

Marriage is a Covenant



God is a Matchmaker (Part 9)
by Derek Prince

In my talks this week I've been sharing with you the conditions which you must be prepared to meet if you really desire to experience marriage on the highest level of God's will.

First and foremost, you must walk in the light of God's Word, the Bible. This immediately rules out marriage between a believer and an unbeliever. Understand, I'm not speaking about those who became believers after marriage, but I'm speaking about believers who have the freedom of choice as to whom they will marry. The Bible rules out even contemplating marriage with an unbeliever.

On the basis of obedience to God's Word, I then outlined seven steps which you need to take if you desire God's highest in marriage. These briefly are the seven steps:

First, believe in God's purpose for you. Live out your whole life on the basis of faith. The righteous shall live by his faith.

Second, commit your body totally to God. Place your body without reservation on the altar of God. The altar will sanctify that which you place upon it and you can enter into marriage with a sanctified body.

Third, be prepared for death and resurrection. When you make a commitment, very often things work out exactly the opposite to what you expect. That's the process of death. If you'll submit to it, out of it God will bring a beautiful resurrection.

Fourth, cultivate right friends and right fellowship. Because normally, though not always, it'll be someone with whom you have cultivated friendship that you will ultimately marry. If you cultivate the wrong friends, you're liable to marry the wrong people.

Fifth, realize your value as God's created masterpiece. You're God's workmanship. Don't make yourself cheap.

Sixth, be prepared to wait. Imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what God has promised. It's not merely faith, it's faith and patience. God has a time for everything. He's got a date in His eternal calendar for you to get married

in His will. Don't jump the gun.

Seven, be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Somewhere, God has an appointment for you. If you let the Holy Spirit lead you day by day, you'll not miss that appointment. You'll meet the mate that God has appointed for you.

Today I'm going to speak about the actual nature of marriage. In Ephesians 5:32, Paul calls marriage a mystery. That is a secret into which we need to be initiated. So many people today enter marriage without any understanding of what they are committing themselves to or what will be required of them. This is one main reason why so many marriages fail. The key to understanding this mystery of marriage is found in the Bible. The Bible reveals the essential nature of marriage, that marriage is a covenant. This is the most important thing that you need to know about marriage.

Now, covenant is one of the main themes of the Bible. The same word that's translated "covenant" is also translated "testament." So the whole Word of God comes to us in the form of two covenants or two testaments: the New and the Old Covenant. So obviously we need to understand the nature of covenant if we're really going to understand the nature of marriage.

I want briefly to state three relevant facts about covenant. First, covenant is entered into by a sacrifice. No sacrifice, no covenant. Secondly, those who enter covenant must lay down their lives for one another. Third, covenant requires total commitment and that's true of marriage. Marriage is not an experiment, it's a commitment. To speak about a trial marriage is a contradiction in terms. If it's trial, it isn't marriage.

For Christians, the sacrifice through which they must enter into marriage is the atoning death of Jesus Christ on our behalf. I'm going to read something from my book, *The Marriage Covenant*, which I believe says this as clearly as I'm able to say it. This is what I've said in *The Marriage Covenant*:

> "The sacrifice upon which the covenant of Christian marriage is based, is the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf. He is the sacrifice through which, by faith, a man and a woman can pass into the relationship of marriage as God Himself ordained that it should be. In marriage, a man and woman pass through the death of Jesus Christ on their behalf into a totally new life and a totally new relationship which would have been impossible without the death of Jesus Christ. The covenant of Christian marriage is made at the foot of the cross.
>
> There are three successive phases in the outworking of this relationship. First, a life is laid down. Each lays down his life for the other. The husband looks back at Christ's death on the cross and says, 'That death was my death. When I came through the cross, I died. Now I am no longer living for myself.' The wife likewise looks at the cross and says the same, 'That death was my death. When I came through the cross, I died. Now I am no longer living for myself.'
>
> Henceforth, each holds nothing back from the other. Everything the husband has is for the wife. Everything the wife has is for the husband. No reservations, nothing held back. It is a merger, not a partnership.
>
> Second, out of that death comes a new life. Each now lives out that new life in and through the other. The husband says to the wife, 'My life is in you. I am living out my life through you. You are the expression of what I am.' Likewise the wife says to the husband, 'My life is in you. I am living out my life through you. You are the expression of what I am.'
>
> Third, the covenant is consummated by physical union, and this in turn brings forth fruit which continues the new life that each has been willing to share with the other. In the whole realm of living creatures, God has ordained this basic principle: without union there can be no fruit. Covenant leads to shared life and fruitfulness; life that is not shared remains sterile and fruitless.
>
> This approach to marriage, which sees it in terms of a covenant, is very different from the attitude with which most people today enter into marriage. Basically, the attitude of our contemporary culture is, 'What can I get? What is there in this for me?' I believe that any relationship approached in this attitude is doomed to end in failure. The one who approaches marriage as a covenant does not ask, 'What can I get?' Rather he asks, 'What can I give?' And he goes on to answer his own question: 'I give my life. I lay it down for you, and then I find my new life in you.' This applies equally to each party, to the husband and to the wife. To the natural

> mind this sounds ridiculous. Yet it is, in fact, the secret of real life, real happiness, and real love."



That's a reading from my book, *The Marriage Covenant*.

Now I'm going to take a few minutes just to apply in a practical way, the principles in that passage that I read from my book, *The Marriage Covenant*.

First of all, commitment is the key. And in marriage, Christian marriage, there has to be a two-way commitment. The first commitment is of each mate to Jesus Christ. That's where it all begins. Only through commitment to Jesus Christ is the grace of God released into a life that will make the kind of marriage God intends an actual possibility.

The second commitment is to each other. Again, it's commitment that releases the needed grace. God has arranged it that way. That's why a trial marriage is nonsense. Because where there's no real, permanent commitment, there's no release of God's grace and without God's grace, marriage on the level of God's will is impossible for us poor human beings. But God has arranged it this way, that if we make the commitment, through the commitment the needed grace is released into our lives.

Second, my final comment on this is that the motive must be to give, not to get. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." There is no area of life in which this is more true than in the area of marriage. Marriage is not a bargain hunt, it's not "What can I get? What will please me? What will satisfy me? What can my wife do that'll make me happy, or my husband?" Marriage is, "What can I give? How can I cater to the needs of my mate? How can I make my mate happy? How can I develop the full potential that's in this person that God has so sovereignly and wonderfully committed to me?"

You see, the evidence of a successful husband is his wife and the evidence of a successful wife is her husband. When the husband is just grasping for himself, he frustrates his wife and she's no glory or crown to him and likewise, on the other side. It's a mutual laying down of life each for the other and both for Christ. That's the principle that will make a marriage work.

Radio Program

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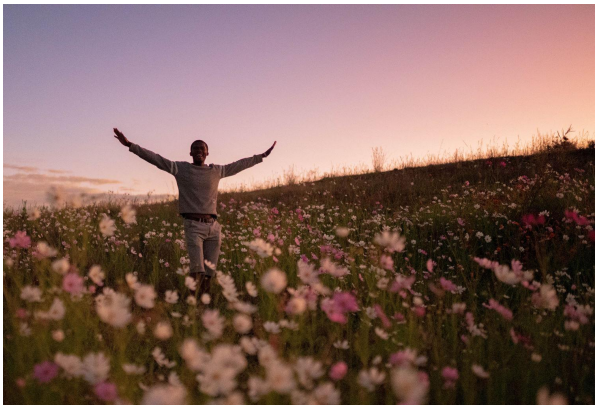

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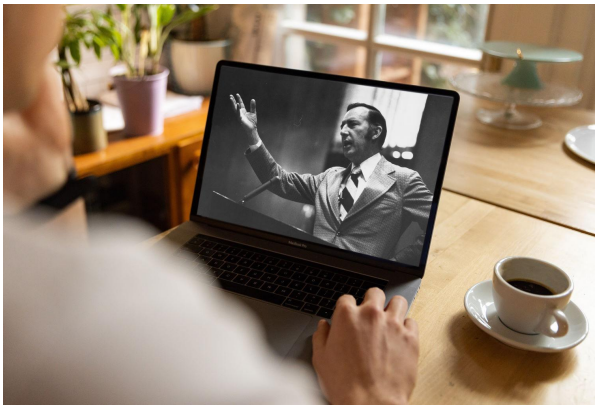

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