



# Marriage As a Covenant, Not a Contract

“The springs of love are in God, not in us. It is in vain to look for the love of God in our hearts naturally, it is only there when it has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”

—Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*

Each year Beth and I celebrate October 11 as the day God intersected our lives together. Eric and Leslie Ludy share the struggles and temptations they had as Christians in their dating relationships in their book *When God Writes Your Love Story*. They candidly tell how dating took its toll personally and spiritually until they committed this area to God. We relate to their story because as young singles we too felt the stress and anxiety of going from one relationship to another, hoping to find someone we could love and marry. Thankfully, God intervened on October 11, 1967, when we met on a blind date and our lives changed forever.

We are still amazed at the gift God gave us. We have shared very good times, as well as very tough times. Some were filled with joy, delight and hope; some were filled with sorrow, loss and pain as we learned to live together as a married couple. It was an “iron sharpening iron” relationship as God worked to form the “Us” that we are today. On our wedding day we made vows to God. We desired a beautiful and joyous married life together, but God had to do a lot of work to change our hearts and wills. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” 2 Corinthians 5:17

## Love Is Not a Contract

Often when talking with couples, I will tear up a piece of paper to explain that a human contract of marriage can likewise be torn up if one of the parties fails to abide by the promises. In contrast a covenant marriage is a holy commitment between God and a couple. “In a covenant between God and humans, God sets the requirements, and each person decides whether to agree to them and enter the covenant” (*Student Bible Dictionary*).

Human contracts are easily broken because we are all flawed sinners. A spiritual covenant adds a new dimension with God. He gives us His ability and strength to keep our marriage promises. Humans cannot make promises of love without failing, but God promises to strengthen and enable us to do all that we promised. No longer are we trying to keep our contract ourselves. Instead, God empowers us to keep our covenant with Him and with each other.

## Vows Based on the Fruit of the Spirit

Those who belong to Christ can choose to go beyond a marriage contract to participate in a spiritual, supernatural covenant with God. When God writes our love story, whether young or old, He enters into our commitments. He begins to develop our human love into His godly love. Galatians 5:22-24 says, “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. There is no law against these things! Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.”

We can make vows together with God based on the fruit of the Spirit. We can promise:

- ♥ To **love** and serve one another as Christ loved and gave His life for us. (John 13:14-15)
- ♥ To bring **joy** and delight to each other, without dissension, conflict or a contentious, quarrelsome spirit.
- ♥ To live in **peace** and contentment together, instead of causing disturbance by our words and actions.
- ♥ To wait **patiently** for God’s timing—without making demands or causing frustration.
- ♥ To be **kind** and pleasant to each other and to be courteous even when upset.
- ♥ To see the **good** in one another and others—even when circumstances are difficult.
- ♥ To be **faithful** first to God by trusting Him in everything and to be faithful to each other in our words, thoughts and actions.
- ♥ To be **gentle** and forgiving instead of brash and abrasive in our relationships.
- ♥ To have self-**control** and discipline to say “yes!” to God’s best and “no!” to whatever is not in God’s will for us.

When fruit is produced in us, God’s love between a man and wife goes beyond friendship (Phileo love) and beyond a sexual relationship (Eros). It does not happen naturally but supernaturally through the submission of each person to the

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## Calendar of EVENTS

### 2016 Dates

- Oct 21 Chapel, Full Armor Christian Academy, Henderson, TX
- Oct 27 Fishers of Men Southern Regional Conference, Bossier City, LA
- Oct 28–Nov 4 Family Outreach and Evangelism, Costa Rica
- Nov 12 Marriage/Family Conference, First Baptist, Neches, TX
- Nov 15–17 Hosting National Youth for Christ Director of India, Tyler, TX
- Nov 18 Heart for Warriors Appreciation Dinner, Lindale, TX
- Dec 3 Centrepoinc's Christmas Dinner for the Homeless with Church Under a Bridge Tyler

### 2017 Projected Dates

- Jan 3 Speaker, Men's Church First Baptist Bossier City, LA
- Jan 2017 Family Outreach and Evangelism, San Jose, Costa Rica
- May 2017 Conference Speaker: Family & Outreach/ Youth for Christ – Bangalore, India
- July 2017 Salmon Frenzy Mission Trip, Kenai Peninsula, AK

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Lordship of Christ. What you see is no longer "Me" but "Christ" in me.

*"If marriage is the picture of Christ and His love for His church, then much more is at stake than my happiness. The world should long for what Christians have. If our marriages aren't filled with kindness and joy, why would anybody want what we offer? But when they see in us a mutual delight, a gentle and easy trust in one another, they can't help but ask, 'What's your secret?'"*

—Hershael York, Professor, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

**And that's THE POINT.** Marriage takes more than trying and desire. It takes the *real* thing—the real fruit of the Spirit of God within us to produce a marriage God can bless. It takes saying "yes" to God's will, regardless of the cost and "no" to our natural thoughts and inclinations. It is His Presence in us. With God, a marriage becomes a covenant for life between two very flawed people.

*Ron + Beth*

Ron and Beth Wells



**Please remember Centrepoinc in your end-of-year giving.**

We have some crucial needs at this time, and every gift goes to strengthen marriages and families locally and beyond.

## Something New for Christmas Dinner!

For over 16 years, Centrepoinc Ministries has celebrated marriages and families with our friends and ministry partners at Christmas. This year Centrepoinc's board members will serve dinner prepared by Hickory Fare on **December 3** to homeless families and individuals with Church Under A Bridge Tyler ministry. Visit <http://cuabtyler.org>.

The space for the event is limited to accommodate as many homeless people as possible. So, instead of volunteering, you can donate a gift if desired. When we asked Pastor Jabo Thomas what the homeless needed, he suggested adult-sized coats and jackets, socks, gloves, warm stocking caps, Bibles and tarps (5X7 to 17X29). Please bring your gift(s) to our Centrepoinc Ministries office on Broadway by **Wednesday, November 30**.

*Jesus said, "For I was hungry, and you fed me..." Matthew 25:35*

