

I. The Meaning of a Covenant of Companionship

- A. “The essence of covenant is to be found in a particular kind of relationship between persons that involves mutual obligations and a commitment to responsibility and action. A key word in Scripture to describe that commitment is **‘faithfulness,’ acted out in a context of abiding friendship.** Covenant is thus an interpersonal framework of trust, responsibilities, and benefits.”

Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible

- B. A covenant of companionship is to mirror God’s covenant faithfulness and to mirror Christ’s love for the church.

1. “In terms of **initiation**, contracts are made by the exchange of promises, whereas **covenants are sworn by solemn oaths.**” [God is front-and-center!]

Oath: Vine’s Dictionary defines an oath as “a fence, an enclosure, that which restrains a person; hence, an oath.” Strong’s Dictionary: “a limit, ***a sacred restraint.***”

Initiation: A solemn oath

Deuteronomy 23:21 “That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for **you voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth.**” ESV adds “you will be guilty of sin.” NASV adds “the LORD your God will surely require it of you.”

Another name for a covenant in the Old Testament was “a walk into death” to emphasize the seriousness of it.

2. “In terms of **application**, contracts are limited by the terms of the exchange of property (“this is yours, that is mine”), while **covenants involve an exchange of life** (“I am yours, you are mine”), which covers a virtually unlimited range of human relations and duties.”

Colossians 3:18 own husbands; Ephesians 5:22, 28 your husbands
Colossians 3:19 and Ephesians 5:25 your wives

3. “In terms of **motivation**, contracts are based on getting profit and fulfilling **self-interest**, while covenants call for **self-giving loyalty** and **sacrificial love**.”
4. In terms of **duration**, “contracts are temporary while covenant bonds are **permanent**” [In the context of marriage, the oath includes the commitment “until till death parts us].” The Lexham Bible Dictionary

II. The Malfunction of a Covenant of Companionship That is Illegitimate or Broken.

- A. **A malfunction** is “a failure to operate or function in the normal or correct manner.”
 1. It does serious harm to your fellowship with God.
 2. **Verses 12-13** are sandwiched between two marital malfunctions that God hates.
 3. “A wake and aware.” Sinned with arrogance!

B. Offense 1: Illegitimate Covenants. 2:11 “Judah has dealt **treacherously**, And an **abomination** has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, For Judah has profaned The LORD'S holy institution which He loves: **He has married the daughter of a foreign god.**” It is a sin for a Christian to marry a non-believer.

II Corinthians 6:14 “Do not be **unequally yoked together with unbelievers**. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?”

C. Offense 2: Broken Vows. 2:13-14 Any sin against His institution of marriage is an abomination, including illegitimate divorce. [Divorce allowed for adultery]

Matt.19:9 “...whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”

Prov.2:17 “...who **forsakes** the companion of her youth and **forgets** the covenant of her God.”

Broken Vows. Divorce is allowed for abandonment.

[I Corinthians 7:10-16]

MacArthur: “When an unbelieving spouse cannot tolerate the partner’s faith and wants a divorce, it is best to let that happen in order to preserve peace in the family.

The bond of marriage is broken only by **death, adultery or an unbeliever’s leaving**. When the bond is broken in any of those ways, a Christian is free to marry another believer.”

- D. Both verses 15 and 16 state “take heed to your spirit.” **Verse 15** adds “And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.” **Verse 16** repeats “let none deal treacherously.” Wayne Grudem states that “These warnings show that for an unfaithful spouse **divorce is an offence against one’s own life**. (So guard yourself in your spirit might be rendered, ‘Therefore **watch out for your lives**’).” *Take your covenant oath very seriously!*

III. The Maintenance of a Covenant of Companionship

A. See your role as designed by God for His glory and the good of your mate.

1. **Genesis 2:24** “Therefore a **man** shall leave his father and mother and **be joined** to **his wife**, and they shall become **one flesh**.”
2. “Leaving what was and cleaving to what is.”
3. Joined: two “glued together” to make one.

4. Marriage “is not just a contract, a two-way relationship between a husband and wife, but a *covenant*, a **three-way relationship** of responsibilities and privileges which involves **God** as a witness to Whom the couple is permanently accountable.” *New Bible Commentary*
5. **Vv14 and 15** The singular word, **wife**, precludes **polygamy**. Polygamy makes the **unique intimacy** in a covenant of companionship impossible.

6. **V15** God's desire for a **godly offspring** re-enforces this union that can only come about between a **believing man** and a **believing woman**. This purpose of God precludes **homosexual** unions which can never produce offspring and which are condemned by God in numerous Bible passages [Lev 10:22; 20:13; Rom.1:27; 1 Cor.6:9; 1 Tim.1:10]

B. What are some ways that you can and must maintain your covenant of companionship?

1. Be **personally growing** in the grace and knowledge of God and in your commitment to Christ. [How would you describe yourself?]

If you are a new creation in Christ, **Christian** should be the **lens** through which you display and develop every other relationship—especially your covenant of companionship. “I am a Christian who is a husband, father, grandfather....”

2. Be **persistently giving** the clear signal that you value each other by serving each other in tangible ways.
3. Be **passionately guarding** against any and all threats to the intimacy that is part of a covenant of companionship. You guard what you value!
 - a. Guard against **apathy** in your relationship with Christ and with each other—beware of a **cruise control mentality**. Much like faith that is shown through works, marital growth necessitates action motivated by love..

- b. Guard against **over-familiarity** with anyone of the opposite sex at all times and in all places.
- c. Guard against **carelessness or carnality** when it comes to stimuli that tempt you to sin in thought, word or deed--soft or hard pornography-- whether printed, televised, rented, spoken or on social media (Instagram; Facebook; Twitter)

Take out the trash! [Renew your mind!]

d. Guard against **competition** for time for each other.

1. **Placing anyone** ahead of your relationship with **each other**. [That includes your children!]
2. **Working** for the purpose of buying “things” that take money, but that cannot compare to relationships that take time.
3. **Ministry commitments** that actually keep you from providing for your own family’s legitimate needs. [If I fail as a husband/father/grandfather, I have failed as a pastor....]

4. Guard against **personal interests** that may be legitimate, but that involve more of your time than your shared interests with each other.

[example: hobbies]

5. Guard against **sporadic church attendance** that hinders your growth and worship as a couple.

IV. The Ministry of a Covenant of Companionship

- A. A covenant of companionship is to be a **picture of Christ and the Church**. Your marriage says volumes about your testimony for Christ and your commitment to obeying His Word.
- B. A covenant of companionship **depends upon the Spirit's enabling**. Pray for grace to think, say and do all things for the glory of God and the good of your testimony. **Pray together!**

C. A covenant of companionship seeks to **bring the fruit of the Spirit** to bear upon all areas of life, especially the most intimate relationships that you have—your spouse and family.

1. By God's grace, we are to **love** each other intentionally, intimately and exclusively like we love no other person. The Bible makes it clear that the **husband** is to take the lead in picturing the sacrificial love that Christ has for His church--agape.

Agape is

Unmerited; it cannot be earned.

Unconditional; it has no prerequisites of any kind. [Not I will love you IF you line up under my leadership, and visa-versa....]

Unreserved; it has no areas that it does not address.

Unrelenting; it never ceases to fulfill its duty.

Unselfish; it often involves **sacrifice** for the one loved.

2. **Joy**: By God's grace, we are to demonstrate that **joyful sense of well-being** and that **peace of mind** that comes by trusting God in the triumphs and the trials that He brings into your life as a couple.
3. By God's grace, we are to show **longsuffering** in the face of adversity, **kindness** or tender concern in times of disagreement, and **goodness** in meeting each other's needs.

Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness

4. By God's grace, we are to be **faithful** to God, as well as loyal and trustworthy to each other.
5. By God's grace, we are to maintain a considerate **gentleness** in the middle of offenses towards each other, and to seek God-honoring reconciliation over any differences that we may have.

6. By God's grace, we are to practice **self-control** by governing the natural tendency of our flesh to be selfish, harsh, unloving, defensive and accusatory.

When it comes to the wife's primary role of lining up under the **headship** of her husband as God's appointed head of the home, the fruit of the Spirit is likewise irreplaceable.

Summary: A covenant of companionship is a **sacred oath** that is made before God by two Christians who enter a unique-and-exclusive, intimate-and-growing, life-long commitment of sacrificial love, steadfast faithfulness and selfless giving as each unconditionally fulfills his or her God-given roles for His glory. [*No matter what stage of life a marriage may be in, if it is not progressing towards this, it is a malfunction of God's plan!*]

The Clueless: Prepare with biblical pre-marital counseling

The Confused: Marriage is not based upon feeling; it is based upon faithfulness to your covenant responsibilities.

The Cruise-controllers: Make a conscious effort to guard and to grow your oneness for God's glory.

The Casualties: Be growing in grace and focus your energies upon serving God. Leave the future in His hands.

The Combatants: Get biblical counseling! Obey the Word!

The Companions: Be grateful examples and mentors!