

Lesson 27

Teacher's Manual

CHART-30

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE VOWS

READ & MEDITATE ON: I Corinthians 7:1-40 MEMORIZE: Genesis 2:24

INTRODUCTION

The writer of Hebrews declares that, "Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4). Marriage is a God-ordained institution designed to meet the needs of a man and a woman and develop them in spiritual maturity. When a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves unto a wife, he experiences oneness of flesh. The union of mind, will, and spirit comes from the commitment (cleaving) to each other in sacred marriage vows. The fidelity called for by God in the marriage relationship is a human object lesson of the spiritual fidelity of Christ and His Church. The Old Testament started out with a marriage in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:18-25); Jesus performed His first miracle at a marriage at Cana of Galilee (John 2); and the Bible ends with the marriage supper of the Lamb in New Jerusalem (Revelation 19:7-9).

I. A SAMPLE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

All of us have attended a wedding, some of which were quite simple and lasted for the duration of only a few minutes. Others were very well organized with much emphasis upon the decor, beautiful music and many participants.

Perhaps the ceremony went something like this:

(Man on the right, woman on the left.)

"We have come here in the sight of God, and in the presence of these witnesses to unite this man and woman in holy matrimony.

"Marriage is a word of solemn beauty which connects our thoughts with home and the tenderest and most sacred relations.

"The Lord Jesus beautified and sanctioned it by His presence at the marriage in Cana of Galilee.

"Marriage was commended by the Apostle Paul to be honorable among all.

"St. Paul also has given us other instructions concerning husband and wife: Husbands are to love their wives as they do their own bodies; furthermore, he that loveth his wife loveth his own body. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh. Wives are to submit themselves unto their husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the Church.

"Such a relationship as man and wife should not be entered into without reverent thought. It should be done advisedly, soberly and in the fear of God.

"Now standing in the presence of God, I ask you to declare if there is any cause that should prevent this lawful union? (PAUSE)

(Man steps to appointed place.)

"_____, do you take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife?"

"Who gives this woman to be married to this man?"

(Whoever gives her shall answer "I do.")

(Woman is brought to stand beside the man.)

(Bride and groom then step directly in front of minister.)

(Minister receives right hand of man, causing him to clasp right hand of woman.)

(Minister instructs man to repeat after him the following:)

"I, _____, take thee _____ to be my lawfully wedded wife; for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until God by death shall separate us."

"_____, do you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband?"

Therefore, let us take a closer look at the subject Vows - The "I Do's" of the Christian Marriage.

CHART-31 II. VOWS—WHAT ARE THEY?

A. A Covenant

A vow is in a scriptural sense a covenant. God is a God of covenants and has, at various points in time, made covenants with His people. Some major covenants are:

1. Covenant with Noah — (Genesis 8:21, 22)
2. Covenant with Abraham — (Genesis 12:1-3)
3. Covenant with Moses and Children of Israel - (Exodus 19:5-8)
4. New Testament plan, a better covenant — (Hebrews 7:22; 8:6; 9:11, 14, 20, 23)

Therefore, a covenant (vow) is an agreement entered into by the parties involved to: solemnly pledge themselves to live by the stipulations and conditions of the agreement under seal. In God's dealings with His people, He made the stipulations of His promises, provisions and ultimate results very clear. (Abraham, Moses, the Church.) Vows are a serious matter with God. (See Numbers 30:3,4 and Ecclesiastes 5:4-6.)

B. The Sign Of The Covenant

In every covenant there is the initiating rite or ceremony through which it is introduced or implemented:

1. Old Testament Covenant—Circumcision (Genesis 17:10-14)
2. New Testament Covenant—Water Baptism, Circumcision of Heart (Colossians 2:11-13)
3. Marriage—Wedding Ceremony (Revelation 19:7-9)

In our present Western world, approximately 60% of marriages are failing due to the onslaught of evil and moral decay. It appears in many circles there is more preparation for the wedding than for the marriage. This results in sorrow, broken homes, and orphaned children.

God has declared that:

"Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

Hebrews 13:4

B. Old Testament Institution

Family is defined in the Old Testament as the institution of worshippers which consisted of the father as the spiritual leader and authority in the covenant of marriage. The covenant was established by God for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-25). The roles of husband, wife, and children are firmly set in the Word of God. The Bible is the manual of life and in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1).

C. Function

The family has two significant responsibilities: to subdue and to have dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:28).

Each generation has the responsibility to train the next generation to subdue it and to have dominion.

Education is life: it is the communication of life from the living to the living. The family has been ordained of God to be His vehicle to establish and train each generation to serve and worship Him.

V. VOW TO ACCEPT GOD'S AUTHORITY FOR HOME AND MARRIAGE

A. God's Divine Order

Paul clearly illustrated "divine order" as God spoke through him to establish authority and responsibility: God has established the family according to the principle of "headship." Every member of the family must adhere to whom God has appointed. (See Colossians 3:18-21; Ephesians 5:21 - 6:4.)

VI. COUPLES VOW TO FIDELITY

A. MORAL Purity

One of the major concerns between marriage partners is that of purity. Keeping one's self clean and only for the one you have vowed to love for life.

The tragic story of King David, the man after God's own heart, reveals four distinct categories of sin. (See Psalm 51.)

1. Transgression...which means going beyond the known boundaries.
2. Iniquity...which is the lawless nature that says "I know better, but I will go ahead anyhow."
3. Sin...this is the act or the willful failure to do good. The Scripture says "He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).
4. Guile...which is the deceit that covers or rationalizes sin.

David, the adulterous murderer, found the going quite rough and most uncomfortable as he revealed in Psalm 32 and Psalm 51.

He acknowledged all four categories of sin and appealed to God for not only forgiveness, but also cleansing.

Marriage and Biblical love have established boundaries that must not be transgressed no matter what the circumstances. The sinful nature of previous years must not be practiced, lest the iniquity be passed on to the following generations.

B. Far Reaching Effects

Iniquity (Exodus 20:5); Righteousness (Psalms 103:17, 18) shall be visited to the children's children through the third and fourth generation.

REMEMBER! God tells us in the seventh commandment: "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). This represents lifelong fidelity and commitment. BE LOYAL ONE TO ANOTHER!

D. Overcoming Infidelity

Victory over infidelity starts in the mind. The following six steps to overcoming infidelity will provide a cure before a serious mistake is made:

1. Admit that all lustful thoughts and adultery are sin (Matthew 5:28).
2. Confess them each time they occur (I John 1:9).
3. Ask God to take away the pattern and cleanse your mind (I John 5:14, 15).
4. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2; I Peter 1:13; and II Peter 3:1).
5. Thank God for His victory and concentrate on pure thoughts (Philippians 4:8).
6. Repeat this formula every time you are tempted with lustful thoughts.

VII. COUPLE'S VOW TO STRENGTHEN MARRIAGE

A. Mature Love

First Corinthians 13 tells us about grown up love. We must remember that sin brought enmity, sin is a destroyer, sin is a separator, and sin ruins homes. God wants the Christian family to know what mature love is all about.

B. Restoring First Love

Let us not fall into the trap of the church at Ephesus (Revelations 2:1-5) which had lost its first love. The saints had ceased to protect the feeling they had at the first. Steps to restoring our "first love" in salvation or marriage are the same as those declared unto the Ephesian Church in the Book of Revelation:

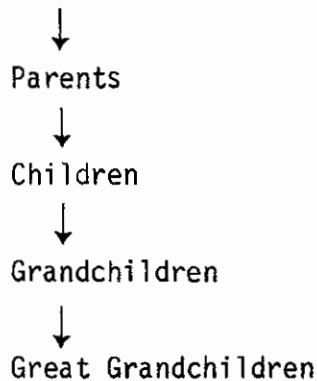
1. Remember the way things used to be
2. Repent - change your mind, will, and emotions
3. Go back and do the right things you used to do.

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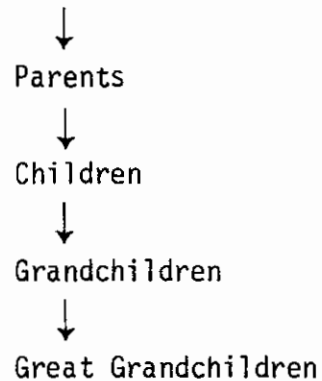
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INIQUITY



RIGHTEOUSNESS



We must vow to do everything possible to root out iniquity that continues to produce acts of sin. We must not pave the road for guile (deceit) which controls one who practices sin or allows himself to cover or rationalize his error.

C. Physical Effects Of Guilt

There are some one hundred seventy psychosomatic (mind related) illnesses in our world today without any known clinical base. The average age of those who voluntarily check into mental institutions is forty-six. Here are the overwhelming discoveries in a great percentage of cases. Psychosomatic illness stems from:

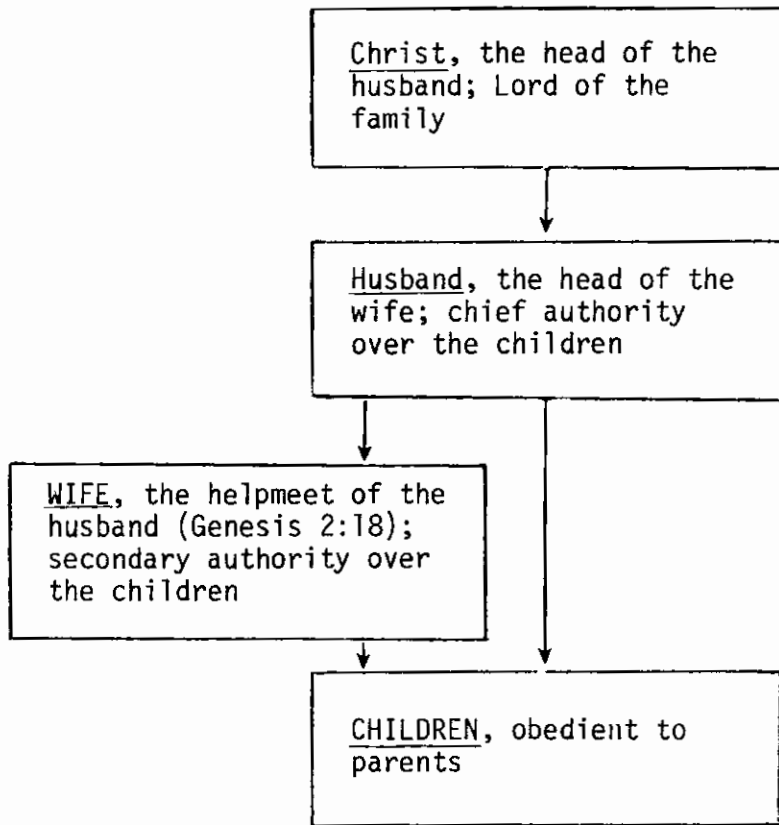
1. Guilt caused by sexual or social sin.
2. Dishonesty that produces a feeling of sickness and despair.
3. Infidelity that carries with it the continuous "wages of sin." (I Corinthians 6:18).

No amount of tears can buy back what is lost in one act of infidelity. (See Proverbs 6:32, 33.) Establish yourselves with each other and God. Be totally trustworthy anywhere, and at all times. REMEMBER! Your conscience is the watchdog of your soul, James said:

"But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren."

James 1:14-16

GOD'S ORDER FOR THE FAMILY



B. Conditional Blessing

If a husband can say "I Do" to God's divine order, and fulfill his role as the head of the wife; God's blessings are promised in his behalf. If a wife can say "I Do" to God's divine order, and fulfill her role as the help meet to her husband; God's blessings are promised in her behalf.

III. VOWS—WHO DO THEY INVOLVE?

Inasmuch as we are addressing the vows and their resulting effect upon marriage, let us look briefly at who they involve and once again by comparison.

1. Old Testament Covenant—His Chosen People (Israel)
2. New Covenant—His Bride (Church)
3. Marriage—Bride and Groom (Husband and Wife)

At every ceremony there are seen and unseen guests and attendants. The vows are therefore made to all those involved and witnesses to the ceremony (wedding) of initiation:

1. To each other
2. To God
3. To God's Word
4. To God's ministry
5. To God's angels (ministering spirits)
6. To God's church (alive and departed)
7. To parents
8. To friends

We are literally surrounded by witnesses when we say "I Do," and make a covenant to keep the vows we have agreed upon.

"Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses..."

Hebrews 12:1

CHART-32

IV. MARRIAGE—A VOW RELATIONSHIP

A. Purpose

Marriage is the tenderest, most sacred relationship of life. "Therefore, shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

This indicates that one is to be the complement and counterpart of the other, and that one is incomplete without the other. That is the Bible principle for the foundation of the home and family.

(Woman then follows with a reach of her right hand to clasp the man's hand and take her vows.)

"I, _____, take thee _____ to be my lawfully wedded husband; for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until God by death shall separate us."

(Say after minister the following:)

"The Lord Jesus Christ will always be our counsellor and guide—this we pledge."

"May the vows you have mutually pledged and your faith in each other be as lasting and eternal as the name of God's only Son."

(Bride and Groom kneel.)

"Let us pray: Most gracious God, who in thy infinite wisdom has ordained and blessed the institution of marriage, we ask that your richest blessings may abide with this man and with this woman, who have solemnly pledged themselves to each other in the holy bonds of matrimony. Grant that they may regard their home to be a sacred sanctuary, in which Jesus Christ, our Lord, shall be looked upon as the head of the family. Until that great and glorious day, keep us faithful to Thee and to each other. AMEN."

(Bride and Groom rise and stand again before minister.) SONG

"Forasmuch as _____ and _____ have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company in accordance with the laws of the State of _____ and have pledged their faith to each other, I pronounce that they are husband and wife. In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder.

(If embrace is desired, this is the time, it should be brief.)

(Then minister says:)

May the blessings of our Lord be upon _____ and _____ and abide with you now and forevermore. AMEN."

It all ended so quickly and seemed so simple. It was almost like this was the complete drama of life enacted in a few emotion-filled moments. But really...it was the first day of the rest of their marriage. The prelude that foreshadows a lifetime of joys, sorrows, ups and downs..."Until death do us part." That's the Bible plan for marriage.

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