MARRIAGE:
A
COVENANT
BEFORE
GOD

10 PRINCIPLES FROM ADAM AND EVE TO ESTABLISH A MARRIAGE COVENANT GOD’S WAY

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I wish to lovingly dedicate this book to my wife, Laura, who is my best friend and favorite companion.
Special Thank You

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Table of Contents

Preface

My Prayer

Introduction

The CREATOR of the Marriage Covenant

Articles

I. The Commencement and Termination of the Marriage Covenant ........................................ pg. 1
  ♦ Biblical Principles Displayed in Common Wedding Traditions

II. The Preparations for the Marriage Covenant ........ pg. 11
  ♦ Walking Together In Harmony
  ♦ Reestablishing Purity Following Promiscuity

III. The Significance of the Marriage Covenant ........ pg. 29

IV. The Roles in the Marriage Covenant ...................... pg. 35
  ♦ Recognizing the Differences Between Men and Women
  ♦ A Practical Understanding of Men & Women Based On Adam and Eve
  ♦ Admirable Characteristics for a Life-Long Relationship as Displayed by Boaz and Ruth

V. The Responsibilities of the Marriage Covenant .... pg. 49
  ♦ Reality of Responsibility
  ♦ Reversal of Responsibility
VI. The Terms of the Marriage Covenant ................... pg. 63
   ♦ 5 Levels of Communication
   ♦ The Significance of Friendship in the Marriage Covenant
   ♦ Biblical Pointers for Proper Communication

VII. The Conflicts in the Marriage Covenant ............... pg. 73
   ♦ 5 Stages of Accepting New Things
   ♦ The Common Catalysts and Counsel for Marriage Conflict
   ♦ Discovering Differences
   ♦ Monthly Budgeting

VIII. The Restoration of the Marriage Covenant .......... pg. 97
   ♦ 11 Investments for Life-Long Love
   ♦ 45 Ways for Living in Love with Your Mate

IX. The Expansion of the Marriage Covenant .......... pg. 111
   ♦ “My Son” Throughout Proverbs

X. The Fulfillment in the Marriage Covenant .......... pg. 127
   ♦ Physical Intimacy Scale
   ♦ The P’s of Proper Physical Intimacy
   ♦ Tips for Intimacy
   ♦ Illustrated Difference of Intimacy for a Man and a Woman
   ♦ Causes and Cures for Tension in Intimacy

Samples

  Charge to the Couple
  Wedding Vows
  Marriage Certificate
Preface

A few years ago, while serving the Lord on the mission field, I received the joyous news that one of my beloved family members was going to be married. Then, to my pleasant surprise, I was asked to return home for a short visit so that I could officiate the wedding. After accepting the invitation, I realized the great responsibility I was undertaking by helping to establish a new home that would glorify God. So with a pastor’s commitment to God’s Word, and a family member’s love, I began to search the Scriptures for the clearest example of Biblical matrimony this young couple could learn from and follow. My goal was to provide a solid foundation for their relationship before the wedding so that they would be prepared for the life God had for them. It was through that search that God led me back to the beginning—the beginning of man and woman, the beginning of marriage. For “In the beginning ... God created man in his own image ... and ... made he a woman, and brought her unto the man” (Genesis 1:1, 27, 2:22).

What I am now privileged to share with you is what I lovingly shared with those who are dear to me as they prepared to enter into a marriage covenant before God and man. These biblical truths are accompanied by practical illustrations and applications so that you and your loved one might grow in your knowledge of each other and God’s will for your future together. My prayer is that these studies and the additional material given will provide a solid foundation on which you can build a marriage and family that will be both personally satisfying as well as God-honoring until death do you part.

Pastor Jeremy Markle
God is the Creator of marriage, which started in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 2:18-25 provides us with God’s plan for and provision of a perfect marriage between man and woman as it says, “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And 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. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” On the sixth day of creation, Adam and Eve entered not only into a contract between themselves, but by having God being the witness to their marriage, they entered into a Spiritual Covenant with Him as well (Malachi 2:14, Proverbs 2:16-17). Malachi 2:14, while speaking of the marriage relationship says, “... Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the
wife of thy youth ... yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.”

Those couples who desire God’s blessing and presence on their wedding and marriage must also look to God for His teaching and guidance in every aspect of their relationship. They must learn and follow their God-given roles and responsibilities before God and man. As the Marriage Covenant is proclaimed by the pastor’s declaration of, “in the presence of God and these witnesses, I pronounce you husband and wife,” a covenant has been made which should never be broken. It is therefore, important that both parties preparing to join in such a covenant are fully aware of what God says about marriage. Ecclesiastes 5:2-6 warns, “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few ... When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?”

Unfortunately many young couples believe that marriage is nothing more than “dating” while living in the same house. They don’t take seriously the need for Godly preparation and counsel. For this reason they are spending the first months and years of the matrimony struggling to find out how it all works. This is similar to a parent giving his 16 year old child with the keys to the new family car without providing him with any textbook and hands on training. The reasons could be provided; he has driven bumping cars before (dated), or he has been in a family car and watched his parents drive all his life. But neither of these past experiences are true preparation grounds nor do they guarantee that the experience gained was truly correct. They can not replace the need for a textbook to learn the rules and personal guidance to gain the experience. God does not desire his children to jump into the driver’s seat of marriage, only to crash. For this reason God has revealed His pattern for a proper marriage throughout His Word. Therefore, it is the goal of this study to use the first marriage found in Genesis 2 and
3 as well as other Biblical passages to prepare you for one of the most important and permanent decisions of your life.
Chapter 1

Article I
The Commencement and Termination of the Marriage Covenant

Genesis 2:18-24

The Commencement of the Marriage Covenant

God’s timing is always precise. He has a reason for every change and delay to man’s plans (Proverbs 16:9). The timing of Adam and Eve’s marriage was not an exception. Genesis 2:18 reveals Adam’s condition before his “wedding.” God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” God recognized Adam’s need for a wife, but He did not bring about an immediate resolution. Verses 19-20 reveal some responsibilities Adam needed to be complete before God could provide him with his needed wife.

As Adam followed God’s leading to take charge of the Garden of Eden (vrs. 15) and name the animals, he fulfilled his spiritual (obedience to God) and physical (preparation of a home) responsibilities. Perhaps, God knew that Adam would never finish naming all the animals after he saw and experienced the presence of Eve? The same is true for a Christian couple desiring to get married today. There may be some specific tasks God desires to do in and through them before they are joined in matrimony. I Corinthians 7:33-34 say, “But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.” Time spent in singleness is not wasted, but rather
“invested” in greater opportunities to serve God (Mary and Joseph - Matthew 1:18-25).

As a Christian couple considers the timing of their wedding, they must consider all that God desires for them to accomplish and have accomplished in them before their wedding. Psalm 37:4 and 5 say, “Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.” An impulsive couple who rushes to the alter because of “love” or any other reason and who have neglected to take the time to pray and wait for specific answers to their prayers are in great danger of stepping into their marriage relationship outside of God’s will and without God’s blessing. Philippians 4:6 and 7 say, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Impulsiveness or impatience shows a lack of patience—patience which provides the maturity needed for a Christian matrimony.

James 1:2-4 expresses it this way, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” In the progression of a relationship, there are many temptations to move faster than God desires. These temptations provide opportunities to practice patience. The lack of patience or flexibility during the dating relationship, or an overabundance of frustration and irritation during the engagement and wedding planning, all reveal a fleshly rebellion against God’s timing and authority. However, by the practice of godly patience through each stage of the relationship, the couple becomes more dependent on God and becomes more prepared in their spiritual maturity for the new life they are starting together. If they skip this important process, they are showing their lack of maturity, and are missing out on some of the priceless maturing lessons
The Commencement and Termination of the Marriage Covenant

God wants them to learn so that they will be the best husband and wife they can be for each other for the rest of their lives.

- Have we truly taken time to pray and ask God for His will and direction in our wedding and marriage plans, including the date we have chosen?
- Have we waited long enough to be able to see specific answers to our prayers to assure us of God’s blessing on our plans?
- Are we willing to change our plans and even our wedding date if God begins to show us these changes need to be made by way of circumstances or Godly counsel?

The Termination of the Marriage Covenant

A husband and wife are declared to be “one flesh” in Genesis 2:24 which says, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” Jesus Christ uses this same statement to provide God’s view of the permanency of marriage in Matthew 19:3-6. It says, “The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” The joining of two individuals in the Marriage Covenant by God is to be permanent. Jesus Christ is very clear to those looking for an excuse to divorce their spouse when He says, “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put
God has authored the Marriage Covenant in such a way that the only proper way to terminate the agreement is through death. For a Christian couple, the only pre-nuptial agreement they should consider is their Last Will and Testimony. I Corinthians 7:39 says, “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.” and Romans 7:2-3 agrees by saying, “For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.” There must not be any doubt on this very important claim to God’s authority over the Marriage Covenant. God’s plan for marriage is “until death do us part!”

Are we committed to God’s plan for marriage to be “until death do us part?”
1. Are we presently, as singles, fulfilling our spiritual and physical responsibilities in our lives?
   a. List a few spiritual responsibilities outside of your relationship which you currently are fulfilling:
      i.  
      ii.  
      iii.  
   b. List a few physical responsibilities outside of your relationship which you currently are fulfilling:
      i.  
      ii.  
      iii.  

2. Have we spent time together and separately in prayer asking God for His will and timing in our wedding plans?

   How has God answered our prayers up to this point in our planning process?
   a.  
   b.  
   c.  
   d.  

3. How have we shown patience and individually matured by waiting for God’s direction and provision in our relationship?
   a.  
   b.  
   c.  
   d.  

4. Are we both committed to follow through with our Marriage Covenant “until death do us part?”  

Biblical Principles Displayed
in Common Wedding Traditions

- **The seating of the parents** - The couple is honoring the authority and role of their parents in their relationship by giving them a prominent position as they make their covenant together (Genesis 24:1-67, Ephesians 6:2)

- **The positioning of the groom** - The groom is waiting for his bride to be brought to him just as Adam waited for God to bring Eve (Genesis 2:21-22)

- **The entrance of the bride with her father** - The father is displaying his protection and leadership over his daughter and his willingness to relinquish his role to the groom (Numbers 30:3-16)

- **The bride dressed in all white** - The bride is displaying her moral and physical purity as she presents herself to her groom (Revelation 19:7-8)

- **The pastor’s leadership over the ceremony** - The pastor’s role displays the couple’s desire for God to be the officiating authority over their marriage and their recognition of the church’s involvement in their home (Matthew 19:4-6, Mark 10:6-9, Hebrews 10:24, 13:7, 13)

- **The spiritual challenge to the couple** - The spiritual challenge establishes a pattern for the couple to always
follow God’s instruction for their relationship (Ephesians 5:22-33, Colossians 3:18-19)

- **The exchange of vows** - The verbal exchange of the vows, in God’s house, in God’s presence, and before human witnesses, reveals the bride’s and groom’s permanent covenant together as husband and wife for the rest of their lives (Ruth 4:1-12, Ecclesiastes 5:1-7, Matthew 19:6, Mark 10:9)

- **The exchanging of rings** - The giving and receiving of rings as gifts is an expression of the bride’s and groom’s commitment to enter into their marriage covenant, and displays their delight to share their earthly possessions (Genesis 24:51-53, Ruth 4:7, Ephesians 5:33)
  - The rings’ circular shape is a reminder that their love must be unending (I Corinthians 13:2-8a)
  - The rings’ creation out of costly metal (gold) displays that they are willing sacrifice for their love (John 15:11, I Corinthians 7:33-34)
  - The rings’ continual presence on their fingers is a reminder to them of their covenant of love and the authority of love they must abide by even when they are a great distance apart (Matthew 19:6, Mark 10:9, I Corinthians 13:8a)

- **The pronouncement of the couple** - The pastoral pronunciation of the couple as “man and wife” officially establishes that a public covenant has been made and that the bride and groom are officially joined together until death do they part (Genesis 2:23-24, Matthew 19:5-6, Mark 10:7-8, Ephesians 5:31)

- **The lifting of the veil and kiss** - The veil being lifted by the groom displays his privileged right to reveal the bride’s beauty, and by kissing her he expresses that he will find his satisfaction in her beauty alone, while the bride displays her willingness and welcoming of the
grooms authority and partaking of her beauty (Genesis 2:25, Proverbs 5:15-19, Song of Solomon 4:9-11)

- **The lighting of the unity candle** - The lighting of the singular candle from two pre-lit candles displays the new one flesh relationship, the bride and groom have begun (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5-6, Mark 10:7-8, Ephesians 5:31)

- **The presentation of the couple** - The public pronouncement of the couple by name establishes that the bride and groom are no longer to be known as children of their parents, or from separate families, but as one new family (Genesis 2:23, Matthew 19:5-6, Mark 10:7-8, Ephesians 5:31)

- **The wedding reception** - The couple has the opportunity to work together as husband and wife to host their first reception of their family and friends as they all celebrate their new life together (Matthew 22:1-14, Revelation 19:7-9)