

A Blood Covenant Marriage

“A Covenant is intended by God to be a lifelong fruitful relationship between a man and woman. Marriage is a vow to God, to each other, our families, and our community to remain steadfast in unconditional love, reconciliation, and sexual purity, while purposefully growing in our covenant marriage relationship.” *From Covenant Marriage Movement*

A covenant agreement is equally binding on both partners, unconditional, and irrevocable until death. Our delicate, tender, sensitive hearts cannot survive joined together in a marriage without this level of commitment from each other. It becomes the protective covering that allows a husband and wife to trust each other and become one in every way.

A covenant marriage provides the environment where a couple can feel safe, protected, and secure to share everything together. It is a place where the two can truly be open and transparent with each other and intimacy can flourish. It is where we share heart-to-heart our dreams, hopes, fears, struggles, past hurts, heart wounds, and joys. *Nothing is hidden or "off-limits" for discussion and sharing.* It is a state where the walls are down and the roof off of our lives, totally open for the other person to see. I'm giving someone the privilege to look into the depths of my heart without shame or fear of what is there or how that other person will respond.

Elements that make up a covenant marriage

- It is the fruits of a loving faithful relationship
- Both partners take responsibility for their actions
- The relationship is based on freedom of choice that grows from trust and respect
- The relationship is rooted in actions based upon their choices and not their feelings
- Both partners nurture their relationship – it grows as they continue to build each other up
- It is based on commitment freely given – selfless love given and received
- There is nothing that either partner does or says that will stop the other partner from loving them

Blood Covenant vs. Contract

<u>Blood Covenant</u>	<u>Contract</u>
Unilateral	Bilateral
Independent of the choices of others	Dependent on the performance of others
Irrevocable	Revocable
Can never be broken	Breakable by either party upon non-performance
Undissolvable	Dissolvable
Total obligation to each other	No obligation to keep or be bound by it if there is non-performance
Based on one's word	Based on the performance of the other
Promise is kept regardless of the circumstances	"I'll keep my word if you will keep yours."

Taken from Craig Hill's book *Two Fleas and No Dog*

In history, especially in the Middle East, blood covenants were the most sacred, enduring, and binding agreements known to man.

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- Men would rather die than dishonor themselves by breaking a blood covenant.
- His word was more valuable than his life.
- "Only truly free people are able to give their word and keep it no matter what the cost."
- The covenant does not depend upon the performance of the other party keeping the covenant.
- One's own actions are not dependent upon the actions of the other person in covenant.

Josh. 9:9-14

Contracts are a modern development and more common in Western societies.

- Because of the less binding nature of contracts, they are legal documents written by lawyers to nail down exactly what the two parties are agreeing to and what conditions will make the agreement null and void.
- Commitments are based upon the performance of the other person in the contract.
- Either party is free to break the contract if the conditions in the document are not exactly meet.

For Example,

If a marriage is based on a contract (until adultery, abuse, incompatibility, or someone else comes along), then there is no protective covering and the marriage is destined to fall apart. Without covenant, the marriage will be full of pain and hurt and life becomes one of pain avoidance rather than intimacy and love. Contract marriages create kids with no sense of stability in their lives, who cannot commit to anything, and have no ability to think long term. They usually cohabit rather than get married.

In a covenant marriage ("Until death we do part...") the covenant provides a safe secure environment where differences can be worked out and the marriage will last a lifetime. Covenant marriages help protect the heart from damage and reduce the pains and hurts. Covenant marriages are all about protecting and meeting the needs of another at your own expense. You honor the words of the marriage regardless of what your spouse says or does.

A covenant marriage is also important for the health and wellbeing of the whole family. A covenant marriage will help divorce proof your marriage relationship when both the man and woman are committed to the union. Father hates divorce because it makes it impossible to train up Godly children. Divorce destroys your credibility to pass on Biblical truths to your children.

"And here's a second offense: You fill the place of worship with your whining and sniveling because you don't get what you want from God. Do you know why? Simple. Because God was there as a witness when you spoke your marriage vows to your young bride, and now you've broken those vows, broken the faith-bond with you vowed companion, your covenant wife. God, not you, made marriage. His Spirit inhabits even the smallest details of marriage. And what does He want from marriage? Children of God, that's what. So guard the spirit of marriage within you. Don't cheat on your spouse." Mal. 2:15-16 MSG

See also **Gen. 18:19, Deut. 6:7**

A Look at Blood Covenants

Seven Components of Blood Covenants

1. Unilateral commitment before God. It is not dependent upon the fulfillment of the other party.

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2. Terms were Expressed including duration and scope of the commitment which usually included a commitment of all available resources up to one's own life.
3. Witnesses attested to the making of the covenant and an attorney was appointed to ensure that the covenant was carried out.
4. Exchange of a token of the covenant – Either both parties would make a scar on their body or a container would be worn with the covenant in it. It was a sign to all that this person had entered into covenant (ex. Circumcision of the Jews **Gen. 17:10**)
5. Vows were made before God of fidelity until death. The vows usually included blessings to those who keep the covenant and curses to those who did not. These vows would never be broken.
6. Exchange of Gifts – There were usually four valuable gifts involved:
 - a) **Coat** or robe representing the family, tribe, or status
 - b) **Weapons belt** representing the strengths and military might of each party and a commitment to defend each other to the death against all enemies. It also signified that they would never use these weapons against each other.
 - c) **Their name** – each would take the name of the other and make it part of their own, signifying access to all their wealth.
 - d) **Blood** was shed either through direct exchange or by a sacrificed animal. It signified that I am willing to give my life for you. They became one.
7. Sharing a Covenant Meal which was symbolic of their friendship. They would break bread together.

Wedding Ceremony Covenant

There are many similarities between a blood covenant and the traditional wedding ceremony.

1. They are conducted in the presence of God
2. Terms are expressed: "I take thee for better or for worse..."
3. Wedding gifts are exchanged. Groom gives his name to his bride. On their wedding night, blood is shed when the hymen is broken the first time a woman has sex. They give each other all they are, the most precious part of their being.
4. Vows are pronounced. "I take you to be my lawfully wedded wife/husband, to have and to hold from this day forward..."
5. Witnesses are present and the best man and pastor who marries them signs the marriage certificate to ensure that the wedding covenant is carried out. The Lord is also a witness. **Mal. 2:14** *"For the Lord has been witness...yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant."*

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6. Rings are exchanged and worn as a sign to all of the covenant that they just made.
7. A covenant meal is held at the reception. The two serve cake to each other as their sign of commitment.
8. When a father takes his daughter and gives her away to the man waiting at the altar to marry her, he is symbolically following the example of our heavenly Father bringing Eve to Adam in the Garden and presenting His Bride (the church) to Jesus.

Threshold Covenant

There is another strong covenant from times past that is symbolically portrayed as one of the traditions associated with getting married called the Threshold Covenant.

- It is a relationship established between the owner of a house and anyone who steps across the threshold to their dwelling.
- There is an implied covenant of hospitality entered into when the guest crosses over the threshold.
- The host places blood on the threshold signifying his willingness to receive the guest in peace.
- The guest would step across the threshold, not on it which was an insult to the host. (where the superstition of stepping on cracks comes from!)
- By stepping over the threshold, the guest was agreeing to come under the authority of the owner of the house while in his house. He would support, honor, and bless the host.
- The host would then take care of the guest and defend them even with his life until the guest left. They were treated like family as long as they were in the house. (similar to coming under the shadow of the Almighty in **Ps. 91**)

In Jewish custom the bridegroom went away and built a house, put blood on the threshold, and after the wedding he would pick up his bride and step over the threshold. When his right foot hit inside of the house, he entered into a life-long covenant with his bride and she was bound to him into his family for the rest of her life. (This is why we carry our bride into the hotel room on the first night!)

The Foundation for Trust and Intimacy

As you can see, blood covenants are strong commitments to each other that allow a husband and wife to feel safe in the relationship.

- They can feel safe to share their deepest feelings and hidden secrets of their lives without fear of the other person leaving them.
- This opens transparency, builds intimacy and strength between the couple.
- It allows a couple to enjoy the deepest levels of romantic love in a marriage. Of course, this requires a commitment to the covenant by both partners!

Much of this lesson was taken from Craig Hill's book *Two Fleas and No Dog* and Jimmy Evans' *Marriage Today*

Written and compiled by Richard and Susan McCoy, Abba's Arms International, Inc. 1406 Harris St. State College, PA 16803 2018