

# THE VOW

---

When we stand before God, our family and friends, we make some vows. In this session I want to remind you of four vows you made at the altar. And if you will keep these vows sacred I believe that you will “finish together.” (Jimmy Evans – “Marriage On The Rock”)

Society says ... “To really be fulfilled in life, you have to find the one.” But if you look around it seems as though a lot of people have found the wrong one. Right?

**Illustrations:** Nearly 70% of married men & 60% of married women have affairs. In the U.S. less than half of couples who marry will stay married 15 years. Every 10 to 13 seconds another couple divorces. (Dr. Holly Hines – “Sexual Detour”)

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”

**Genesis 2:24-25 (NIV)**

## I. The Vow Of Priority

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother ...”

**Genesis 2:24 (NIV)**

leave: `azab (aw-zab'); to loosen, relinquish, to let go of what you were holding and commit to something new.

Prior to marriage our number two is to be our parents. Some of us need to heed this warning ... we need to prioritize our spouse above our parents but below our Heavenly Father. **Let's say this aloud together ...**

**I PROMISE THAT GOD WILL BE MY #1 PRIORITY  
AND MY SPOUSE WILL BE MY #2.**

To really be fulfilled in life you have to find the One! God is the one ...

“You shall have no other gods before me.”

**Exodus 20:3 (NIV)**

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,  
and all these things will be given to you as well.”

**Matthew 6:33 (NIV)**

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

<sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it:

Love your neighbor as yourself.”

**Matthew 22:37-39 (NIV)**

If you're pursuing marriage more than you are God ... that's called idolatry.

# THE VOW

---

If your marriage isn't working like you'd hoped ... I can promise you that somewhere your priorities are out of whack. Best intentions won't get it! You need to repent and realign your life. *What else is competing for your top priorities?*

- Kids become dominant – you become child-centered parents and rather than focusing on your God-relationship and your spouse you become crippled by running your kids everywhere to everything.
- Careers climb up or we become consumed with our hobbies, health, house, church, online activities (Facebook, Twitter, Blog, etc.) or friendships.

Men ... most of us would say that we'd be willing to die for our wives. But what God is asking us to do is to LIVE for them ...

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ...”

**Ephesians 5:25 (NIV)**

How do we protect? We protect physically from harm. We protect spiritually by personally assuring that we do whatever it takes to make God the central focus in our family life. We protect financially by tithing, keeping out of debt and creating a sense of security for our wives.

**Interview: How do you practically keep God in the number one slot? (Intentional, Routine, Plan) What advice would you have for a dual-income family? How do you feel being my #2? I believe that Amie and I have what we have because God is our #1 and we're each other's #2.**

*“Neglect the whole world rather than each other.”*

*Ann Landers*

Assignment: Ask God to be first in your life & pray that He will empower you to protect your priorities.

## **II. The Vow Of Pursuit**

By nature, we pursue what we don't have. When we're first dating we go all out in pursuing one another. We do some of the craziest things in the name of love. **(1<sup>st</sup> Date – Stage; 6 Month Anniversary Scavenger Hunt; Movie Theater Dance)** But as time goes on we begin to take each other for granted. Show me a couple who is divorced and I'll guarantee you that one or both stopped pursuing the other.

What area is there in life where you can neglect and see improvement? Physical body, yard, business, etc. Why would you think you can neglect your marriage and that it will become better?

**I PROMISE TO ALWAYS PURSUE MY TWO.**

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

**Genesis 2:24 (NIV)**

# THE VOW

---

United – dabaq (daw-bak'); cling or adhere; to catch by pursuit, pursue hard with affection and devotion. Dabaq is translated ...

“I follow close behind you, protected by your strong right arm.”

**Psalms 63:8 (TLB)**

“They are joined fast to one another; they cling together and cannot be parted.”

**Job 41:17 (NIV)**

“And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men; and pursued hard after them unto Gidom, and slew two thousand men of them.”

**Judges 20:45 (KJV)**

So how are we doing on pursuing one another these days? (Genesis 20 ... Jacob pursued Rachel and was given Leah. So he worked for seven more years for Rachel. He pursued her!)

Many of us have the best of intentions when it comes to pursuing our spouse. We long to keep the value high but other things compete for our attention.

Here is a simple phrase that will help you to understand this ... “Direction – not intention – determines our destination!”

We judge our spouse by his or her ACTIONS and ourselves by our INTENTIONS. So how do we close the gap between intentions and actions? **Here are some practical suggestions ...**

## 1. When You Think Something Good, Say It. (Every Time!!)

“But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.”

**Hebrews 3:13 (NIV)**

- a. Pursue her with words of affection. (non-sexual affection, I love you BECAUSE)
- b. Pursue him with words of affirmation. (he needs to know that you believe in him; he is becoming what you say about him and see in him, do you believe in me?)

## 2. When You Think Something Special, Do It.

Chocolate, flowers, bathing the kids, making the bed, unloading the dishwasher, vacuuming, bring a drink, post-it notes, cards, dates, sex (often, creatively), etc. (All points evaporate at midnight.)

“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.”

**James 4:17 (NIV)**

# THE VOW

---

## 3. When You Want Something Different, Be It.

Instead of whining about what isn't, be what you long to become. Less of you and more of Christ. Stop focusing on what isn't being done, focus on what you long to become.

“Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”

**Romans 12:2 (NLT)**

If you don't like what you're GETTING out of the relationship ... think about what you're GIVING to the relationship. For those of you who haven't had or don't currently have the kind of marriage that God wants, I want to give you a couple of pieces of advice ...

a. To get what you've never had, you must do what you've never done. (Bring Christ)

b. To get what you once had, you must do what you once did. (You pursued)

“Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.”

**Revelation 2:5 (NIV)**

If you're at this seminar and have not yet given your heart to Christ you need to know that He is pursuing you ...

“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?”

**Luke 15:4 (NIV)**

## III. The Vow Of Partnership

**I PROMISE OUR MARRIAGE WILL BE ABOUT “WE” AND NOT “ME”.**

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

**Genesis 2:24 (NIV)**

One – ‘echad (ekh-awd’); united, altogether, completely joined as one.

“A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

**Ecclesiastes 4:12 (NIV)**

Marriage is a covenant not a contract ...

“The LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.”

**Malachi 2:14 (NIV)**

# THE VOW

---

A contract is an agreement between two people. A contract is based on mutual distrust.

**Contract** – a conditional agreement protecting your rights and limiting your responsibilities.

A covenant is when two become one. A covenant is based on mutual commitment.

**Covenant** – an unconditional surrendering of your rights while increasing your responsibilities.

covenant: *beriyth* (ber-eeth); cutting, a binding agreement, a blood covenant.

Old Testament practice – wedding ceremony, priest would cut the hands of the bride and groom and join them together and bind their hands with a rope to signify their covenant union. The gift of lovemaking that God designed between two virgins would then be further signified by their union on the night of the wedding (shedding of blood; physical picture of deeper union).

This is why it so critical that we don't do "married things" (conversation, touching, kissing, sex, living together) outside the bond of marriage! Parents, we MUST instill this in our children!!!

"Honor marriage, and guard the sacredness of sexual intimacy between wife and husband. God draws a firm line against casual and illicit sex."

**Hebrews 13:4 (MsgB)**

A covenant partnership includes godly leadership (NOT domination or control; we are to be point leaders – point our families in the godly direction – working together to develop the core values of your family – thankfulness, hospitality, generosity, etc.; this can function with harmony and fluidity) and mutual submission (not about me but about me) ...

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.<sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.<sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything."

**Ephesians 5:21-24 (NIV)**

A covenant is not 50/50. It's 100%. It's wholeheartedly serving your spouse as Christ did the church. God uses us to complement one another (strengths & weaknesses). HE completes us.

"Wives, understand and support your husbands in ways that show your support for Christ.<sup>23</sup> The husband provides leadership to his wife the way Christ does to his church, not by domineering but by cherishing.<sup>24</sup> So just as the church submits to Christ as he exercises such leadership, wives should likewise submit to their husbands.<sup>25</sup> Husbands, go all out in your love for your wives, exactly as Christ did for the church—a love marked by giving, not getting."

**Ephes. 5:22-25 (MsgB)**

Will you be united or will you be untied? What is the difference between the two words? When the "I" is in the right place ... we'll be united! Will you be in this marriage for better or for worse?

# THE VOW

---

“Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall.”  
**Luke 11:17 (NIV)**

“Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.”  
**Psalms 34:3 (NIV)**

## IV. The Vow Of Purity

**I PROMISE TO CONFIDE IN YOU AND NOT HIDE FROM YOU.**

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> The man and his wife were BOTH naked, and they felt no shame.”  
**Genesis 2:24-25 (NIV)**

shame: *buwsh* (boosh); to be ashamed; to feel completely worthless.

“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves ... and they hid from the LORD ... But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup> He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

**Genesis 3:7-10 (NIV)**

**Kids hiding when pooping in  
diapers, eating cookies, etc.**

Satan's shame game ...

- You experience something deeply painful or sinful.
- You connect what happened with who you are. (I must be bad.)
- You believe the only way to be safe is to hide.

*Wherever secrets live, intimacy dies. Wherever intimacy lives, secrets die.* So how do we defeat the darkness with light?

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ... Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible.”

**Ephesians 5:8-9, 11-14a**

- Confess your secret.** (no partial confession)
- Receive any confessions with grace.** (remember what you have been forgiven of)
- Pray together.**
- Commit to the healing journey together.**

**What are you hiding?**  
Job concerns, financial mismanagement, health fears, addictions, past failures, indiscretions, molestation, unhealthy relationships, etc.

# THE VOW

---

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.”  
**James 5:16 (NIV)**

“... you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up!  
Strengthen what remains and is about to die...Remember, therefore,  
what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.”  
**Revelation 3:1-3 (NIV) – Church in Sardis**

Let's Pray!

- I promise that God will be my #1 priority and my spouse will be my #2.
- I promise to always pursue my two.
- I promise our marriage will be about “we” and not “me”.
- I promise to confide in you and not hide from you.

## Batons

We believe in you!  
We want you to pass  
this on the next generation!!

1. Imagine someone objective observed everything you did last week. According to the way you lived, what would they conclude are your top priorities? Be honest.
2. It is not only the bad things that distract you from your priorities; it can often be good things. What are the top three things that could distract you from your priorities?
3. What specific change(s) are you going to make to ensure God is your #1 priority and your spouse is your #2?
4. How are you living for “me”? In what ways do you need to begin living for “we”? Ask your spouse for specific ways in which you can fulfill your partnership vow. Now, do them!
5. Adam and Eve hid out of embarrassment or shame. Different people “hide” because of different reasons. If you currently (or in the past) struggle(d) with being totally transparent, what fear is holding you back? What are you hiding?
6. Ask God to empower you to love your spouse with an authentic and transparent intimacy. Commit to confess any secret sins or shame.