

One Marriage Under God

A British Broadcasting Company reporter called our office a while back and asked, “How long has covenant marriage been in existence”? I chuckled to myself as I responded, “Since God established marriage”. The reporter’s question pertained to the Covenant Marriage laws passed in the states of Louisiana, Arizona and Arkansas. As I helped her locate the best sources of information, I wondered whether or not her call was prompted by the state of affairs we are facing in our nation regarding marriage.

Our nation is struggling with the legalization of homosexual relationships with the ultimate relationships being lived out in legalized homosexual unions called marriage. Why should we, as Christian, expect a sinful world to respond in any other way than a self-gratifying lifestyle, be it heterosexual or homosexual? The fact is, the world cannot embrace a Christian view without first viewing it.

The challenge we have as Christians is to present to the world, a view of marriage that dispels any shadow of doubt that marriage as God designed it is the best arena of human relationships through which you can experience love to its fullest degree. God’s view of marriage is a covenant relationship. In Ezekiel 16:8 as the Lord God speaks of His relationship with Jerusalem He said, ‘When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine,’ says the Lord God.” The following seven verses describe how God provided for His bride. In verse 15 and the next 44 verses describes how Jerusalem, the Bride fell prey to her own beauty and fame and became the queen of harlots. Then in verses 60-63 we read this account, “⁶⁰ Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. ⁶¹ Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed, when you receive your older and your younger sisters; for I will give them to you for daughters, but not because of My covenant with you. ⁶² And I will establish my covenant with you then you shall know that I am the Lord, ⁶³ that you may remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I provide you an atonement for all you have done.’ Says the Lord God.”

The Covenant Marriage Movement (CMM) consisting of over 60 Cooperating Ministries and Organizations and 27,000 couples around the world, has designated the third Sunday of February as Covenant Marriage Sunday. We are encouraging churches throughout the nation and around the world to corporately affirm and celebrate marriage as a covenant relationship. Phil Waugh, Executive Director of the CMM stated, “It is our goal to eventually have 50,000 congregations throughout the Judeo-Christian world affirming marriage as a covenant relationship during their morning worship hour(s).”

The world views marriage as a legal contract between two or more individuals. Contracts are based on rights and responsibilities and are motivated by self-interests rather than on unconditional love. A legal contract is necessary to begin and likewise end a relationship. But a covenant is more than a contract. It is more than a legal document declaring a state of interdependence.

For the past 30 years, our nation has been wandering in the wilderness of “no-fault divorce” brought about by an acceptance of the view that marriage is simply a contract. During this time of aimless wandering, the church has found herself taking on the beliefs and practices of our culture rather than impacting our culture with the life-changing Word of God regarding marriage.

The concept of marriage as a “contract” cannot be documented in God’s Word. In fact the word “contract” cannot be found in commonly used versions of the Bible. The word “covenant” on the other hand, can be found approximately 300 times—in Scripture. The Hebrew root word for covenant is “to cut”, which relates more to the rituals involving the sacrifice of animals that “sealed” the covenant.

The value of a “covenant marriage relationship” as opposed to a “contractual marriage agreement” lies in a person’s understanding and acceptance of God’s intent for marriage and the importance of His presence in the marriage.

God intends for marriage to be a lifelong covenant relationship between one man and one woman under His Lordship. When a couple shares their wedding vows, they are vowing to God, each other, their families, and their community to remain steadfast in unconditional love, reconciliation, and sexual purity, while purposefully growing in their covenant marriage relationship.

As your congregation comes together in worship on the third Sunday in February, we encourage you to proclaim God’s Word regarding marriage as a covenant relationship through which His name is glorified, the Bride of Christ is edified, and the nation is sensitized to His activity in our hearts and lives. In addition to preaching the Word we encourage each of you to provide an opportunity for the couples in your congregation to affirm their relationship as a covenant marriage by signing a Couple’s Commitment Card.

We have developed a Covenant Marriage Congregational Kit to assist you with the promotion and observance of the 2004 Covenant Marriage Sunday Celebration. The Congregational Kit (**\$49.95 + S&H**) includes the following *undated* items and more to help you celebrate the Covenant Marriage Sunday.

- *The Marriage Masterpiece*, a hardcover book by Al Janssen from Focus on the Family
- *Covenant vs. Contract: Experiencing God’s Blessing In & Through Your Marriage*, a Bible Study on Covenant Marriage by Dave Brown and Phil Waugh
- (3) - 11” X 17” Four-Color Posters
- (100) - Bulletin Inserts
- (50) - Couple’s Commitment Cards
- A Collection of Sermon Outlines by:
 - Dr. H.B. London (Vice President, Focus on the Family)
 - Dr. Dan Jarrell (Pastor, Anchorage, Alaska and FamilyLife Speaker)

- Rev. Leo Godzich (Director, National Association of Marriage Enhancement)
- Rev. Phil Waugh (Director, Covenant Marriage Movement)
- Rep. Tony Perkins (President, Family Research Council)
- Marriage Facts Sheet (Family Research Council)
- Whatever Happened to the Tie That Binds? (Bible Prayer Fellowship)
- An Alternative to Divorce (Marilyn Conrad, President, Covenant Keepers, Inc.)
- The Pastor's Marriage: For Better or Worse (H.B. London, Jr., Vice President, Focus on the Family)
- Covenant Affirmation Ceremony
- Covenant Marriage Certificate
- Administrative Booklet
- And much, much more