

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

COVENANT

In this section, we will consider covenant, blood covenant, biblical examples of covenants, and how and why this all applies to your lives individually and to your marriage relationship. You might think this section is a major rabbit trail, a detour from our goal of preparing for marriage, but it really isn't.

Your views of life and your views of your relationship with your spouse (soon to be) will change. This is a given. It can also 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 mind, views, opinions, in your character, and even at least somewhat in your personalities. Events such as having children drastically change your inner lives and outer lifestyle. How you accept (or don't accept) these changes will affect your relationship either positively or negatively.

This changeable aspect of life is also the basis for modern marriage and divorce, which is exemplified by Hollywood. Many marriage vows are little more than expressions of sentimental, trite feelings. And we know that feelings are the most changeable things in the world. What is the number one reason people use for divorce? Without question, it is incompatibility. This reason is all a judge needs to hear to grant a divorce. Anymore, divorce is just probably assumed. In our culture, no one is expected to live together for life. ...It just isn't done. It's not normal. ...In fact, it probably isn't even healthy.

Hollywood-style marriages are certainly not built on the rock that Jesus spoke of. They are not even built on sand—even sand is too enduring. Instead, they're built on cotton candy—mere fluff. Movie stars fall in love during a filming session, and they fall out of love almost as quickly. The operative word is “fall” not “love”. When the relationship isn't as fun, bright, exciting, or rewarding as 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 become incompatible, or 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, then. If life is so changeable—if people are so changeable—how can there be any security in a relationship? How can you be sure that 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 be completely different. How then, can we be sure? You can do as much premarital preparation as possible by doing 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. But, people have done all these things and still divorced. There are those who have done little preparation and have had good marriages that last their lifetime. Is there something else to the equation? There is.

The answer, which we will cover now, is covenant. And although it has been said about each section of this course, it must be said for this one as well: Understanding covenant and the difference between it and an agreement—or a contract—is not just important ...it is vital.

Cracker Jack Weddings

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

Wedding vows are covenant vows; they are not for the expression of sentimental, trite feelings.

God's word reveals that vows are to be defended and kept even to death.

WHAT IS COVENANT?

In questions 1 and 2 below, give your definition and thoughts on covenant. Then continue and see how your ideas compare with what follows.

1. In your words, what is a covenant? _____

2. Is there a difference between a covenant and an agreement or contract. _____ Explain _____

3. List five examples of covenant making in the Old Testament (include scripture references.)
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____

4. The New Testament could more accurately be called the New _____
 or, more precisely, the New _____

God is a covenant-making and a covenant-keeping God

God not only made a covenant with man, but God keeps His covenant. God keeps his word. Herein is the strength and certainty of all life. The one thing we can be certain of is that God keeps his promise. [Gen 26:3] He watches over His word to perform it. [Jer 1:12, 11:5] Jesus said “heaven and earth will pass away, but my word will never pass away.” [Matt 24:35]

What does covenant have to do with marriage? [Malachi 2:13-15]

God keeps his word. We can depend on Him with certainty. He will do what he has said. Thus, the covenant of God applies to your relationship. Marriage is covenant. Your covenant vow is like a compass. No matter which direction you are headed, a compass always points north. You can always depend on it. Its dependability is the only reason we use it. If it doesn't always point north, we could never be sure when or if it actually is pointing north. Next, consider a toy gyroscope. If you spin the gyroscope fast enough, no matter which way you tilt the base it is on, it will always remain upright. That's what covenant is. It is the compass and gyroscope of marriage. No matter which way life turns, you remain in covenant. That is the certainty of covenant. Regrettably, many people don't know or understand this. Hence, breaking covenant does not seem a catastrophic thing to do ...but it is. If your word (or your fiancé(e)'s word) is not fixed and certain, you will have no compass to navigate life. Therefore, in marriage, covenant is more important *than* “love” i.e. *feelings* of love.

EQUALLY YOKED

- 1. Are you both in the faith? [1 Cor 7:39, 2 Cor 6:14] ____ Are you mature in faith? ____ [1 Cor 3:1]
- 2. Are you equally yoked—not only in being believers but also in your degree of desire and love for God? ____

There is more to being spiritually compatible than just believing in Christ or having the same doctrines. Believing in Christ is a radical deal.¹ If one of you is a “Sunday Christian” and the other is full of zeal for the Lord, you should consider this carefully. However, if both of you are lukewarm, it still doesn’t mean you are a good match; neither of you will spur the other’s growth.

- 3. Are you headed in the same direction spiritually—in your relation to Christ, in your devotion to Christ, in your devotion to his body (the real church)? ____
- 4. What vision has God placed in your mind ...your heart? _____

- 5. What is your personal vision for marriage? _____

- 6. Is it a shared, mutual vision? ____ [Amos 3:3]
- 7. Is it an adequate vision – a worthy vision? Does it need to be altered, expanded, upgraded? ____
 If so, how? _____

- 8. As a husband, where will you take your family spiritually? _____

- 9. Are you set and determined to be faithful to Christ and to your spouse through persecution, trials, sufferings, disease, poverty, prosperity, success, failure, fun times and un-fun (miserable) times ____ [Rom 8:35-39, 1 Cor 4:9-13, 2 Cor 6:3-10, 2 Cor 11:23-33]

- 10. Are you set and determined to be committed to a lifelong covenant with your spouse no matter what comes your way or no matter how you or your fiancé(e) change? ____

- 11. List the reasons, other than adultery, that would you divorce your spouse? _____

