

Marriage is a Covenant



The Key to a Successful Marriage (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you today. Let me begin by saying "Thank you" to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk, we will be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. Feel free to share with us your personal needs, your problems, your prayer requests.

Today I'm going to talk to you about marriage. In fact, I'm gong to begin with a very frank and personal question. Do you have a successful marriage? One that brings you real happiness and satisfaction? Or, if you're not married yourself, how about your friends? How many couples do you know who have the kind of marriage that you yourself would wish to have if you were married?

I remember once talking with a young man who'd come to me for help with his marriage. He was a minister in a large and well-known denomination. His experience in the ministry had left him sadly disillusioned. He said to me, "Brother Prince, I know about forty couples pretty well. Several of them are in the ministry with me. But to tell you the truth, I can't think of one couple that is really happy." Would you call that cynical or just realistic?

I want to share with you today that it is really possible to have a successful marriage. There is a key to such a marriage. I know, because I've found it.

First, let me give you a little of my own personal background, my qualifications, if you like. I want you to understand that what I have to say is based on experience, not merely on theory. It sometimes grieves me when I hear a so-called expert on marriage or home or the family holding forth in long psychological phrases, jargon, and yet when you examine their own lives in many cases they themselves are the product of broken homes and often they have at least one unsuccessful marriage in their own past. Personally, I can't listen to an expert like that because if a person doesn't make it work in his own life, I don't see how he's capable of counseling or advising or helping others.

In my case, I want you to know that what I am saying is not based primarily on university degrees or ordination papers. It so happens I have both. I have degrees from Cambridge University in Britain and I hold ordination papers. But the basis from which I am speaking to you today is experience.

My first marriage with Lydia lasted almost exactly thirty years. It was ended by her death in 1975. During our time together, we raised a family of nine daughters, so I know a little about raising children. We went through many hard experiences. We were in the middle of a war, the war that brought the state of Israel to birth. We faced a siege, famine and danger. We moved from country to country and continent to continent. We worked in Africa, in Canada, in Europe and in the United States. But our marriage was firm, happy, successful.

I want you to understand that the success of a marriage does not depend on lack of tension or problems but it depends on establishing a relationship which can stand and overcome those tensions and problems. I don't believe most marriages are easy in the accepted sense.

Let me just add that I am married again now for the second time and my second marriage also is happy and harmonious. You will say, "Well, where did you find the key to this kind of a marriage?" My answer is very simple, "In the Bible." I want you to know that I believe that the Bible is a true, relevant, up-to-date book. I believe it has the answers to life's problems today. I believe all we need to do is apply it and it works. The Bible attaches great importance to marriage—much more, I think, than most churchgoers or Christians realize.

According to the Bible, human history started with a marriage. God created Adam and then He said it was not good for him to be alone, and He Himself formed and brought to him a wife, a helpmeet. Marriage initiated in the heart of God, not in the thought of man, and I believe once we get away from God's concept of marriage, it's not going to work. Furthermore, the Bible ends with marriage. The great climax of all human history is the marriage supper of the Lamb. That's what all history is leading up to. So I think you'll agree with me when I say that if you view the Bible objectively, it places tremendous importance on marriage.

Marriage was conceived in the Bible. It was conceived in the heart of God and there, too, we find the key to a successful marriage.

In Ephesians, chapter 5, Paul has been speaking about marriage. He's been comparing the relationship of Jesus Christ to His church to that of a bridegroom to his bride. He concludes this comparison with this statement, "This is a great mystery…" One of the modern translations says, "a profound mystery…" He is speaking about marriage. Now we need to understand that in the language of the New Testament, the word "mystery" had a specific meaning. It meant a secret that most people didn't know but that could be learned if you went through a process of initiation and got in with the right group. And so, that's what marriage is. It's a secret that most people don't know but it can be learned if you go through the process of initiation. And that's what I'm going to try to help you do in my talk today and the rest of this week.

Now, to come to this secret that is the key to a successful marriage, I want to turn to the last book in the Old Testament, the Book of Malachi. At this time, Israel as a nation were not very close to God. God had given them His law but, in most cases, they had been somewhat disobedient and, as a result, they were not enjoying the blessings that God had promised them. They had a lot of problems and some of their problems were like the problems of many people today, they were in their homes and in their marriages. And God puts His finger on the reason for their problems. And I'm going to read to you Malachi 2:13–14:

> "And this is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accept it with favor from your hand."

Do you understand, they were religious people, they were doing a lot of praying but God wasn't answering their prayers. And they said, "For what reason?" And then the Lord gives them this answer:

> "Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant."

I want you to notice three points about that. First of all, religion does not necessarily produce successful marriages. These people were very religious, they were praying all the time, they were in the temple, but their homes were in a mess. Do you know that that is true of many situations today? A lot of religious marriages do not have happy homes. So bear that in mind first of all. Religion does not necessarily produce a happy home.

Then the second point I want to bring to your notice is that a wrong relationship between a husband and wife hinders a relationship with God. God said He wouldn't hear their prayers and they said, "Why?" and He said to them, "Because you haven't dealt right with your wife. You've been unfaithful to the wife of your covenant."

And other Scriptures tell us the same. In 1 Peter 3, Peter instructs husbands to be careful how they live with their

wives so that their prayers will not be hindered. In other words, if you pray out of an unhappy marriage, and it is not an ordered home, your prayer may not be very effective. God says to get your home in order.

Then the third point I want to bring to you is the vital one—it is the key. It is the last word of that Scripture, the word "covenant." This is the key to a successful marriage. It is the realization, out of Scripture, that marriage is a covenant. Covenant is one of the key concepts of the Bible. The same word that is translated "covenant" is also translated "testament." And so you see that the whole Bible comes to us in the form of two covenants or two testaments. I think that shows the importance that God attaches to a covenant that His whole word to us, His written word, comes in the form of a covenant.

Now there are two essential features to a covenant that affect marriage. I am going to mention them. The first is: A covenant demands commitment—total, unreserved, whole-hearted commitment. And that is part of marriage. Marriage is not an experimental relationship, it is not a trial. It can only succeed on the basis of total commitment. Secondly, in a covenant, God sets the terms for a commitment. Man does not set the terms, God sets the terms. This was the problem with Israel in the days of Malachi they were trying to set their terms for how marriage should be and God said, "I won't accept that." So I want you to hold on to these two important points: first of all, that marriage begins with a commitment; secondly, that God sets the terms. Remember that, because I am going to be closing my message today but I'll be back again with you at the same time tomorrow. Tomorrow I'll be dealing further with the nature of covenant and I'll be explaining in a practical way just how it works in marriage.

Radio Program

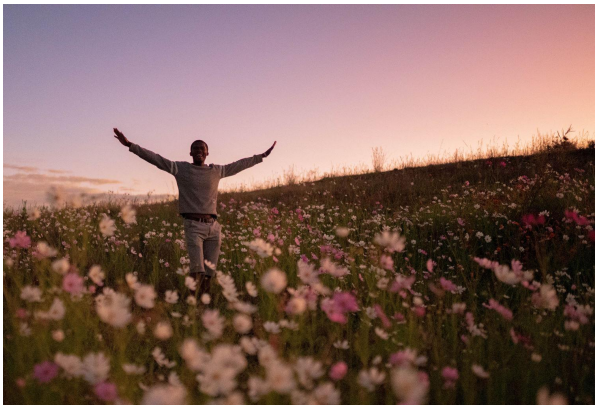
Transcript: TS-R001-101-ENG
Last Updated: 12 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

Bible Teaching Resources



Books

Illuminate and expand your understanding of the Bible with the Derek Prince collection of Christian books.



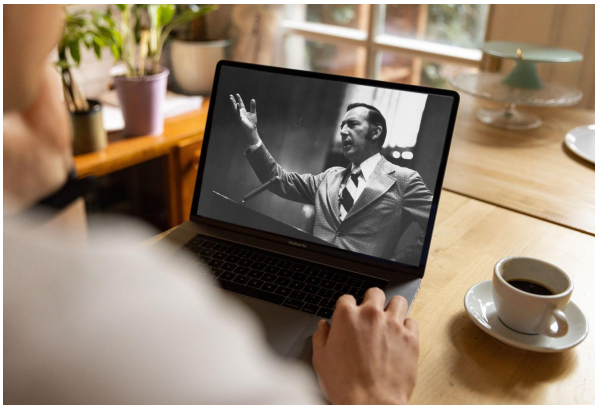
Daily Devotionals

Browse free biblically inspired daily devotionals by Derek Prince for practical teachings to uplift your Christian faith.



Legacy Radio

Listen to inspiring 10-minute messages and connect faith to life with the Derek Prince Legacy Radio podcast.



Sermons

Watch original and digitally remastered sermons by Derek Prince. Includes full message transcripts (free download).



Official App

Available free, download the official Derek Prince Ministries app and equip your faith, anywhere, anytime.



Proclamations

Declare life and experience the transformative power of God's Word with our bible-based Proclamations.

Copyright © Derek Prince Ministries