

COVENANTS

The age-old question is, “How does God relate to man?” How can man establish a relationship with God? How reliable, stable, predictable, and dependable could this relationship be?

A Biblical Marriage Covenant Perspective (Genesis 2:23-25/Malachi 2:14)

1. Traditional societies vs. Contemporary Societies

- **Traditional**- the family is the ultimate value in life so marriage is merely a transaction that helps the families interests.
- **Contemporary**- The individual’s happiness is the ultimate value, and so marriage becomes primarily an experience of romantic fulfillment.
- **God’s view** is more than both. God intimately unites feeling/duty, passion/promise.

2. Consumer or Covenant ?

- **Consumer**- These relationships last only as long as the vendor meets your needs at a cost acceptable to you. If another vendor delivers better services or the same services at a better cost, you have no obligation to stay in a relationship to the other vendor. **In a consumer relationship, it could be said that the individual’s needs are more important than the relationship itself.**
- **Covenantal** – These are relationships that are binding on us. In a covenant, the good of the relationship takes precedence over the immediate needs of the individual. Our culture has become mainstream “Marketplace Minded” when it comes to relationships. **Today we stay connected to people only as long as they are meeting our particular needs at an acceptable cost to us (commodification).**
- **Commodification** – The process by which social relationships are reduced to economic exchange relationships. When we cease to make a profit- that is, **when the relationship appears to require more love and affirmation from us than we are getting back- then “we cut our losses” and drop the relationship.**

3. The Vertical and the Horizontal

- Horizontal covenants are made between human beings (I Sam. 18:3; 20:16).
- Vertical covenants are more prominent because they are made by God with individuals, families, and people Ge. 17:2; Ex. 19:5).

The marriage covenant is unique and is the most deeply covenantal relationship possible between a man and a woman (Ephesians 5:31; Gen. 2:24). The marriage covenant is the most deeply covenantal relationship because marriage has both strong horizontal and vertical aspects to it (Malachi 2:14; Ezekiel 16:8; Proverbs 2:17). The covenant made between a husband and a wife is done “before God” and therefore “with God” as well as the spouse. To break faith with your spouse is to break faith with God at the same time.

Have you noticed that the wedding minister official first asks pointed questions to each spouse while they both are looking at the minister and not each other.. These are vertical vows being made to God before they turn and make vows to each other. They are “speaking vertically” before they speak horizontally.

Now building on this foundation, they take one another’s vows (promises). So it is the covenant with and before God that undergirds and strengthens the partners to make a covenant with each other. So then, it is God Himself that says, “I now pronounce you Husband and Wife.”

So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate (Matthew 19:6).

