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Celebrating 40 Years of Service

2018

Dear Friends,

I was privileged to officiate a marriage ceremony for a couple who wished to publicly renew their vows on their twenty fifth anniversary. It was a wonderful service, and more so for this couple has come so far in their relationship with each other and with God.

In my searching for appropriate words to say I used a great book, *Whole Marriages in a Broken World* by Gary Inrig. "Someone has compared marriage to two porcupines trying to survive an Arctic winter. When the mercury drops and it snows, they cuddle together for warmth. But when they do their quills stick one another. So they pull apart, but soon begin to shiver. So they move together again --- and stick each other.... The dance goes on--- damaging and distancing until they realize that if they don't learn to adjust to each other they will not survive."

Marriage is hard work and there is never a time when growth isn't necessary. All too often our understanding of marriage is incorrect and so we are working hard for the wrong things. Sadly today, even for Christians, marriage is a contract and not a covenant. We now have prenuptial agreements, a written contract designed for the sole purpose of making the divorce easier. If you need one why get married? From Inrig's book he states the prenuptial contract between Jackie Kennedy and Aristotle Onassis had 170 clauses. Wow! What marital bliss!

All too often an unwritten contract is made by a couple. It may look like a *performance contract*: "I'll do my part; you do yours" Or a *service contract*: "I'll meet your needs if you meet mine."

Then there are *maintenance contracts*: "I'll make you look good if you make me look good". My favorite is the *remodeling contract*, "I'll fix you. Or Please fix me." The worst is "You have the problem so you change." Contract marriages all work on the principle of exchanging services. Contract marriages produce consumers who continually ask "What's in this for me?"

In contrast, Covenant Marriages involve commitment of persons to one another rather than commitment of services. Marriage should involve a pledge commitment or vow not just a promise. Promises can be broken for lots of reasons but a vow is a continuing force.

Today's new marriage promise words, I can't call them a vow, have changed the word 'LIVE' to 'LOVE'. The old vow states *...forsaking all others, and keeping only onto thee, so long as we both shall LIVE*. The new promise is, "so long as we both shall LOVE". An easy way out!?

God's covenants are permanent and so should ours be permanent. Without binding commitments people live a life of perpetual adolescence and uncertainty. When God enters into a covenant He commits Himself without reservation. He does not offer part of Himself or a service but; "I will be your God and you shall be My people".

Mike Manson quoted by Inrig says; "To keep a vow means not just to keep from breaking it, but to devote the rest of one's life to discovering what the vow means and to be willing to change and to grow accordingly."

Grace and Peace to you,

Richard

HEAVENLY MARRIAGE

Emphasis in trusting the Lord with your mates needs

Failure is seen as an opportunity to grow

Appreciates your mates differences

Draws the best out of mate through forgiveness, grace, and love

Gives mate the benefit of doubt in their actions and words

EARTHLY MARRIAGE

Emphasizes your mates ability to meet your needs

Failure seen as another step to the end

Tries to stamp out you mates differences

Motivates spouse to change by using guilt and conflict

Attributes wrong motives to actions and words of the mate