

Grace to Help in the Covenant of Marriage

Introduction – It may be that, having heard of the responsibilities of husbands and wives, and of the description and purposes of the covenant of marriage, that you feel overwhelmed and insufficient. Yet, here you are. What are you to do? As Paul said in another context, “*We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair...*” (2 Cor 4:8). There is grace to help in your time of need.

Contentment and Thankfulness – “*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have*” (Heb 13:5). With regard to your marriage, this means that you must begin where you are and not where you wish you were. Sidelong glances will only add to your list of sins. Begin by giving thanks to God for the state that you find yourself in now. Single, married, estranged, divorced. We must always ‘count it all joy’ (James 1:2-8), but we must always do so with faith or we are fools.

Repentance, Confession, and Forgiveness - When two sinners live in close proximity to one another, sparks will always fly. **Repent of the darkness** – (1 John 1:5-7). This is repentance from a godly sorrow leading to salvation (2 Cor 7:9-10). It is only available to Christians.

Confess your sins – to God (1 John 1:9), and to one another (James 5:16)

Forgiveness is necessary – (Col 3:12-13). He may have sinned greatly against you, but not as much as you have against the Lord.

A Few Common Sins – Often, these can be very long-standing in a relationship. But they are guests in your home who must be shown the door.

Bitterness and Anger – “*Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them*” (Col 3:19). Men have a particular bent towards becoming bitter towards their wives, blaming them for their own shortcomings – “if she were just more responsive...” Also, men tend to offend, and women tend to get offended. Both are sins, but the wife is going to be tempted to keep a record of wrongs. You must not (Eph 4:31-32).

Mental Infidelity or Outright Adultery – Both men and women must avoid the temptation to lust, but the temptation is very different for both. The temptation, generally for the man, is going to be physical and sexual (Matt 5:27-28). The woman is generally going to be attracted to masculinity, romantic adventure and relationship. The husband is responsible to make sure that both he and his wife are satisfied and delight in the pleasures of one another.

Slothfulness – “*He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich*” (Prov 10:4). A man must provide for his family (1 Tim 5:8) or he is worse than an unbeliever. For both the husband and the wife, the constant work of sanctification requires diligent work, no concessions (“...this is just the way I am...”), and a willingness to persevere and grow (Heb 12:1-2)

An Urgent Call for Godly Masculinity – (Josh 24:14-15). We will not see a reformation of the church and a return to an efficacious gospel until we see men shed themselves of sentimental pietism, stand like men, take full responsibility for their families, gladly submit to the whole counsel of God and see to it that it is all put into practice at home. This includes, but is not limited to –

Confession of all the sins of the household – The husband must make a practice of standing before God as the covenantal head of his home, and confessing all the sins of the family as his sins. This requires the next point.

Repentance of Excuse-making – Ever since Adam, men have been blaming women and blaming God for their problems. Masculinity means making no excuses – even when you have a good one.

Full Responsibility for Everything in the Household – He must know what the Bible says about marriage, headship, and the family. He must take responsibility for his wife’s loveliness. He must make sure she has the food, clothing, and other tools necessary to care for the family. He must make sure that his children receive a godly education and that the wife is equipped to help in that task. He takes responsibility for the spiritual, emotional, financial, and physical condition of his entire household. And remember – no excuses.

Godly Initiative – The husband must be the one who makes the call – ‘we will serve the Lord’, and then it must be him who leads the charge in every way.

Blessings of a Covenant – (Gen 2:24) If God established the covenant of marriage, you have much to hope in. This means marriage works. This means God will have His way with you and your spouse. This means you are not alone.

Purpose of the Covenant – While we have talked about all the hard work involved in marriage, do not forget its purposes. It is to provide a sexual union for two people in the protection of covenantal vows, to provide godly offspring, and a picture of Christ and the church. All of these work together as God’s means for nothing less than world dominion by Christian families.

Grace in the Covenant – Do not try to be a good husband or a good wife by your own works. There is only grace for this covenant when we approach the Lord of the Covenant by faith. And when we approach Him, there is grace abounding.