of Zarephath**, who fed Elijah with miraculously never-ending flour and oil. Elijah would raise her son from the dead. 1 Kings 17:7-16, Luke 4:24-26
3. **The widow from Nain**, Jesus raised her son from the dead. Luke 7:11-15
4. **The persistent widow**, the main character in the parable Jesus told his disciples about the need for constant prayer and to never give up. Luke 18:3-5
5. **The poor widow** who gave all she had ("the widow's mite") to the Temple treasury. Luke 21:1-4

All of these widows were able to serve as examples. There is still service in the Lord's work even after a spouse is gone.



Are you able to move on?

Fred: Do I find somebody else? That's a hard one because there's some people for whom the answer would be no, and that's okay, and some people say yes, I want to find a woman for me and get married. That's okay; there's no right or wrong answer. To me, I've come to a place where I want to keep it - where I put it in the hands of the Lord. If He has somebody in mind it will happen, but if the answer is no, I have to be okay with that.

Julie: Are you okay with that if that's the answer?

Fred: I'm getting there. There was a time where the answer was no, I need to be with someone, but now, if that's the Lord's will, it will be okay. I have to try to figure out other ways to fill that void, because there is a void.

Rick: And it's massive.

Fred: Yeah.

The ability to move on takes time, as Fred expressed.

We remember it is God's will:

Romans 8:31: (NASB) *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?*

Such a perspective may not come immediately. We want to grow toward that kind of attitude over time. Trusting and waiting on God's providence can be challenging, until we compare it to the alternative - trusting and waiting on what we ourselves think.

Sometimes when we lose a spouse, we fall into sad, dark thinking. This is what was happening in Israel - they trusted in their own thinking instead of God's. The context of these next verses is the tribe of Judah's great sins with idolatry. God begins by telling them of coming failure, as they have believed in the deceitfulness of imperfect man and his imagination over God.

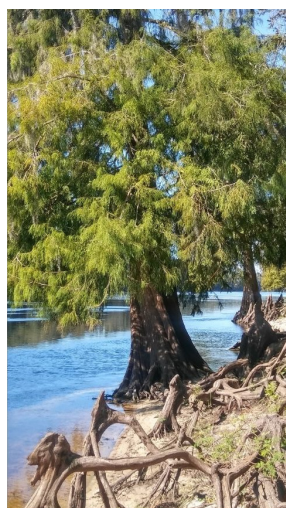
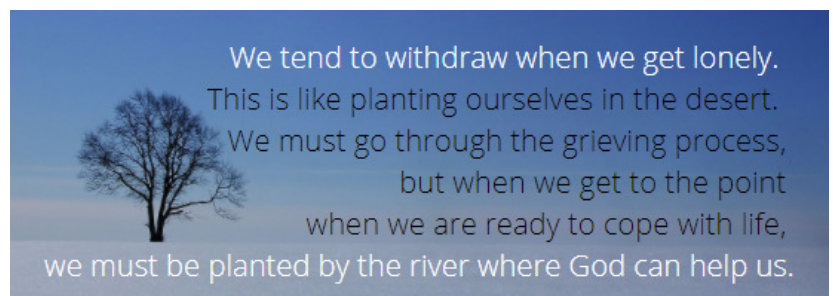
He shows them the sad future of those who live without Him:

Jeremiah 17:5-8: (NASB) *⁵Thus says the LORD, Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD. ⁶For he will be like a bush in the desert and will not see when prosperity comes, but will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, a land of salt without inhabitant.*

Like a bush in the desert and will not see when prosperity comes - this person is planted too far away from the nourishment. Sometimes with loneliness we are planted too far away and become so isolated that we are just barely hanging on.



Loneliness can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. We feel lonely, we act lonely, and then we are lonely.



God now shows them the value of blooming where He had planted them - He gives them HOPE:

⁷Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD And whose trust is the LORD. ⁸For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit.

There is a dramatic difference between confidence in my sinful way (being like a bush in the desert) and God's merciful way (being planted by the river, protected from heat and drought). Where do we plant ourselves in that lonely, tragic time when we have suffered loss? We want to have an increase of faith over time.



Has this experience increased your faith?

Fred: Yes, I think my faith is stronger now. It's almost like you have the stock market and you have those lines going up and down up to a high place. It's not a straight line; you're going to have dips. One of the things you have to do is forgive yourself when your flesh wants to go in the other direction because it does. That's where prayer comes in to play. If you want to have a deep personal relationship with God, you have to fight for it. Relationship requires work and struggle. As you said before, did you get mad at God? I did and then you feel guilty about it, but then you have to realize that God knows, and He knows because He sent His own son to die for us. So, when you're sitting here angry at God, and you realize that you are basically making a fool of yourself, He knows. He's all about the forgiveness, so just turn back and go to Him. It's worth it.

This shows us how to begin to move forward:

1 Peter 5:6-7: (NASB) *⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.*



Think of a greeting card picture of a six-year-old with her hands together, serenely praying before bed. Is that what *casting all your anxiety on Him* means here? No!

Instead, think of it as a physical action, using the analogy of a football to literally throw those cares 20 feet away to a waiting catcher. We no longer have possession of that football - our anxiety anymore. A prayer such as this does not have to be serene; it can be full of tears, anger and frustration. We can let God know we are broken and upset.



If we are suffering the loss of a spouse, bring the anxiety to Him and pour it out. Give it to God in such a way that He now owns it as we wait for His providence.

Here is a formula for growing through frustration with circumstances that are not what we expected:

1 Timothy 6:6-11: (NASB) *⁶But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. ⁷For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.*



Having godliness is a growth process. Because our lives are in God's hands, we can, over time, learn to rejoice in spite of our losses. This rejoicing in God's providence is a sure way to combat the desire to "fill the gap" with earthly things.



⁹But those who want to get rich fall into temptation (this can be a metaphor for relying on earthly thinking) and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

This is frustration, especially for a Christian. Misplaced focus stifles growth.

¹¹But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

Tragic loss notwithstanding, our life's primary pursuit needs to be clear - follow Jesus always! We might want to bury our sorrows in earthly thinking (and unsafe, unhealthy habits such as alcohol abuse, etc.) We might not be ready to accept help from others but make sure we do not plant ourselves so far away that we no longer see a way back. Let our brotherhood be with us, close enough to encourage us when we are ready.



At this point, what would you say to someone else?

Fred: If you're stuck in bitterness, bitterness, like COVID, is infectious. The grief is real. It's okay to grieve. There's no set time. There's no set way, but you can't grieve forever. Go through the process. Don't try to short-circuit it, and if you stop, that's where you get destroyed. Work the process. Keep going forward, and if you're somebody who doesn't have faith, look for it. Look for something bigger than yourself. That really is important. Look for something higher than yourself.

Philippians 4:11-13: (NASB) ¹¹Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹²I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

I have learned the secret - the "secret" of godliness is no secret - it is living based on faith and trust in God through Christ. It is hard to do but we can get through these things through Christ who strengthens us.



The marriage covenant is not exempt from serious trauma. The principles of fidelity we abide by within our marriage covenant can also sustain us through loss. We now must **cleave to the word and will of God** to carry us and lead us forward.

Even in the face of tragedy the principles of the marriage covenant shine through as a comfort and a guide.



**With a powerful understanding of marriage in place,
what can we practically do to enhance our relationship?**

For now, we will only focus on a few of the many great answers to this question that have a clear scriptural basis. As with any covenant, a key to making it and faithfully keeping it, always has to do with *respect* for the other party. The deeper our respect for them, the more laser focused we will be to keep our covenant healthy!



Our friends Tom and Cheryl have been married 42 years. Among other things, Tom says that learning to respect each other and recognize each other's strengths has been invaluable. They co-labor together in witness activities to spread the gospel. Tom says, "I know Cheryl has insights that I don't, and I've learned to value her opinion. It also helps that Cheryl is so thoughtful. Much of her life is spent doing things for others. Her example has helped me to try to think more like that."

Cheryl adds: Love is a choice. We need to choose it every day even though some days are harder than others. Don't sweat the small stuff. In the light of eternity, most temporal things just don't matter.

It is good to remind ourselves that our lives are a public spectacle:

1 Corinthians 4:9: (KJV) *For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.*

Heavenly hosts are watching; make it a good show! Our best, feeble efforts and victories in our behavior will bring glory to God.

One last example of another serious covenant from God that changes the world:

Genesis 22:15-18: (NASB) ¹⁵*Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶and said, By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.*

How do we know this "Abrahamic promise" is a covenant?

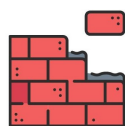
Because the New Testament clearly verifies it as a covenant from God:

Acts 3:25: (NASB) *It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*

When God makes a covenant, He keeps it! This shows His deep respect and love for His children.

Keep your eyes wide open before marriage, half shut afterwards.
— Benjamin Franklin

It is important to keep our eyes closed to the imperfections of our spouse, as none of us are perfect.



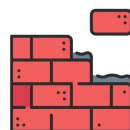
Marriage Covenant Builders submission

This first point is sure to bring a reaction in our modern day:

Ephesians 5:21-24: (NASB) ²¹*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.* ²²*Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* ²³*For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, he himself being the Savior of the body.* ²⁴*But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.*

What does this mean in a practical sense? Why does verse 21 start with submitting to each other and then the focus is on the submission of wives?

Mutual submission is important - to be subject to one another means we need to take each other's perspectives to heart and make them important. Then it talks about wives specifically submitting to their husbands. In a practical sense, there is submission, but it is a two-way street. We will see the husband's submissiveness next.



Marriage Covenant Builders agape (selfless) love

The "submissiveness" of wives CANNOT be taken out of the context of the required submissiveness of husbands:

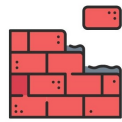
Ephesians 5:25-33: (NASB) ²⁵*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her,* ²⁶*so that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,* ²⁷*that he might present to himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.*

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church - this indicates that marriage is part of a bigger picture. It illustrates Christ and his church (his faithful followers) as husband and wife. While there is submissiveness to each other, it is dependent on the husband submitting enough to be like Christ. Each part is important - both must exist in order for this beautiful picture to work. Husbands cannot demand respect or submission of their wives if they are not also submissive to Christ and his expectations of them. The willingness to give our spouse the best of us, to put her first and to be willing to die for her is a good place to start for husbands.

How can we tell if we are doing this?

²⁸*So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;* ²⁹*for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,* ³⁰*because we are members of his body.*

Men must care for their wives the way they care for themselves. If their foot is hurt, they will protect that foot. It is the same with all other parts of the body. Men must protect their wives in the same way. While a wife is to submit to her husband, there are many things a husband must do so that his wife will be lovingly and enthusiastically submissive. He has to play his part, to serve and cherish. Jesus cherishes the church, and *so must the husband cherish his wife* - it is a vital part of marriage.

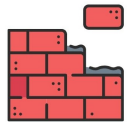


Marriage Covenant Builders

serve/nourish/cherish

The two shall become one - Jesus loves the church as his own body, and we husbands must love our wives with that same passion:

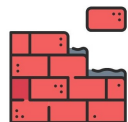
³¹For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to this wife, and the two shall become one flesh. ³²This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. ³³Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.



Marriage Covenant Builders

respect

The wife must see to it that she respects her husband - respect is so important! The husband has to be worthy of her respect. He has to live up to a lot of ideals here. Wives need only one line of advice while husbands need an entire paragraph! If we see a submissiveness in a marriage, it is because things are in order in a godly way. If we are married, this is the covenant that we have made and this is the covenant we need to keep.



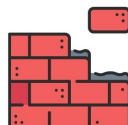
Marriage Covenant Builders

a godly character in action

Let's look deeper into how *agape* love, that selfless love, operates:

1 Corinthians 13:4-5: (NASB) ⁴Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, ⁵does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,

We hear these Scriptures so often at wedding ceremonies, we wonder if anyone actually pays attention to it! **Please see the Bonus Material for more.** These are beautiful, poetic words, but more importantly, they mean something. These words describe the highest level of love. Our godly character has to be active in a marriage - it is a Marriage Covenant Builder. If we are fighting with our flesh, we need our godly character to react to cradle and cherish, to cling and cleave to our spouse.



Marriage Covenant Builders

live with a forgiving spirit

Ephesians 4:31-32: (NASB) ³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.



Tim and Joyce have been married for 56 years. Their practical Love Notes include to be patient, flexible and have a sense of humor. We are all very different and need to show preference to the other. Laughter can get you through difficult times.



Tom and Tamra have been married for 49 years, and she offered this advice:

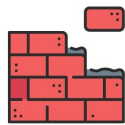
-I try not to criticize him ever to others, and he does the same. That is destructive on a marriage or any relationship.

-Every marriage can go through difficult times and it takes working through tough times to make it work. Give more than you get and be generous to each other.

-A common faith elevates the relationship since your belief structure is the framework for all the rest.



The common denominator with all our Love Note authors is a love and respect for God's will and God's ways and their common goal to be pleasing to our Heavenly Father that bonded them. When we go into marriage not assuming that divorce is an option, we first hopefully choose our partner wisely. Then, daily we need to find a way to make each other content - like the Apostle Paul said, *whether in abundance or need*. We have to build each other up spiritually and emotionally.



Marriage Covenant Builders

intentionally weave God into your marriage covenant

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12: (NASB) ⁹Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. ¹⁰For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. ¹¹Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? ¹²And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

A one-quarter inch thick three strand rope has a tensile strength of 1,700 pounds! The idea of the third strand is so important; that is the binding tie. We need to bring God into our lives as the third strand every day. He binds our lives together to make the tensile strength of the marriage much stronger than the two alone. Even if one partner is not a believer, the believing partner's reliance on God will strengthen the relationship.



Jonathan's parents - 64 year marriage

The marriage covenant is a comprehensive, experience-altering, no-holds-barred **lifelong commitment**. If treated with the respect due a covenant witnessed by God, it can bring joy, growth, happiness and exhilaration to your life. **Reach higher regarding your marriage and be blessed!**



us part.” What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. If we keep that in the forefront in our married lives our lives will truly be blessed.

*So, how vital are my marriage vows?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on February 22, 2021
Ep. 1166: How Did the Apostle Paul Handle a Slave Owner?

Bonus Material and Study Questions

A husband and a wife may disagree on many things. But they must absolutely agree on this: to never ever give up. — Marriage.com

First, a look at one more example of a covenant that God made:

Jeremiah 31:31-34: (NASB) ³¹Behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new **covenant <1285>** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³²not like the **covenant <1285>** which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My **covenant <1285>** which they broke, although I was a husband to them, declares the LORD. ³³But this is the **covenant <1285>** which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD, I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know the LORD, for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the LORD, for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

To find what word is used for this same solemn promise in the New Testament, we simply find a quotation from the Hebrew Scriptures in the New Testament:

Hebrews 8:8-9: (NASB) ⁸For finding fault with them, He says, Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will effect a new **covenant <1242>** with the house of Israel and the house of Judah; ⁹not like the **covenant <1242>** which I made with their fathers on the day when I took

them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my **covenant <1242>**, and I did not care for them, says the Lord.

Covenant: Strongs #1242 *diatheke*; properly, a disposition, i.e. (specially) a contract (especially a devisory will) KJV - covenant, testament

Next, a look at the meanings of the words used to describe love in action:

1 Corinthians 13:4-5: (NRSV) ⁴Love is **patient <3114>**; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

Love is patient:

Patient: Strongs #3114 *makrothumeo*, to be long-spirited, i.e. (objectively) forbearing or (subjectively) patient

Developing this level of patience means a willingness to be non-reactive, to be willing to wait for a situation to completely unfold, to be disciplined in holding back. This patience gives the benefit of the doubt and can only truly be displayed by mankind through a humble spirit.

Clothing ourselves with grace:

Colossians 3:8-15: (NRSV) ⁸But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices ¹⁰and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. ¹¹In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all! ¹²As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and **patience <3115>**. ¹³Bear 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. ¹⁴Above all clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

Love is kind:

Kind: Strongs #5541 *chresteuomai*; to show oneself useful, i.e. act benevolently, disposition to do good, an act of kindness, a generous gift

Luke 6:35-36: (NRSV) ³⁵But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Ephesians 4:32: (NRSV) and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

1 John 3:17-18: (NRSV) ¹⁷How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? ¹⁸Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

Love is not envious:

Envious: Strongs #2206 *zeloo* or *zeleuo*; to have warmth of feeling for or against, 1) to burn with zeal 1a) to be heated or to boil with envy, hatred, anger 1a1) in a good sense, to be zealous in the pursuit of good 1b) to desire earnestly, pursue

James 4:1-5: (NRSV) ¹Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? ²You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. ⁴Adulterers! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a

friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you suppose that it is for nothing that the scripture says, God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?

Not boastful:

Boastful: Strong's #4068 *perpereuomai*; middle voice from *perperos* (braggart; perhaps by reduplication of the base of 4008); to boast: AV-vaunt itself 1; 1) to boast one's self 2) a self display, employing rhetorical embellishments in extolling one's self excessively

Proverbs 13:9-11: (NRSV) ⁹The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked goes out. ¹⁰By insolence the heedless make strife, but wisdom is with those who take advice. ¹¹Wealth hastily gotten will dwindle, but those who gather little by little will increase it.

Proverbs 16:18-19: (NIV) ¹⁸Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. ¹⁹Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.

Proverbs 29:23: (NIV) A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor.

Proverbs 21:19: (NIV) Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife.

Proverbs 26:21: (NIV) As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.

Not arrogant:

Arrogant: Strong's #5448 *phusioo*; from 5449 in the primary sense of blowing; to inflate, i.e. (figuratively) make proud (haughty), 1) to make natural, to cause a thing to pass into nature 2) to inflate, blow up, to cause to swell up 2a) to puff up, make proud 2b) to be puffed up, to bear one's self loftily, be proud

1 Corinthians 4:6-10: (NRSV) ⁶I have applied all this to Apollos and myself for your benefit, brothers and sisters, so that you may learn through us the meaning of the saying, Nothing beyond what is written, so that none of you will be puffed up in favor of one against another. ⁷For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift? ⁸Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Quite apart from us you have become kings! Indeed, I wish that you had become kings, so that we might be kings with you! ⁹For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, as though sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to mortals. ¹⁰We are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute.

1 Corinthians 8:1-3: (NRSV) ¹Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that all of us possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. ²Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; ³but anyone who loves God is known by him.

Not rude:

Rude: Strong's #807 *aschemoneo*; behave (one's) self uncomely, behave (one's) self unseemly, to act unbecomingly

1 Corinthians 11:17-22: (NRSV) ¹⁷Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. ¹⁹Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. ²⁰When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. ²¹For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. ²²What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!



It does not insist on its own way:

Seek: Strong's #2212 *zētēō*; of uncertain affinity; to seek (literally or figuratively); specially, (by Hebraism) to worship (God), or (in a bad sense) to plot (against life):--be (go) about, desire, endeavour, enquire (for), require, (X will) seek (after, for, means)

Its own: Strong's #1438 *heautoû*; him- (her-, it-, them-, also (in conjunction with the personal pronoun of the other persons) my-, thy-, our-, your-) self (selves), etc.:--alone, her (own, -self), (he) himself, his (own), itself, one (to) another, our (thine) own(-selves), + that she had, their (own, own selves), (of) them(-selves), they, thyself, you, your (own, own conceits, own selves, -selves).

The KJV reads, *seeketh not her own*. The meaning here is love is not selfish, it does not seek to have its rights over others.

Philippians 2:3: (KJV) *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

Romans 12:3-10: (NRSV) ³*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. ⁹Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.*

It is not irritable:

Irritable: Strong's #3947 *paroxuno*; 1) to make sharp, sharpen 1a) to stimulate, spur on, urge 1b) to irritate, provoke, arouse to anger 1b1) to scorn, despise 1b2) provoke, make angry 1b3) to exasperate, to burn with anger

Colossians 3:16-25: (NRSV) ¹⁶*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. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. ¹⁸Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly. ²⁰Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. ²¹Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart. ²²Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. ²³Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, ²⁴since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve^ε the Lord Christ. ²⁵For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality.*

Not resentful:

Thinketh: Strong's #3049 *logizomai*; to take an inventory, i.e. estimate (literally or figuratively):--conclude, (ac-)count (of), + despise, esteem, impute, lay, number, reason, reckon, suppose, think (on)

Evil: Strong's #2556 *kakos*; worthless (intrinsically, such; whereas 4190 properly refers to effects), i.e. (subjectively) depraved, or (objectively) injurious: bad, evil, harm, ill, noisome, wicked

The KJV reads *thinketh no evil*. Resentment comes from thinking badly of, resenting, another's gain or elevation. This leads to seeking to do someone harm, to take advantage in some way.



Philippians 4:8: (ASV) *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

Romans 14:13-15: (NRSV) ¹³*Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another* ¹⁴*I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.* ¹⁵*If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died.*

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to **22828** to get started.



Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1165: How Vital Are My Vows of Marriage?

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/1165-marriage/>

See:



1. How is marriage described in the Bible? What does this teach about how we should approach marriage? (See Genesis 2:22-25, 9:11-13, Joshua 22:5, Malachi 2:13-16)
2. What can God's covenant with Israel teach us about our covenant of marriage? (See Genesis 17:7-8, Deuteronomy 30:3, Isaiah 54:5, Jeremiah 3:14, Ezekiel 11:17)
3. How is the covenant of discipleship similar to the covenant of marriage? (See Psalms 116:12-15, Luke 9:23, Romans 12:1) How are they different?
4. What is a "covenant of God?" What is an example of such a covenant found in the Bible? (See Proverbs 2:11,16-17, Matthew Poole's Commentary, 1 Samuel 20:8, 2 Samuel 9:7)
5. According to the Bible, why is the marriage covenant so important? (See Proverbs 2:11, 16-17, Mark 10:2-9)
6. How can we cope with the loss of a spouse? What can we do to help others cope? (See Isaiah 41:10, 1 Kings 17:7-16, Luke 2:36, 7:11, 18:3, 21:1-4, 1 Peter 4:12-13)
7. What can we keep in mind to move forward after such a tragic loss? Why is a bush in the desert an apt metaphor for someone who has lost a spouse? What does the tree planted by the river represent? (See Jeremiah 17:5-8, Romans 8:31, Philippians 4:11-13, 1 Timothy 6:6-11, 1 Peter 5:6-7)
8. What steps can we take to strengthen our marriage relationship? Discuss each of the Marriage Covenant Builders: (See Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, 1 Corinthians 4:9, 13:4-5, Ephesians 4:31-32, 5:21-33)
9. What does marriage mean to you? How do you show its importance to your spouse?
10. What will you do strengthen your marriage relationship spiritually?