

Rules of Engagement

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How exciting that you are getting ready to “tie the knot”. In marriage, a knot is tied when there’s a desire for something to never come undone. In ancient times, whenever a covenant was established, there was typically a shedding of blood in order to seal the covenant. This was a symbolic gesture that basically communicated “I am willing to have my blood shed if I break this oath” or “the only way this oath can be broken will be upon the pain of death”.



SESSION OBJECTIVES


This Rules of Engagement session is designed to help you understand:

- (a)** what a marriage covenant actually necessitates
- (b)** the four characteristics of a biblical marriage bond
- (c)** the importance of commitment

Unwavering commitment.

The Hebrew word for covenant is “berit” (בְּרִית) which has the root meaning to “bond, fetter, yoke or chain up”. From a biblical standpoint, a marriage covenant is where two people become tied together forever.

A marriage covenant is only entered into by a couple when they are willing to do whatever it takes to love, protect and cherish not just each other, but also the institution of marriage itself. It’s a gravely serious, permanent and unchanging commitment.



**“I TAKE YOU FOR MY
LAWFULLY WEDDED
WIFE/ HUSBAND,
TO HAVE AND TO
HOLD FROM THIS
DAY FORWARD; FOR
BETTER, FOR WORSE;
FOR RICHER, FOR
POORER; IN SICKNESS
AND HEALTH; UNTIL
DEATH DO US PART.”**

What does it practically mean?

Even though a marriage bond is designed to be permanent and unchanging, it should be recognised that YOU WILL CHANGE. You will likely develop different interests, habits and priorities. Despite growing, maturing and evolving personally, what can you practically do to ensure your dedication to your spouse and commitment to your marriage doesn't change?



What does it practically mean to each of you, to uphold the following principles in marriage?

1. Being transparent and honest towards each other

ZECHARIAH 8:16

Him:

Her:

2. Forsaking all others (forfeiting your availability)

ZECHARIAH 8:16

Him:

Her:

3. Being patient, supportive, nurturing and kind

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4

Him:

Her:

4. Remaining focused on the positives, despite the negatives

1 PETER 4:8

Him:

Her:

5. Unreserved extension of love and respect

EPHESIANS 5:33

Him:

Her:

6. Managing emotions and keeping no record of wrong

1 CORINTHIANS 13:5

Him:

Her:

7. Striving to maintain peace and unity

EPHESIANS 4:3

Him:

Her:

A close-up photograph of a bride's hands holding a large, elegant bouquet of flowers. The bouquet features a mix of white, red, and peach-colored roses, along with greenery and white hydrangeas. The bride is wearing a white wedding dress, and the background is softly blurred, showing the groom in a suit. The overall lighting is warm and romantic.

**A MARRIAGE COVENANT
IS NOT JUST ABOUT A
COMMITMENT BETWEEN
TWO PEOPLE...**

**it's a
commitment
between a
married couple
and God.**

Core characteristics of a covenant marriage.

Beyond enduring commitment, marriage covenants are entered into for the benefit of the 'other' person. In other words, each person's intention is to make the other happy. Covenants are also unconditional. The vow you make to your spouse has no sub-conditions or strings attached because covenants are based on 'steadfast' love. This means that your love is unwavering, persistent and trustworthy. Yet when mistakes are made, feelings are hurt and trust is broken, covenant relationships not only confront, address and resolve issues, they are also quick to forgive.

Initiated for the benefit of the other



Unconditional & uncompromising



Commitment

Steadfast in love. Unwavering, persistent & trustworthy



Not afraid to confront, address & resolve issues. Quick to forgive



When trouble strikes, a covenant marriage strikes back!

When a relationship encounters trouble – as all marriages from time to time do (for example, stresses and strains, irritations and idiosyncrasies, or even bankruptcy and betrayal), a couple with a covenant perspective on marriage stays committed to the relationship. They don't resist getting separated or divorced out of an obligation or adherence to a law. Rather, the covenant of marriage serves as a motivator to make appropriate changes, or seek the appropriate professional, to help bring the marriage back to a place of health.



Match each of the following scenarios with the appropriate covenant characteristic.

1. Unwavering commitment	2. Benefit for the other	3. Unconditional & uncompromising	4. Steadfast in love	5. Confront & quick to forgive
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The diagram consists of seven scenarios on the left, each in a red box, and five characteristics on the top, each in a grey box. Lines connect each scenario to a characteristic, with red circles marking the connection points. The connections are as follows:

- Scenario 1: "We argued at length, but in the end we agreed. It was difficult, but positive." connects to Characteristic 5: "Confront & quick to forgive".
- Scenario 2: "Instead of ignoring the fact that the job hadn't been done, I reminded them of their promise." connects to Characteristic 2: "Benefit for the other".
- Scenario 3: "I keep myself in shape because a 'healthy me' is one of the best gifts I can give." connects to Characteristic 4: "Steadfast in love".
- Scenario 4: "I try my best to be trustworthy. If I say I am going to do something, I do it." connects to Characteristic 1: "Unwavering commitment".
- Scenario 5: "When I let go of hurts, I discover the gift of forgiveness ends up being for us both." connects to Characteristic 5: "Confront & quick to forgive".
- Scenario 6: "I'm committed to making it work, even if we need to seek professional advice." connects to Characteristic 1: "Unwavering commitment".
- Scenario 7: "It doesn't matter what they've done, I choose to love them anyway - no strings attached." connects to Characteristic 3: "Unconditional & uncompromising".

How committed are you?

One of the most common excuses couples use when filing for divorce is having 'irreconcilable differences'. However, the truth is, most couples will encounter varying opinions on things, especially when making decisions. Rather than requiring that you and your spouse concur on every point of view, couples that thrive know how to work out their differences, for the bigger cause of unity in marriage. Despite having major differences, empirical research studies have found that couples that are highly committed to one another, tend not to get divorced. Rather than 'being right', they commit to 'staying right'.

THE GOAL IS NOT TO TRY AND GET YOUR SPOUSE TO BECOME MORE LIKE YOU, RATHER FOR YOU BOTH TO BECOME...

more like Christ!