

The following sample pages are extracted and condensed from the workbook. This section in the workbook is 15 pages.



COVENANT

Your view of life and your view of your relationship with your spouse will change. This is a given. Change can be a healthy sign of growth, that is, of course, if the changes are toward growing closer to the Lord and to each other. During your lifetime of living together, both of you will change. You will not just get older and slower. You will also change in your views, opinions, character, and perhaps somewhat in your personalities. Events such as having children will drastically change your inner lives and outer lifestyle. How you accept or don't accept these changes will affect your relationship positively or negatively.

This changeable aspect of life is also the basis of modern marriage and divorce, which is exemplified by Hollywood films and the lifestyles of the stars. Many marriage vows are little more than expressions of sentimental, trite feelings. And we know that feelings change. What are the foremost reasons cited for divorce? Without question, they are incompatibility or irreconcilable differences. This is all a judge needs to hear to grant a divorce. Anymore, that a couple will eventually divorce is just assumed. In the world's culture, no one is expected to live together for life, almost as if it isn't normal or healthy to do so.

Hollywood-style marriages are not built on the rock that Jesus spoke of. They are not even built upon sand. Even sand is too stable! Instead, they're built on cotton candy—mere fluff. Movie stars fall in love during a filming session and fall out of love as quickly. When the relationship isn't as fun or rewarding as it was during the engagement, the reason given is that one or the other has changed. His or her feelings for the other are no longer what they were. They have fallen out of love. The solution is to end the wilted relationship and find a fresh one—one they are sure will last forever. To a lesser degree, the same mindset is true outside of Hollywood.

Well, if life is so changeable—if people are so changeable—how can there be any security in a relationship? How can you be sure this person will be the person you will want to be with ten years from now? He or she might be different. The other side is also possible—you might change; you might be different. How then, can we be sure? You can do as much premarital preparation as possible by completing this course, reading books, and attending small groups and seminars. In other words, you can get as much information as possible. You can do background checks on each other. You can do a lot of inner homework on yourself. All of these things are important and advisable, yet some people have done all these things and still divorce. Conversely, there are those who have done little preparation and have had good marriages that last a lifetime. Is there something else in the equation?

There is. The answer is covenant.

Cracker Jack Weddings

We attended a wedding in which the groom pulled the ring out of a Cracker Jack box. At the time, this was a popular and supposedly hip thing to do. Many of the guests laughed, but within a year or so, the couple divorced.

Wedding vows are covenant vows. They are not for the expression of sentimental, trite feelings. Rather, they are there for you to count the cost.

Covenant vows are to be defended and kept to death.

BLOOD COVENANT


 READ

 Gen. 15:1-18
 Prov. 30:5-6

 Gen. 22:1-18
 Mal. 2:13-14, 16

 Deut. 4:1-2, 12:32
 Matt. 24:35, 26:28

 Lev. 17:11
 Heb. 10:1-4

 Jer. 1:12, 11:1-5
 Rev. 22:18-19

English translations of the Bible use the words *testament* and *covenant* interchangeably. Thus, we refer to the two major divisions of the Bible as the Old-New *Testament* or the Old-New *Covenant*. In each case, the word in the original Greek is *diatheke*—a word that connotes a unilateral decision. In other words, it is a one-way agreement that God makes with us (or more precisely a covenant between the Son and Father, which includes us). Perhaps the closest human equivalent is unconditional surrender, in which the losing side of a war does not get to negotiate any terms; it's a one-way deal. This is an important distinction, because it factors into the covenant that God makes with us. It is unequivocally on His terms. We cannot add anything to it or take anything from it. (Deut. 4:1-2, 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19)

Additionally, the word *testament* does not do justice to the original idea of the word. To get the depth and power of the word, we must go to the Hebraic origin and literal meaning.

Strong's Bible Dictionary says the following about two related words.

beriyth – noun Strong's #1285 beriyth (ber-eeth'); from 1262 (in the sense of cutting (like 1254)); a compact (because made by passing between pieces of flesh): . . . covenant, league.

karath – verb Strong's #3772 karath (kaw-rath'); a primitive root; to cut (off, down or asunder); by implication, to destroy or consume; specifically, to covenant (i.e. make an alliance or bargain, originally by cutting flesh and passing between the pieces).

The Bible can more accurately be called the old and new *blood covenants*. It is the record of God making covenants with man. (Gen. 15:1-18, 22:1-18) God established these covenants, and they involved sacrificing animals—the cutting of flesh and the shedding of the blood for the atoning of sins. *For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul* (Lev. 17:11).

Animal sacrifices were symbolic; they could never truly atone for the sins of man. Jesus Christ shed his own blood for the remission of sins as the true and heavenly atoning sacrifice (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 10:1-14). God is a covenant making, covenant keeping God. “*I will watch over my word to perform it*” (Jer. 1:12, 11:1-5). “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my word will never pass away*” (Matt. 24:35).

What does covenant have to do with marriage?

In God's sight, marriage is covenant (Mal. 2:13-14). Your covenant vow is like a compass. No matter which direction you are headed, a compass always points north. Its dependability is the only reason we use it. Next, consider a spinning toy gyroscope. No matter which way you tilt the base it is on, the gyroscope remains upright. That's what covenant is. It is the compass and gyroscope of marriage. No matter which way life turns, you remain in covenant.

This is why we place so much emphasis on character. Keeping your covenant vow has everything to do with character. Your character must be such that you do not break your word. If your marriage vow is not sacred to you—if you break it for ungodly reasons—you are not a man or woman of your word, you do not have the character it takes, and you are not marriage material. If these words seem severe, they are intended to be. Many Christians are divorcing—still claiming to be following and obeying God. Most of them have no basis for divorcing their spouse. God hates covenant breaking. Divorce is covenant breaking. God hates divorce. (Mal. 2:16)

If you do not understand covenant—if you do not agree with it and how it pertains to marriage—you are not ready for marriage

Biblical examples of covenant

Perhaps you already know about biblical covenants, but perhaps not. Many people do not have an adequate understanding of biblical covenants and their background. Please make time to do a Bible study on the following scriptures. Diligently consider them before continuing with this section.



Josh. 9:1-27 Josh. 10:1-7 1 Sam. 18:1-4 1 Sam. 20:1-42
2 Sam. 9:1-13 2 Sam. 21:1-9 John 17:20

1. What did you glean about covenants from reading Joshua chapter 9? _____

2. What does Joshua chapter 9 tell you about making a vow foolishly or lightly without adequate knowledge of whom you are entering into covenant? _____

3. What does Joshua chapter 9 tell you about keeping a vow? _____

4. What does Joshua 10:1-7 reveal about the responsibility of covenant? _____

5. What does Joshua 10:1-7 reveal about the benefits of covenant? _____

6. In 1 Samuel 18:1-4, what did Jonathan and David do? _____

7. Jonathan gave David his robe, armor, sword, bow, and belt. What did that signify?

THE COVENANT OF MARRIAGE



Gen. 1:28 Gen. 2:18, Gen. 2:23-24 Amos 3:3 Matt. 6:33
Matt. 19:6 Rom. 12:5 1 Cor. 12:26 Eph. 4:25 Eph. 5:30-32

Recapping what we just covered: Your relationship to God is a blood covenant relationship that God has made in Jesus Christ and with His shed blood. God is a covenant keeping God. He will not break His covenant. God is faithful to His covenant. His faithfulness is our eternal security. Furthermore, God hates divorce, which is, in fact, covenant breaking. God keeps His word, and He expects us to do so.

Marriage is covenant. You will be making a covenant vow. This goes way beyond feelings of mutual attraction. It goes way beyond deciding to live together. People in the Old Testament did not enter into covenants lightly. They knew the implications, responsibilities, commitment, and consequences of covenant. The following questions deal with issues and mindsets about marriage.

Your view of marriage

1. What is marriage? _____

2. How, when, why did the institution of marriage originate? _____

3. Is marriage (Yes/No)
A social expediency? _____ An invention of society? _____ God's design and purpose? _____

4. What event or events constitute marriage? When is a couple, in fact, "married"? _____

5. What is the purpose of marriage? _____

6. Why do you want to be married (to anyone at all)? _____

Your view of divorce

1. Look up the word “*sacred*” in a dictionary and write the first few meanings. (For a great online dictionary source go to <http://www.onelook.com>. Click on the “Browse Dictionaries” link)

Definition _____

If marriage is God’s deal—if it’s sacred, if it’s for God and by God—then it is not ours to dissolve based on our will, feelings, discomfort, or displeasure. Listed below are some common reasons people grow apart and divorce. Answer each question **yes** or **no** whether you believe it would be grounds for divorce.

- | | |
|---|---|
| _____ I don’t love you anymore. | _____ You’re emotionally unstable. |
| _____ You don’t love me. | _____ You’ve become fat, old, unkempt. |
| _____ My needs are not being met. | _____ I’m being neglected. |
| _____ You’re not exciting or stimulating. | _____ You’re boring in bed. |
| _____ We have nothing in common. | _____ You’re boring out of bed. |
| _____ The magic has gone out of our relationship. | _____ All you want from me is sex. |
| _____ You don’t provide the lifestyle I expect. | _____ All you want from me is a paycheck. |
| _____ You’re not going anywhere with your life. | _____ You don’t make me happy. |
| _____ I’ve found someone else. | _____ You don’t respect me. |

2. Find the Bible verses that support the above listed reasons for divorce and write them in the space provided.

Write the biblical references here ▶ __

Silly, huh? But, what’s the point? There isn’t any biblical support for such motives, but many Christians divorce for these reasons anyway. If you have been divorced, or if in the future, God forbid, you initiate divorce for any of the above or similar reasons, then know that there is no biblical basis for your choice, and you are disobeying God. So, whether you were married before or not, be certain with God, yourself, and each other that your vow, your word, and your commitment will not include any of the above escape clauses or loopholes.

3. Many couples divorce over much more serious and devastating situations such as the examples listed below. Answer each with **yes** or **no** whether it would be grounds for divorce. Think realistically. Some of these situations can be extremely difficult and some can be unbearably abusive.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| _____ Alcohol or drug addiction | _____ Refusal to work at marriage | _____ Physical abuse |
| _____ Child molestation | _____ Pornography addiction | _____ Sexual abuse |
| _____ Prison incarceration | _____ Abortion | _____ Mental-emotional problems |
| _____ Adultery | _____ Infertility of either spouse | _____ Sex (impotence, unwilling) |
| _____ Gambling addiction | _____ Wandering eyes | _____ Emotional - verbal abuse |
| _____ Lifelong debilitating illness | _____ Jealousy, possessiveness | _____ Homosexuality – lesbianism |
| _____ Family neglect | _____ Overspending, charge cards | _____ |