

NOT FOR RESALE

A Vision For Marriage

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A VISION FOR MARRIAGE:

Marriage is an institution that has been abused, misrepresented, misinterpreted, misapplied, and seen as a thing for the non-liberated. This is at most a concept prevalent in the throwaway society. In this society, when something is broken, the pain and time to repair it are irrelevant. This mindset has hit marriage as an institution badly. A man or woman throws away each other in a marriage relationship today without any sense of regret. Society no longer bothers about the sanctity of marriage.

In fact more shocking is the statistics coming from the Christian Church where the rate of marriage breakdowns now exceeds that of those living without Christ. I think churchianity is a big evil today. Again, this is a symptom of how religion has made the Christian Church to miss God's plan for marriage. Marriage is supposed to be like the three-legged stool where a man and woman are married to God first before thinking of marrying themselves as husband and wife. It is the responsibility of each individual to maintain the vertical relationship with God and the horizontal relationship with the husband or wife.

The VISION FOR MARRIAGE is very timely. God will continue to speak to those who are willing and those not willing to hear Him as a testimony for and against the parties even as His judgment has already started in the house. Read this book and fireproof your marriage. Those who succeeded in pulling down their own marriages can still rebuild on the on the devastated foundation they have created. The marriage city on the devastated foundation can still give light, provide a home for the homeless and so forth. Marriage must be done and maintained as given by God. **NO COMPROMISE!** Larry and Carol are the very powerful single voice coming directly from God's throne. I am deeply moved with this book. **ALL** marriage candidates need this book so as to enjoy the reality of marriage today. This is a manual calling us back to the Marriage as it was done in the Garden of Eden.

Finally, read this book and re-read it and pass the skills and blessings to your generations as we await the second coming of

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Christ to collect the faithful. This is a masterpiece material for all, even celibates. I thank God for the lifestyle and commitment exhibited by the Chkoreffs. If your marriage is already in the garbage bin, just pick it up, dust it off and read this book for life skills that will make you live in heaven on earth. Tell a friend and go for it!

See you at the finishing line!

John Brown Okwii, PhD
ISOB Ministry Board Member and President of the LAWNA
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Forward

There is no shortage of books about marriage, even Christian marriage. This little booklet is not intended to be an all-inclusive resource on marriage. Rather it is to give the reader a vision of the God kind of marriage.

You may rather read a marriage book by authors who have had perfect marriages and have never been divorced. We understand that. We believe in the perfect marriage with no divorce. However, we also believe that God redeems those who have gone through that tragedy, and wants to set them on the right path for the rest of their lives without condemnation or limitation.

We do not believe that divorce is God's best. However, even Jesus said that there was such a thing as a Scriptural divorce (Matthew 19:9). Ezra set up a divorce court (Ezra chapter 10). On the other hand, we know about marriages that have endured adultery and have not only survived but have become heavenly. The balance is; you need to have a vital relationship with God and hear from Him about every decision in your life. God has a customized plan for every person.

In spite of the failures we have experienced, we feel that we have something to offer resulting from our 27 years (in 2009) of heavenly marriage. Ours is one of those marriages that was not only ordained by God, but has been blessed by Him.

The essence of this book is to compare the types of marriages that the "world's system" practices, with the original idea that God had in mind for two people. The result that God had in mind was that two people would actually change their identity, their spiritual make up and become one person.

We have become one!

“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” (Ephesians 5:31-32).

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Credits.

We have been greatly inspired by two godly teachers not only in our own personal marriage, but also for much of the content of this booklet.

Dr. Mark Rutland.

Dr Rutland is a former pastor, evangelist, missionary, past president of Southeastern University, and presently president of Oral Roberts University. His marriage conferences and other teachings on marriage have been very valuable, and you will notice that we quote him often.

Derek Prince.

Derek Prince, now in Heaven, has been one of our favorite teachers for many years. Several pages from his book on marriage are quoted here.

Both of these great men of God have emphasized the covenant aspect for a godly marriage, which we believe to be the key, the most important and often misunderstood, ingredient for marriage.

Thanks to:***Tracey Diaz.***

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editing and proofing

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A Vision for Marriage Chapter One Overview

Do you remember looking at your parent's wedding pictures when you were a child? Do you remember your own wedding day? Or maybe you are single and you dream that one day you will be a bride/groom yourself. No matter where you live or what ethnic background you come from, weddings are a big celebration in any culture, and this event is also a first step on a journey called *Marriage*. Most of us think of marriage as “happily ever after,” a happy end of a fairytale, but in reality, it’s not always like that. Look at these sobering facts. In the USA, 50% of all marriages fail, and this percentage is almost the same inside the church population. This has caused unbelievers to say that traditional marriage is a mistake. Feminists have taken that position due to the horrible abuse experienced by many women. Their position says: “You can’t depend upon a man.” Actually, men have also been abused, but not to the same degree. Women have been abused as children by fathers and then as adults by husbands. This began after the Fall when Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden.

Satan and the world have turned marriage upside down, but God had a plan and there is a mystery that brings heaven to earth.

You need to drop your prejudice and open your hearts to the Word of God. Perhaps the main reason that so many Christian marriages do not operate in the way God desires is that the parties simply do not understand God's design for marriage.

God’s blueprint is heaven on earth. Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10, KJV). Heaven’s blueprint for marriage is absolutely fantastic, and it is possible to have that perfect pattern here on earth, *nearly perfect that is*.

God has set His standard for marriage from the beginning of creation, but people could not keep it up. The form of marriage that had become acceptable in Israel in the times of the Old

Testament was lower than God's standard. God's original purpose was expressed when He created Adam and Eve. In that union they had lost their separate identities and became "one flesh." It is the purpose of Jesus to restore marriage in the lives of His disciples to the original standard revealed at the time of creation, i.e., a blood covenant relationship.

In Matthew 19:3-9 Jesus said what He did about divorce and marriage because the religious men of His days were marrying just to obtain a possession and a slave. When the woman no longer pleased them, they hid behind Moses' law and obtained a divorce. Jesus told them that such practices were sinful and they had not avoided breaking the Law.

We hope that this book will help you to discover God's original design for marriage.

If you are married, we hope that your marriage covenant will be restored and you and your spouse will be able to experience heaven on earth.

If you have been divorced, it matters not whether it was your fault or the other person's. What matters is that God wants to heal you from the wounds caused by this trauma. He wants you to get on with your life and be fruitful in His Kingdom. He will use your divorce for His glory if you allow Him. If you do not go through the healing of the wounds caused by your past marriage, or even your present one, you will never be happy whether married or single!

If you have never been married, this series will also apply to you, to use this as a pattern for your future marriage, if God has one in mind for you.

This book covers the following aspects:

1. All godly relationships in the Bible are covenant based.
2. God's blueprint for marriage is a covenant relationship.
3. A covenant cannot exist or be maintained without two deaths and without blood.
4. Covenant is a mystery. One cannot understand it without preparation and diligent seeking.

5. A marriage covenant involves dying to self for the purpose of giving to the other person, agape love.
6. After the “death” God supplies the supernatural element, resurrection!
7. If you have not had the covenant relationship, you have been wounded, or you have wounded another.
8. There is healing for these wounds through the fact that Jesus was wounded on the inside for these abuses from you and against you.
9. The solutions are repentance and forgiveness. The goal is to allow Jesus to open the wounds and heal them. This can be painful, but otherwise you will always have a scab instead of a scar.
10. No matter where you stand, if you are still single, married or divorced, God can make your life “heaven on earth.”
11. In chapter 2 we will address the fact that you cannot love another person with agape love unless you have experienced it yourself
12. In chapters 2 and 3, we will talk more about blood covenants in general and some practical ways of ministering to your spouse.
. We go into the depths of the love of God at the Cross.

God’s original design is a hidden mystery, and the discovery of that mystery takes preparation by you.

You must prepare yourself to discover this mystery. There is a key, and the key is hidden.

Psalm 25:12-14 says,

“12 Who is the man that fears the LORD? Him shall He teach in the way He chooses.

13 He himself shall dwell in prosperity, And his descendants shall inherit the earth.

14 The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, And He will show them His covenant.”

How do you prepare yourself?

God wants to reveal the mystery to you, but you must make the effort. The effort lies in seeking, with all of your heart, an

intimate relationship with God and allowing Him to change you into His likeness.

God reveals His mysteries to those who fear Him.

The fear of the Lord is the key to unlock the mystery of the covenant. Submit to God, obey Him, repent, drop pride, be teachable, listen to God, take up your cross and determine to live the love life at any cost. This does not mean to live without boundaries for outsiders, or boundaries where there is abuse.

Psalm 24 indicates that those who have a pure heart and clean hands will qualify to “see” God. When He is “seen” you are changed!

Malachi talks about the attributes that prove that there is no fear of the Lord. Malachi 3:5 says, “‘And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien – because they do not fear Me,’ says the LORD of hosts.”

Here is what you will discover. I can write about the mystery here and wet your appetite, but in the end, God must reveal it to you in revelation knowledge, revealing the mystery to you.

Marriage was designed as a covenant relationship.

Typically people look to one another on how they can make “me” happy. Covenant is a commitment on how I can meet your needs, and die to my own needs. There are no godly relationships in the Bible without a covenant, a blood covenant. There is no such thing as a covenant without the “death” of both parties.

Covenant brings two into oneness. Look again at God’s blueprint for that oneness. Malachi 2:15 included the statement, “But did He not make them one...?”

Jesus took up His Cross and died for our sinful nature. He took our fallen nature and died with it. That was His part of the covenant.

However, there must be two deaths. Unless you take up your cross, you cannot partake of His blood covenant benefits. Luke

9:23-24 says, “Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.’”

The practical application in a covenant marriage is this: Both parties must “die” to their own selfish desires, and must be committed to “do something” for the benefit of the other person – “I will do something, or I will die. I will do this thing when it means “death” to my own wants.”

Some people think that commitment means I will NOT do something. They say, “I promise to never leave you.” That is good, but there is much more to it. It means I WILL do something. Who wants a divorce when both spouses are pleasing one another?

Truly committed person says: “Your interests take precedent over my interests. I no longer live for myself; I live for you. I will take time to listen to you, to seek your benefits, to make your life more fulfilled, more significant, to lift you up and seek your best, even at the expense of my own interest.”

Relationships are the most important thing to God. Men have missed it totally for the most part, and women are burned out trying to keep it going. Men, how can you expect your wife to crave you when your head is buried in the newspaper, TV, or at the golf course all the time? Then you wonder why the romance is gone!

Women, how do you expect for your husband to be the “boyfriend” he was before you married, when you are always criticizing him to his face and at the ladies Bible study?

Here is the payoff! Resurrection is supernatural. It is the element that God adds! God will make the two one!

People have not experienced heaven on earth in their marriage because they have not allowed resurrection to take place. Only God can take two people who die to themselves and resurrect them into something beautiful. God will make the two one! Without resurrection, you are in a compromised marriage, one that is based upon the kingdom of this world, over which Satan is the prince.

Marriage unity brings heaven to earth!

Psalm 133 indicates that when we dwell together in unity that God commands a blessing and brings us to Zion, or His presence. Husbands and wives must seek together. Unity in the marriage brings an awesome blessing.

Ephesians 5:22-32 talks about the mystery.

“22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

27 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.

28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

Notice the difference between the commands given to the wife and the husband. While the wife is supposed to give or submit herself to the husband, the husband is called to give himself for the wife. Christ gave Himself for us, which makes us rush to give ourselves to Him. This is the marriage pattern. It seems to me that the initiative is with the husband as it was with Christ!

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You both must “die” to your own interests, and then watch God do a supernatural resurrection where two become one. Resurrection depends upon death first. How can you expect a resurrected blood covenant marriage unless you both die first?

Actually it is a threefold relationship.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 says,

“9 Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor.

10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up.

11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone?

12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

We first must take up our cross with Jesus. Then we are automatically in right relationship with our spouse. The spouse does the same thing, and the result is a threefold cord. Rope-makers know that a threefold cord is the strongest. They can add and make it four, five or six fold, and the strength does not increase. A two-fold cord is very weak. That is a mystery!!

You may be taking your marriage with less seriousness than you should be doing.

You may have just “tuned out” and are just trying to make it. However, when judgment time comes, you will be judged for your degree of taking up your cross with Jesus. That is something eternal, and fearful. So, wake up and do the “dying” you owe to Jesus. You will have eternal rewards, and chances are you will have a reward in this world as well.

The law of sowing and reaping applies here. Remember the passage from Galatians that says God is not mocked, but whatsoever one sows, that and that only is what he will reap? (see Galatians 6:7) If you are indifferent or perhaps even worse than that towards your spouse, watch out, the harvest is coming and it will not be a good one!

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It sounds good, but how do I do this?

1. Seek God. Seek His face and use discipline in your relationship skills with Him.
2. Be honest with one another and with God.
3. Communicate with your spouse and with God.
4. Listen to your spouse and to God.
5. Don't criticize.
6. Learn the other's "love language" or communication style. Ask the Holy Spirit to be the translator.
7. If you are not more concerned with God's will and the welfare of your spouse than your own, then repent and ask for forgiveness.

What if you are in a "one sided" marriage that looks hopeless?

What if you got married without God's guidance? What if your spouse is no longer interested in your marriage or in a relationship with God? What if your spouse is abusive? There are no easy answers, but here are a few suggestions.

Caution, danger!

If you despise your spouse who is continually taking up his/her cross and attempting to please God by laying down his/her life for you and God, I have a warning for you. If you continually take advantage of your spouse or take them for granted by not taking up your cross for Jesus and your spouse, you are in for some judgment and suffering!

God will not let you off so easy. If you have been doing this, then quickly turn around; ask for forgiveness (on your hands and knees), and God will bless you beyond measure.

If you have a spouse who is taking advantage of your laying down your life, God will care for you. You cannot lose by trying.

1. God is very serious about abuse and does not require you to remain in an abusive relationship.

2. Exactly what you should do cannot be expressed by a principle. You must hear from God for yourself! Principles do not work here because every situation is customized! However, chances are that you got into your mess by not hearing from God,

so now is the time to hear from Him. He has the solution, for sure! He will not forsake you. When you are desperate enough, you will hear Him speaking to you because He loves you and wants the best for you.

3. If you have taken up your cross and gone deep with the Lord you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. You are in covenant with Him and He is jealous over you. He will give you an abundant life. I have seen this principle operate many times. It works; you will not lose if you continually stay in touch with Him! This is a time when simple principles will not work; you must see Him and hear from Him!

If you have not been in a totally committed covenant marriage, Satan has his license to do as he pleases! Satan has every right to operate in a covenant transgressor's life. However, forgiveness and repentance will nullify Satan's power.

Jeremiah 34:18-20 says,

“18 ‘And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it--

19 ‘the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf--

20 ‘I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. Their dead bodies shall be for meat for the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the earth.”

The bottom line.

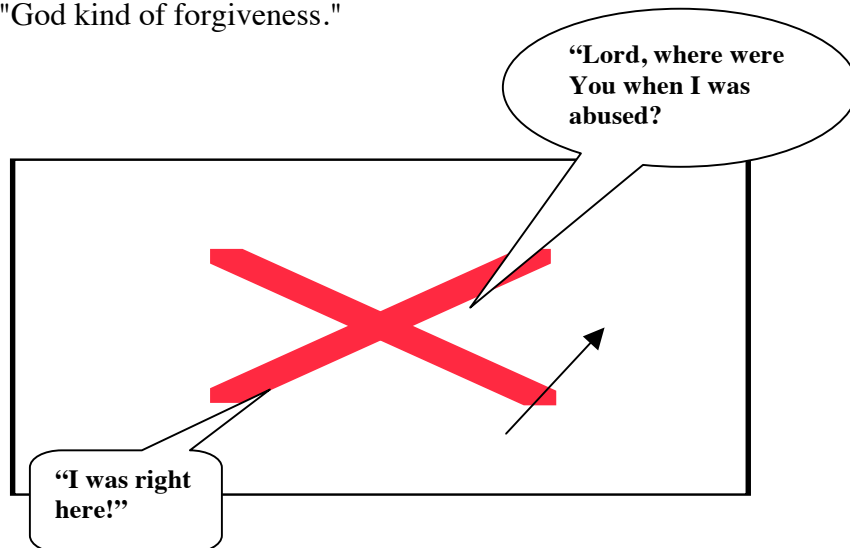
We are called to take up our cross and live the love life just because Jesus purchased us and He owns us. He wants to live His life through you. If you do not allow Him to do so, you will have to answer to Him. What is at stake is much more than marriage.

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We need inner healing from the wounds. Jesus was there when you were wounded and He bore those wounds. When you agree with that, it is called forgiveness, and you are healed.

We wound others and others wound us when one party or the other sins against the other. One of the most powerful forms of wounds is that of rejection. Normally, rejection from a father or mother is the worst, however, rejection from a spouse is also very powerful.

The cure for you is forgiveness. However, it must be the "God kind of forgiveness."



Isaiah 53:3-8 says, "He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its

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shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.”

HOMEWORK

Study Ephesians 5:22-32 and Isaiah 53. Make a list of your perceived wounds, and the wounds you have afflicted and practice forgiveness by putting those sins on Jesus. See Him as the One who was between you and your victim or perpetrator, the One who BORE your sins.

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A Vision for Marriage

Chapter Two

How can you love another when you have never received love?

Before answering that question, let us do a quick review of what we saw in Chapter 1.

Without a sacrifice there can be no covenant, without a covenant there can be no relationship, every marriage relationship that is not based upon this is not really a marriage. The World has the wrong concept of marriage.

Marriage is a relationship that is supposed to be ordained by God.

In a Biblical marriage God brings the wife to the husband. A Biblical marriage is based upon a covenant. All relationships designed by God are based upon a covenant. Marriage was designed as a covenant relationship. Marriage covenants are blood covenants, and without death by both parties, blood actually shed by both parties, there is no covenant. When this design is not maintained, it results in deep wounds that are caused by the resulting rejection. However, Jesus bore those wounds for you. There is healing for failures.

This is a model for real covenants. They are only valid through death. "For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives" (Hebrews 9:16-17). If your marriage has not worked out, then perhaps there have not been covenant type deaths!

In America, many people live in homes that are within what we call a housing subdivision. When one purchases the home, he/she enters into a contract with the seller and buys the house. However, after the purchase they must sign Subdivision Covenants. These covenants tell you how to relate to your neighbors. The covenants restrict what kind of changes you may make to your house. It's about relationships. They will only permit certain behavior, which is intended to make the relationship between neighbors compatible. Most ungodly marriages are like contracts rather than covenants.

Take a lesson from various cultures.

To begin with, no culture has the right idea about marriage, therefore what I am stating here is without bias or prejudice.

Dr. Mark Rutland, former pastor, evangelist, missionary, president of Southeastern University, and presently president of Oral Roberts University, spent a good deal of his life in West Africa. He states that marriage in that culture is like a man purchasing a garden. The owner buys it for the fruit it can give to him. He therefore may purchase many wives. The fruit could be children and some sort of slavery and servanthood to get his own selfish needs met.

In polygamy, the children have no intimacy with the father, only the mother. This causes many inner wounds, which later the children might medicate with all sorts of ungodly lifestyles for example drug addictions. The children compete with one another for the father's attention. The woman is totally degraded and treated as a piece of real estate. The husband is a landlord.

I know for sure, that many marriages in Western cultures have the same flavor; this pattern is not limited to West Africa. We have seen many examples of it here in America, and yes, even within the church culture. These types of relationships were born of Satan's original idea of taking people into slavery.

Many Western cultures have the marriage concept likened not so much to a contract of purchase but more like a corporate merger. The expectations of each party are set out in contract, maybe written but more often verbal. Each party has an obligation to fulfill. While this does not degrade the woman to the same degree as the example given above, it cheapens the marriage and often the woman gets the bad end of the deal. Actually, both parties lose. This corporate merger idea is, "It is all about me and how this relationship can benefit me." It consists of selfish motives, there is no laying down of lives and it will make both parties miserable.

In a true Biblical covenant marriage, God's power is unleashed in its resurrection glory; only if, both parties have died to their own selfish desires. This is the mystery; this is the miracle. This is the two becoming one as in Ephesians chapter 5. How do the two become one? By the resurrection power of Jesus operating on two people who have laid down their lives!!

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The following passage is quoted from Derek Prince's book, The Marriage Covenant.

¹ “The nature of Covenant.

The nature of covenant is one of the jealously guarded secrets of Scripture. It is a “pearl” which God will not cast to the careless (see Matthew 7:6). It is something holy which God will not unveil to the impure. In Psalm 25:14, David says, “The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him, and He will make them know His covenant.” The secret of covenant must be approached in the reverent fear of God. It is withheld from those who approach with any other attitude.

Furthermore, an understanding of covenant requires careful, thorough study of Scripture. It takes time and concentration. In Proverbs 2:4, Solomon states that those who desire discernment and understanding must “seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures.” This implies strenuous effort. Just as the earth does not yield up her treasures to the superficial observer, so Scripture yields up the true understanding of covenant only to those who are willing to go below the surface and to devote time and study to their search.

The definition of Covenant.

There are two basic words in Scripture for covenant. The Greek word used in the New Testament is diatheke. The Hebrew word, used in the Old Testament., is b'rit (or b'rith). This Hebrew word occurs in the name of the well-known Jewish organization, B'nai b'rith, which means, literally, “Sons of Covenant.” Each of these words – diatheke in Greek and b'rit in Hebrew – is regularly translated by two different English words: covenant and testament. The Hebrew word b'rit means to BIND. Diatheke means to set something out in order or the setting forth of specific terms and conditions.

¹ Quoted from: Prince, Derek. *The Marriage Covenant*. Whitaker House Publishers, New Kensington, PA, 1978 – Pages 27-31

Covenant can be both horizontal and vertical.

In Scripture, we find two different types of covenant. One is on the horizontal plane, as covenant between two human beings. This more nearly approaches the concept of a contract. For instance, in 1 Kings 5:12, we read about Solomon making a covenant with Hiram, the king of Tyre. By this covenant, Solomon and Hiram committed themselves to mutual friendship and established the conditions upon which Hiram would supply Solomon with material and labor for the building of the temple.

Although this form of covenant was only on the human level – between two kings – it is interesting to note that later on, when God declared through the prophet Amos that He would bring judgment on the kingdom of Tyre, one reason that He gave was that “they did not remember the covenant of brotherhood” – that is, the covenant made between Solomon and Hiram (see Amos 1:9). So we see that, even on the human level, God considers the breaking of a covenant a very serious matter and one that will bring judgment on the guilty party.”

Covenant on God’s level is much more profound. Covenant is the basis of relationship. Every permanent relationship with God and man is always based upon covenant.

² *“However, beyond that, the main use of covenant in Scripture is not as a contract between two human beings on the horizontal plane, but as a relationship sovereignty initiated by God Himself, with man, in which the two parties are not on the same level. Essentially, **a covenant expresses a relationship which God Himself sovereignty initiates out of His own choice and decision.** He defines the terms on which He is prepared to enter into that relationship with man. We need to emphasize that the initiative is wholly with God and the terms are set exclusively by God. Man’s part is simply to respond to*

² Quoted from: Prince, Derek. *The Marriage Covenant*, Whitaker House Publishers, New Kensington, PA, 1978 – Page 31

God's offer of a covenant and to accept the relationship which that covenant brings with it. Man does not set the terms nor does he ever initiate the relationship."

God's view.

Ancient tribes have endeavored to copy God's type of covenant with one another. God's type of covenant actually changes and exchanges His nature with the very nature of mere man.

Psalms 50:1-5, NIV, says,

"1 A psalm of Asaph. The Mighty One, God, the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets.

2 From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth.

3 Our God comes and will not be silent; a fire devours before him, and around him a tempest rages.

4 He summons the heavens above, and the earth, that he may judge his people:

5 "Gather to me my consecrated ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

Here in the passage of Scripture the word "consecrated ones" is translated *hasid*. It is the word that gives us Hasidic Judaism, which is the most intense and dedicated form of Orthodox Judaism. A Hasid is a person whose life is totally wrapped up in God. He is a person who exists only for God. Those totally consecrated ones referred to in this passage are those who have made a covenant with God by sacrifice. There it is again, no sacrifice, no covenant!

Please recall in Chapter 1, we quoted Jeremiah 34:18-20 which indicated that covenant breakers would be left to the hands of their enemies.

You can't give something you have not received.

So many people are so wounded and in such bondage before they enter into marriage that they cannot possibly love the other person. Often they do not even have a healthy love for themselves. Perhaps they have never received love from another, especially their parents, and maybe they have not really had a revelation of the love of God.

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The Scripture tells us, in 1 John chapter 3, that when we see Him, we will become like Him. Until we see Him we are blinded. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, “whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” And if we are blinded we cannot see Him.

So which comes first?

“But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns [repents] to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord ” (2 Corinthians 3:15-18).

Simply turning to the Lord, or repenting from your independence will allow you to see, with spiritual eyes, the love of God for you. Then as verse 3:18 says, in that seeing you will be changed, from glory to glory, or in other words, in progressive steps of more seeing and more changing. As you are changed, you will become more like Jesus and His agape love will begin to spill out of you.

Paul prayed in Ephesians chapter 3 that the Ephesians would realize the love of God by experience, beyond mere cognitive knowledge.

Ephesians 3:16-19 (Amplified Bible) says,

“May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the [Holy] Spirit [Himself indwelling your innermost being and personality]. May Christ through your faith [actually] dwell [settle down, abide, make His permanent home] in your hearts! May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love, That you may have the power and be strong to apprehend and grasp with all the saints [God's devoted people, the experience of that love] what is the breadth and length and height and depth [of it];

[That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that

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you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]!”

The Cross of Jesus is really the ultimate love of God!

“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him” (1 John 4:9).

The Cross is what gave us the potential of going back to what normal mankind was meant to be, a clay vessel filled with the Spirit of God.

You might say, “How does that demonstrate love?” Ephesians 5:25 says that Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. The Church is His bride, and you are an integral part of Her.

God looked at you and me and knew that our nature had to be swapped for a clean and holy nature in order for the Holy Spirit to again reside in us as it did in the first man, Adam. As rotten as mankind had become, God expressed His love by allowing that rotten nature to be put on Him. He suffered, through Jesus the Creator, not only the horrible sin nature of all mankind, but also its consequences, hell itself, so that we would not have to experience those things. That is love, my brothers and sisters!

The picture that I would like to use for this covenant is the blood covenant that was expressed to Abram.

“...that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:14).

What was the blessing of Abraham?

As promised, it was the Holy Spirit going back into mankind, and mankind's sinful spirit going into Jesus; a blood covenant exchange!

Look at this in Genesis 15:

12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him.

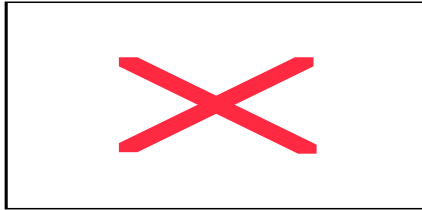
13 Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years

14 And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

15 Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.

16 But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.



Here is what most likely happened in those days in the blood covenant ditch.

Each party would walk the ditch towards the other, each proclaiming the blessings if the covenant conditions were kept and the curses if the conditions were not kept. As they reached each other they would often even press an open wound to the other's open wound, often in their wrists. They would exchange coats, weapons and pledges. Sometimes they would exchange rings and signets. They would exchange weaknesses and strengths and they would become more closely related than their “milk” brothers.

Why did God put Abram to sleep?

If Abram had walked through this blood covenant ditch to exchange his curses for God's blessings, it would not have worked. Why? It was because Abram was unable to keep his end of the bargain. He would have failed in the promise, or at least his children would have failed, and for sure, you and I, as his spiritual children have failed.

How did God deal with this? How did God, in His mercy and passion to bless Abram and you and me, pull this off?

I submit that the two persons who walked the blood covenant ditch were the Holy Spirit representing the Father, and Jesus representing Abram and you and me! Notice, the two people were

a “smoking oven and a burning torch.” Abram saw this entire ceremony while in a deep sleep; he had little to do with it.

Upon looking up the Hebrew word implication of the words “smoking oven and a burning torch” it seems to indicate the fire of God’s wrath. We know that God’s entire wrath was put upon Jesus at the Cross, in order to allow God to offer us His blessing. That is what happened in a pre-figure, or as a shadow of the future work of Jesus, in that bloody trench.

I don’t think that it is a stretch to say that God appeared unto Abram as recorded in Genesis chapters 12-15 as the incarnated Jesus, the crucified and resurrected One. James 1:17, as well as many other Scriptures, tells us that God never changes. We also know that Jesus was crucified before the foundation of the world (see Revelation 13:8). Also in John 8:56, Jesus said that Abraham saw His incarnation.

Paraphrasing the unsaid message may be like this: “Okay, son, I want to bless you with children so that I may have my purpose done on this earth, which is to purchase mankind back from Satan. It is going to take the life of My Son to accomplish this because He is the only perfect One with whom I can make covenant. If you were to walk this ditch, you would fail, you would be without child and My Messiah could not come to redeem you and your descendents. But if My Son, Jesus, were to walk this ditch on your behalf, then, when you and your descendents do indeed fail, My Son will die on their behalf.” Now that is Good News! That is love!

God has a deep-seated longing to love you that He is aching to satisfy.

Ephesians 2:4 (Amplified Bible) says, “But God – so rich is He in His mercy! Because of and in order to satisfy the great and wonderful and intense love with which He loved us.” The next verse states that even while we were dead in our sins He made us alive in Him, and we were saved by grace, etc. This aching love will become your aching love for your spouse when Jesus changes you.

The end purpose of a blood covenant is union, or common union, sometimes called communion.

The sacrifice upon which the covenant of Christian marriage is based is the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf. He is the sacrifice through which by faith a man and a woman can pass into the relationship of marriage as God Himself ordained. Just as the Lord passed through the pieces in the ditch, so a man and a woman pass through the death of Jesus on their behalf into a totally new life and a totally new relationship, which is impossible without the Cross.

Here are the three successful phases in the outworking of this relationship.

1. ***A life is laid down.*** Each lays down his/her life for the other. Each looks back at the Cross and says *that* death was my death. I am no longer living for myself. Everything each party has is 100% for the other, no holding back.

2. ***Out of death comes new life.*** Each now lives out that new life in and through the other. Each says to the other, “I live my life through you. You are the expression of **what I am.**”

3. ***Covenant is consummated by physical union.*** The word used to describe it is *know*. Adam *knew* Eve and she bore children. Where there is an illicit relationship, one in which God did not approve, it says, “he laid with her.” It is possible to have sexual intercourse and never know someone at a deep covenant level.

This brings forth fruit.

Without union there can be no fruit. Covenant leads to shared life and fruitfulness. Life that is not shared remains sterile and fruitless.

The result of union is unity. Psalm 133 states that God commands a blessing and allows us to live in Zion, His presence, when unity exists. Everything is blessed, not just the marriage, but vocations, ministry, children, finances and health; everything!

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing – life forevermore” (Psalms 133:1-3).

Here is where we are going with this.

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If you have been or are in a marriage that was not based upon covenant relationship where each party did not die to serve the other, you have wounds. Perhaps rejection is the most common. You should forgive the other and ask to be forgiven for your part. This forgiveness, two-way forgiveness, needs to be first with God and then with the other party. If you have a strained relationship with a former spouse, perhaps a letter would be better than personal contact.

Healing comes by recognizing your sin, two ways, and recognizing that Jesus bore the sin instead of you, your victim or your perpetrator. By two ways I mean, that the sin perpetrated against you and the sin that you perpetrated against another, both of these, have been borne by Jesus.

Don't be so surprised if your current marriage is not like this blueprint. No one is perfect. The main thing is for you to make up your mind that you will strive for a covenant marriage.

You need to humble yourself and not attempt to look so perfect and without fault. This will do more to change your spouse than trying to blame him/her. Then, you actually need to confess before God and your spouse your shortcomings and tell them both that you are willing to change. Remember, God can change you if you repent, because repentance allows you to see Him, and seeing Him will change you. God is not able to work with a proud person who is always defending himself or herself and blaming the other.

If you find yourself unable, emotionally dead, or unwilling to carry out your end of the marriage covenant, you first need to go through the ISOB Free To Be You book ³ or another good inner healing discipline.

If you hope to marry some day, make sure that both you and your potential spouse signs on to the covenant pattern for marriage before you perform your vows!

Here are some suggestions:

Make sure that you both unveil everything about your past. Keep nothing hidden, as the hidden things will work against you spiritually. Then realize that you are entering a serious relationship that will require a great sacrifice on your part.

³ http://isob-bible.org/freebook/free_toc.html

Everything, good and bad, that belongs to your spouse belongs to you. Your joy, your hurts, your money, your children from another marriage (at least you must support their position for their children), everything is shared in common. If you try to exclude anything, you are in for disaster.

There could be some legitimate pre-nuptial agreements having to do with a sensitive area in finances, but be sure to seek God about this first.

The next chapter addresses more about the contributions both the husband and wife can make towards each other.

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A Vision for Marriage
Chapter 3
Your responsibilities

In our first two chapters we emphasized:

1. God's design for marriage is a blood covenant that demands the "death" of both parties so that His resurrection power can make them one. We covered that this is a mystery that God will only reveal to those that "fear" Him.

A marriage covenant expresses a relationship that God, in His sovereignty, initiated.

2. If your marriage, past or present, has not been based upon this design, then you, most likely, are wounded in your spirit and/or have wounded your spouse.

3. Those deep inner wounds can only be healed by Jesus, but you must set Him free to do His work through forgiveness and honesty.

In Proverbs 2:4, Solomon states that those who rule should have discernment and understanding. One should seek it as one does seeking silver and search for it as for **hidden treasures**.

Notice that it talks about seeking the hidden treasures. This implies strenuous effort. Just as the earth does not yield up her treasures to the superficial observer, so Scripture yields up the true understanding of a covenant only to those who are willing to go below the surface and to devote time and study and search. It may seem difficult for us, but if we pursue with patience, God will yield up treasures of infinite worth.

Contributions by each spouse.

The following passage is quoted from Derek Prince's book, The Marriage Covenant.

⁴*"The wife's contribution.*

Ephesians 5:21-25 (NKJV):

"21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

⁴ Quoted from: Prince, Derek. The Marriage Covenant, Whitaker House Publishers, New Kensington, PA, 1978 – Pages 50-64

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,"

In the passage of Scripture notice that the husband is to give himself for the wife in the same kind of love that Christ loves the church, His bride. Also notice that we are to submit to one another. The wife can only be totally satisfied by submitting herself to a godly husband who has given his life for her. When this is in proper order, then the wife takes pleasure in submitting to the husband for security, protection, and all the other benefits that he is to give to her.

Let's examine what Proverb 31 says about the godly wife.

Proverbs 31:10-31:

10 Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.

11 The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain.

12 She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.

13 She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands.

14 She is like the merchant ships, she brings her food from afar.

15 She also rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservants.

16 She considers a field and buys it; from her profits she plants a vineyard.

17 She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms.

18 She perceives that her merchandise is good, and her lamp does not go out by night.

19 She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hand holds the spindle.

20 She extends her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.

21 She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household is clothed with scarlet.

22 She makes tapestry for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.

23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.

24 She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies sashes for the merchants.

25 Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come.

26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness.

27 She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.

28 Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

29 'Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all.'

30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.

31 Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates."

[In Proverbs 31] But I want to point out one simple fact which is very significant: the beginning, the middle, and the end of the picture all focus on her husband. In other words, the supreme achievement of an excellent wife is her husband. Everything else she achieves apart from that is of secondary value. This is how a woman should measure her achievement as a wife. She is not living out her own life now. Her life is in her husband. She sees her success in him. She rejoices in his achievements more than in her own.

Notice in verse 11, the first statement about this excellent wife, 'The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.' He does not have to go out in the world and make himself a millionaire to prove himself. His wife's approval is sufficient for him. Many men strive unceasingly for success in business or other fields primarily out of a desire to prove themselves. Usually their root problem is that they never had the assurance of approval in their own homes – first from their parents, and later from their wives. Consequently, they go through life with a driving urge to gain approval and prove themselves. But a man who has the right kind of wife need not depend on anyone else for approval. Hers is enough. Everybody else may misunderstand him, and may even betray him, but he knows there is one person on whom he can totally rely. That is his wife. To be a wife of this kind is a very high achievement for a woman.

The husband's trust in this "excellent wife" is based on one simple but vitally important fact: 'She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.'

Let us move on now to verse 23, the central section of this description: "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land." Again the focus is on her husband. He is a recognized leader among his people, sitting in the gate, the place of honor and authority. Solomon's language is so expressive. "Her husband is known..." In other words, he is known as her husband. Without her support, he would not have been able to hold the position of honor. This principle holds true in most cases where we see a successful, confident, respected man. A great part of what we are really seeing is his wife's success.

Then, in verses 28 and 29, the description closes with the focus on her family – first her children, but finally her husband once more:

28 Her children rise up and bless her:
Her husband also, and he praises her, saying:
29 "Many daughters have done nobly,

*But you excel them all.”
(Proverbs 31:28-29)*

So this description of the “excellent wife” – the truly successful woman – begins with, centers in, and concludes with her husband. He is her supreme achievement, beside which every other achievement is secondary.

What reward does he, on his part, have to offer her? “He praises her.” How important that is! Husbands, if you have a wife like this, there is no salary that is adequate for her. You have nothing to pay her with except praise. And you can afford to be lavish with that form of payment because the more you pay, the more you receive in return. So take time to praise your wife. Tell her how sweet she is. Tell her how good her food tastes. Tell her how much you enjoy seeing the home so clean. Tell her how pretty she looks. Tell her how much you love her. Take time to do it. It is a good investment. You will get back many times over everything you put in.

For my part, as I have already indicated, I can look back over thirty years of happy and successful marriage with Lydia. If I have one major regret, it is that I did not tell her often enough how much I loved her. I did love her, and she knew it. But I did not tell her as often as I should have. If I could live that part of my life again, I would tell her ten times as often.

*Let us return again for a moment to the wife’s part. How can a wife achieve this kind of success with her husband? I would say that she has **two main responsibilities**, closely related to each other. The first is to **uphold** her husband; the second is to **encourage** him.*

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul tells us that “the man [husband] is the head of the woman [wife].” In the natural body, final responsibility for decision and direction rests with the head. Yet the head cannot hold itself up. It depends upon the rest of the body to do this. Without the support of the rest of the body, primarily the neck, the head alone cannot fulfill its function.

This applies to the marriage relationship. As head, the husband has final responsibility for decision and direction. But he cannot fulfill this function on his own. He is dependent upon the body to uphold him. In a sense, the wife's responsibility may be likened to that of the neck. She is the one closest to her husband, on whose support he must continually rely. If she fails to uphold him, there is no way that he can function as he should. Just as there is no other part of the body that can take the place of the neck in upholding the head, so there is no other person who can give to the husband the support that he needs from his wife.

The wife's second main responsibility is to encourage her husband. A man should be able to look to his wife for encouragement at all times, particularly when he least deserves it. If Lydia had only encouraged me when I deserved it, it would not have been what I needed. I needed encouragement most when I deserved it the least. I needed somebody who had faith in me when no one else did. I didn't need a sermon. I didn't need a counselor. I needed someone to trust me.

Encouraging is not an easy thing for a wife to do – especially in times of pressure. It is much easier to reproach or criticize. In fact, encouraging is a ministry that must be cultivated. I believe that many times a wife can transform a bad marriage and an unsuccessful husband into a good marriage and a successful husband, if she will learn how to encourage. But that always means self-denial. We cannot encourage others when we are primarily interested in ourselves. If you and your husband are both feeling miserable, what are you going to do? Tell him how miserable you are, or encourage him? To encourage him requires self-denial. But that is the essence of the marriage covenant. You are no longer living for yourself.

This brings us back to our starting point: covenant commitment. This alone can provide the grace and the power that each party in a marriage needs to make it successful. Good advice or a set of rules are not sufficient

by themselves to do this. There are a number of excellent books available today which offer counsel and instruction from a Christian viewpoint on how to have a successful marriage. But in the last resort, Christian marriage will not work without the supernatural grace of God; and this grace is received only as husband and wife yield themselves to God and to one another in covenant commitment.

The Husband's Contribution.

Now we will consider the husband's contribution to the marriage covenant. A good starting place is provided by the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:7: "For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man."

It is the closing statement that we are concerned with just now, "the woman [wife] is the glory of the man [husband]." This simply takes the same principle that has been applied to the wife and applies it to the husband as well. We have already seen that the success of the wife is manifested in the husband. Now, Paul tells us, the wife is the evidence of the husband's success. She is his glory, his greatest achievement. Uniquely and supremely, she is a living demonstration of the quality of her husband.

A well-known evangelist was once asked about a fellow believer, "What kind of a Christian is he?" "I can't tell you yet," he replied, "I haven't met his wife!" That was a wise answer. Personally, I would never form an estimate of a married man until I had come to know his wife, because she is his glory. If she is radiant and restful and secure, her husband has earned my respect. But if, on the other hand, she is frustrated and nervous and insecure, I have to conclude that there is some area of failure in the husband.

This relationship of the wife to her husband as his glory is beautifully illustrated by a parable from the heavenly bodies: the relationship of the moon to the sun. The moon is the "glory" of the sun. The moon has no

glory of its own. Its only beauty comes from reflecting the radiance of the sun.

Some years ago, in the NASA center in Houston, Texas, I had the opportunity to see a fragment of rock from the moon's surface that had been brought back to earth by the astronauts. For a while, I gazed at it in awe. Finally, I bowed my head in reverent worship of the Creator as I began to understand the perfect wisdom of His design. The moon rock is dull and unattractive in itself. It has no brilliance or radiance of its own. Yet it is the most highly reflective material that man has yet discovered. Why? The reason, of course, is that it was designed by the Creator for one supreme purpose – to reflect the radiance of the sun. This it will continue to do, so long as nothing comes between it and the sun. But if some other body – for example, the earth – comes between the moon and the sun, the result is manifested in the moon. It loses its light.

All this is a parable that illustrates a much more wonderful work of the Creator's genius – the marriage relationship. The wife is like the moon. She has no glory of her own. Her function is to reflect her husband. When he shines on her, she glows. But if the full, open fellowship between them is broken – if something comes in between – the result is manifested in the wife. She loses her light.

Those of us who are husbands would do well to check from time to time on our performance in this regard. We should be ready to see our wife's condition as a reflection of our own. We males are often quick to notice some area of weakness in our wives – even perhaps to be unkind or critical about it. Yet it may well be that the problem we see so clearly in our wife is, in reality, but the reflection of a corresponding problem which has gone unrecognized in ourselves.

*What should a husband look for in his wife? What should he accept as evidence that he is fulfilling his responsibility toward her? If I had to answer this question in one word, the word I would choose would be **security**. When a married woman is truly secure – emotionally*

secure, financially secure, socially secure – in most cases that is sufficient evidence that her relationship with her husband is good and that he is fulfilling his obligations toward her. But if a married woman is subject to frequent or continuing insecurity, almost invariably this can be traced to one of two causes: either her husband is not fulfilling his obligation to her, or something has come in between them which prevents the wife from receiving what her husband has to give her.

*What are the main practical ways in which a husband should fulfill his responsibility toward his wife? I would suggest that they can be summed up in two words: to **protect** and to **provide**.*

A husband's primary practical responsibility is to protect his wife. She should feel secure. She should know that she has a covering. It is unfair to ask women to take many of the responsibilities that are thrust upon them today. They may prove to be very efficient; they may even outdo men; but they lose their femininity. In most cases, the true, underlying cause is that the husband has abdicated from his responsibility to protect his wife. A wife should always know that she has someone to stand between her and every blow, every attack, every pressure.

A husband's second practical responsibility is to provide for his wife. Scripture is very clear about this. "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8). The word "provide" has a wide application. A husband should see that there is no area of need in his wife for which he has not made provision – whether the need be physical or emotional, cultural or spiritual.

However, one major area in which a husband is responsible to provide for his wife is that of finance. Normally, he should accept full responsibility for her financial needs. A man who does not do this when he can will almost inevitably forfeit some measure of authority in his home. It is hard to separate the earning of money from the right to make decisions about the way the money is

spent. But the making of such decisions should be a function of headship. If a wife earns as much as, or more than, her husband, it is hard for him to retain effective headship.

We know, of course, that there are exceptions to this. There are husbands who become incapacitated and unable to work. In such cases, the responsibility for financial provision may fall upon the wife. The marriage vow makes allowance for such cases as this; it covers “in sickness” as well as “in health.” However, it is wrong when unfortunate exceptions such as this become the normal rule.

Briefly, now, we may sum up the mutual responsibilities of husband and wife in this covenant relationship of marriage. The main responsibilities of the husband are to protect and to provide. The main responsibilities of the wife are to uphold and to encourage. However, the proper fulfillment of these responsibilities can never be achieved by mere unaided human effort or willpower. It takes something more than that; it takes the supernatural, all-sufficient grace of God. **This kind of grace comes only as husband and wife together commit themselves to God and to one another in solemn, covenant relationship.** It is the act of commitment that releases God’s grace.

The outcome of this commitment is a new kind of life and relationship, one which can never be experienced by those who have not first met the conditions. We will go on now to see what is the distinctive character of this new life.

Union Leads to Knowing.

The result of covenant commitment between a man and a woman can be summed up in one word: **knowing**. A man and a woman come to know each other in a depth and a degree which is not possible in any other way. The verb “to know” in the original language of Scripture has a meaning both wider and deeper than its English counterpart. In Genesis 4:1(KJV), it says, “And Adam

knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain.” (The New American Standard Bible says, “the man had relations with his wife Eve.” However, the King James retains the correct, literal meaning of the original Hebrew.) This is the first time that the word “know” is used in Scripture after the fall. It is also the first recorded occasion that a man and a woman came together in sexual union.

However, the writers of the Old Testament are very precise and discriminating in the way in which they use the verb to know to describe sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. Wherever a man came together with a woman in a covenant union which had the seal of God’s approval, Scripture says that he “knew” her. But where it was an illicit relationship, one which God had not endorsed and did not approve, Scripture says that he “lay with” her. The implication is that it is possible for a man to have sexual intercourse with a woman and yet not to “know” her. I believe that this is fully borne out in experience. Indeed, a man may have promiscuous sexual intercourse with fifty women, and yet never “know” one of them.

What, then, is **the essential difference** between merely “lying with” a woman and “knowing” a woman? The answer can be given in one word: **commitment**. The essence of sexual immorality is that a man and a woman seek physical and emotional satisfaction from each other, but they have not made a permanent commitment to each other. The pleasure that they obtain in this way is stolen. They have not paid the due price for it.”

Laying Down Your Life For Your Bride

By Os Hillman.

Laying Down Our Life for the Bride

TGIF Today God Is First by Os Hillman

"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down,

and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father" (John 10:17,18).

Jesus was called to lay down His life for His bride, the Church. Men are called to emulate this same "laying down" our lives for our wives - our earthly brides. Men are to be a physical representation of what Christ has done for each of us. As we men do this, we experience the love of the Father. Wives will experience the love of the Father as husbands do this. Most of us men fight this process due to our own insecurities, independence, pride and ego. However, it is the very laying down our lives that allows us to connect to the Father just as Jesus connected to His Father.

It is in the sacrificial, free will act that this occurs. This activates in the woman a response of love that allows the man to experience a deep love that is rooted in the Father but channeled from the wife, the one we lay our lives down for. Jesus did not feel something was being taken from Him because He chose to give it willingly. Conversely, if husbands lay down willingly their lives, they will not feel something is being taken. It is when husbands defend, negotiate and withdraw from the needs of a woman that it negates this process. When we think we are being used or manipulated against our will, we believe others are trying to control us and we resist. Jesus did not do this. He gave willingly. Men must realize they are the initiators called to lay down their lives for their wives. Women respond to this sacrificial act by giving their heart and physical love to their husbands. Both husband and wife experience the love of the Father when this happens.

Giving up our lives for our wives feels like just that - giving up our life. We give up rights, privileges, and desires. We focus only on them. When we become dead, God loves us by giving us the desires of our heart. We give up life, in order to gain it. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 16:25).

This is what it means when Jesus laid down His life for His bride. This is what it means when Paul said: "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" (Eph 5:25-28).

This principle is a key to impacting the marketplace for Jesus Christ. The family has been greatly wounded by a failure to understand this principle. This has also led men and women to become slaves instead of sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. Today, if you are a husband, commit yourself to laying down your life for your bride

Ask for God's fire!

Finally, what will it take for the fire of God to fall on your life and marriage? Now it is up to you!

As we covered in chapter one that even if your spouse is an unwilling partner, of course, except of a situation with real abuse, that your responsibility is to take up your cross. As we discussed, this will put you on God's side. He will be your protector. He will either change your spouse, or give you another solution. But if you do not take up your cross as we have discussed, you cannot expect God to take it up for you.

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah and the demonic King Ahab, Jezebel's husband, had a challenge going on. Ahab gathered all his prophets and all the children of Israel on to Mount Carmel.

"And Elijah came to all the people, and said, 'How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.' But the people answered him not a word" (1 Kings 18:21).

Israel was in a state of compromised religion mixed with their idols. Perhaps your marriage is in this state.

In this story, both parties approached the altar with a sacrifice so that the fire of God would fall on it to prove whose god was really God. Elijah first allowed the prophets of Baal to attempt to

bring their fire on it. Then he asked them if their god was busy or on a journey somewhere.

Before Elijah called upon God he “repaired the altar” and surrounded the situation with human impossibilities, flooding the altar, the wood with water and even filling the surrounding ditch with water.

“Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, ‘The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!’” (1 Kings 18:38-39).

If you repair your altar and call upon the name of the Lord, His fire will fall on your marriage, on your life, and you will be healed, one way or the other. Leave all the decisions to God.

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