

The Marriage Vow and its consequences

The marriage ceremony in its present form is only a few hundred years old

The oldest traditional wedding vows can be traced back to the middle ages to the 'Book of Common Prayer,' published in 1549. Before this, in England, you grabbed each others right wrists and before witnesses declared you were husband and wife. And so you were married in the eyes of God and man.

This caused problems for the Catholic church as many married in haste and repented in leisure and were going to the Catholic church (in charge of things like marriage disputes at that time) and requesting an annulment (Divorce not being officially allowed). So the Catholic church had so much of this occur that it was taking up its time so it basically said "we marry you or we will not recognise the marriage" which meant in the eyes of the Catholic church they were living in sin. Not a good thing to be thought of in the Middle Ages.

In a way modern Governments have recognised the original way of marriage by accepting as legally married men and women who live together who have not had a marriage ceremony in a church or registry office. This is called a defacto relationship, in otherwords a marriage but not legalised by a ceremony recognised by the government. The government has even provided some legal protection for the woman like a legally married wife has.

In a sense the government has restored marriage back to what it was originally before God: the simple exchange of vows before witnesses and a wedding feast.

These people living together as man and wife still not cannot divorce as in the eyes of God they are married.

If a person loves a woman He will have a legally registered marriage as it provides protection for her greater in degree than people who do not have a recognised legal marriage ceremony but who live together as husband and wife.

Remember that people living together as a husband and wife are recognised as such by God and must live according to the guidelines He gives people for marriage.

The reason we have a prayer book ceremony is that a prayer book was instituted by the Anglican church so that the wedding vows needed to be codified and so became a standard vow for all Anglicans.

This arrangement was verified by Jesus when He took people to hell and showed couples in hell, who had lived together purely for sexual purposes, because they had not married each other but just had sex for lustful purposes.

Now to discuss the Marriage Vows

Two people come before God and submit to His will for them to get married and serve Him by doing so. The wife obeys God and submits domestically (not spiritually) to the husband and respects him. The husband obeys God and loves her as Christ Loves her and serves her in this love. In this attitude the marriage blossoms as the Love of God is in all and the focus is on Jesus and His will for the marriage. Any other focus and the marriage falls apart.

Any vows not based on these principles in Ephesians 5 are incorrect and do not negate these responsibilities to each other.

The vows are made before God so they are very serious and should be carried out:

Ecc 5: 2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.

5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

The Ceremony

The Christian couple stand before a Christian minister and other earthly witnesses and something like the following is said:

The Call to the wedding Ceremony proper and vows

“Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God, and in the presence of this company, to unite ___ and ___ in holy matrimony. Marriage was ordained by God in Eden and confirmed in Cana of Galilee by the presence of the Lord, and is declared by the Apostle Paul to be honourable among all men. On this occasion we begin by asking God’s blessing on this marriage service. Let us pray.”

The Minister asks if there are any hindrances to the marriage

If any person knows why these two should not be joined in holy Matrimony speak now or forever hold your peace.

Both say the following vows

“Do you, ___ take ___ to be your (wife/husband)? Do you promise to love, honour, cherish and protect her/him, forsaking all others and holding only unto her/him?” (“I do”)

“I ___, take thee ___, to be my (wife/husband) to have and to hold, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, and I promise my love to you..”

Then the man says

“With this Ring I thee wed, with my Body I thee worship, and with all my worldly Goods I thee endow; In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Amen.”

When the man says “with my body I thee worship” he is saying he will put her needs before his as a person does when they worship God. It is not idolatry of worshipping her body but of holding her and it in high esteem.

Worship in this sense means ‘to hold in reverence’ and treat her as something God has made. in a sense it is also a reverence for God as creator.

And so begins a lifelong adventure that God designed to be beautiful but often ends in disillusionment, conflict and/or divorce.

Why? People do not understand what Marriage is, as God meant it be, and are not properly prepared for marriage the way God intended it to be.

Now to look at each part of the statements and vows made in the ceremony

“Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God,

The first thing to point out is that the vows are made before God, not just man. Accordingly they are holy and an act of worship to God as you believe He is worthy to witness and bless the marriage union.

Marriage is something God holds in high regard as Jesus considered a marriage important enough to attend, record in the Bible and be the place for Jesus to do His first recorded Miracle at.

If you believe God has called you to marry a person then to divorce or separate is disobedience to God. The Holy Spirit will help you resolve problems and deliverance may be needed along with repentance of something by one or both spouses.

What is marriage? The Mosaic Law does not say anything about the marriage ceremony itself and God stated in the Garden of Eden only two things were necessary for there to be a marriage. You live together as husband and wife and consummated the marriage (Gen. 2:24). A minister is not necessary except for the purposes of denominational records.

The legality of a marriage does not depend on it being performed by a minister as that can be done elsewhere. God blesses the union and anything the church does is ancillary to this. So you can be married in God’s eyes and blessed by Him if you agree to live as husband and wife in the manner He requires and consummate the marriage. Many governments recognize this now and this so called ‘defacto’ relationship is recognized (where couples live together as man and wife) but do not have a formal wedding ceremony.

Do not forget that we are to obey the laws of the land and marriage requires a formal ceremony in some countries which does not recognise these ‘defacto’ relationships and to live together in those countries as a married couple according to the law you will need a ceremony approved by that country.

I am not advocating a ‘defacto’ relationship as being a good form of marriage. The point is that if you live together as husband and wife and have an intention of doing so the rest of your life you are married in the eyes of God once the relationship has had sex.

A person who loves their spouse will give them the legal protection of a formal marriage as recognized by government whose rules they under. A Christian who loves their spouse will marry in a church or have a Christian minister marry them to protect their marriage (and wife) from incorrect, negative criticism and gossip by other ‘Christians’ about the fact God has not “blessed” their marriage or ‘joined’ them together.

This having a Christian minister will be for three reasons:

Not to cause other Christians to stumble through not understanding that marriage is before God

As a witness to order in the Christian life and that God holds Marriage as being very important.

To satisfy any legal requirements of the land in regard to marriage

A marriage is blest by God when it is lived according to His rules and not because it is held in a church. It is the heart relationship God blesses, not the outward signs of the marriage.

If God has not ordained a marriage so that it is not in His will and may even be rebellion against His Will, how is He able to bless that marriage? Regardless of where it is held: church, cathedral, chapel or other consecrated place He is unable to bless it as it is not in accordance with His plans for that marriage. Satan will bless it as much as he can though to ensure its destruction.

God can still make it work out for the best for both couples and will bless their obedience to Him but it will not be as good a marriage as it could have been.

Next is said the following for the purposes of uncovering any legal impediments to the marriage. This question really assumes these problems have all been dealt with prior to the marriage or it would not be asked.

If any person knows why these two should not be joined in holy Matrimony speak now or forever hold your peace.

The main legal impediments are obvious:

One of the persons being underage or under a guardian (such as legal capacity, mental illness or disability) and the guardian's approval has not been given

One of the persons being married is already married to someone else

One of the persons is being forced to marry against their will.

But there are other things that should be considered before a marriage which can impede the happiness of the marriage.

The Bible says for a Christian not to marry a non-Christian (2 Cor. 6:14)

Is it also God's appointed time to get married?

Are you also sure this is the person God wants you to marry? (Satan will try and place his wrong choice before God's choice).

Are you mature enough for marriage yet?

Are you bringing into the marriage hurts and emotional problems that should be dealt with first by a deliverance ministry?

Is the attraction spiritual, physical, for financial gain or ambition?

Spiritual attraction: This is based on a person's relationship with Jesus and His will for you both as well as love for who the person is as a Christian and not what they look like or what they do. This marriage will last as its basis is Jesus and not the other person's looks or abilities. This is more in line with how a marriage should be. In this relationship the man looks on his wife as a Prov 31 woman.

Physical attraction: This is based on how the person looks, their abilities and their sexuality. Lust may often be involved. This marriage will only last as long as these things last and one day they

will not be there so the spouse looks elsewhere and thus affairs and divorce occur as one spouse seeks these things in another person outside the marriage (which Satan will gladly supply).

Financial Gain: If it is for money then when the money goes the marriage goes.

Ambition: If the marriage is purely for the ambitions of one of the partners so they will get promoted in a field or business then it will last as long as that position they were promoted to lasts or a better proposition comes along for that partner.

God may work in these marriages so that they fall into line with His will for the marriage (through deliverance of both partners) and the marriage will survive any events that would normally have ended it. Otherwise the marriage is usually doomed to failure or divorce.

Marriage is usually a mixture of spiritual and physical attraction. The degree of the spiritual in a marriage will determine the success of the marriage. The more Jesus is Lord of the marriage the more chance it has to be successful.

Do you understand what marriage really entails or do you have a starry eyed view of it. The starry eyed view lasts till you wake up and see each other in their pyjamas the day after the wedding and realize the honeymoon is over even though you are officially still on it. This is when the hard work begins of making a marriage that lasts.

Amos 3:3 states "can two walk together unless they are agreed?"

This summarises the situation. Unless Jesus is Lord of the life of both spouses they will mainly be doing their own will in the marriage. Both spouses will not be in full agreement and discord will occur. If Jesus is Lord of both spouses they will have unity as they do His Will for the marriage and they will both have the same objectives and purposes. There will be unity through obedience to Jesus because of the common Holy Spirit that lives in them and guides them both and they will agree on all things, even if it requires discussing it first to understand their differences over the matter.

What you set your heart on is what you will try and achieve. If you love Jesus you will seek to please Him in the marriage by loving your spouse as He loves them and obeying what He requires you to do in the marriage. Remember that loving your spouse as He does and accepting the role He has given you in the marriage is an act of obedience and worship to Jesus as well as the fulfilment of the command to love your spouse as He does.

The vows proper begin and are said by both partners:

“Do you, __ take __ to be your (wife/husband)? Do you promise to love, honour, cherish and protect her/him, forsaking all others and holding only unto her/him?” (“I do”)

“I __ , take thee __ , to be my (wife/husband) to have and to hold, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, and I promise my love to you..”

In addition the wife promises to respect (submit) and obey the husband (or at least in the more correct versions of these vows she does).

As I said before, the word ‘obey’ originally meant not subservience. God calls the wife a ‘helpmeet’ and not a ‘slave’.

Marriage is the relationship that epitomizes God's Love for us and so the first question rightly asked is whether they will love each other and so this is the first part of the vows to be examined. It is to be noted all else promised in these vows are a result of the commitment to love their spouse as Jesus Loves them.

Take out the physical/sexual part of the relationship what you have left is the spiritual aspect of it. This is why you have the comparison in Ephesians Ch 5 between Jesus and His Church (the spiritual relationship) and a husband and wife (the spiritual reflected in the physical, in the domestic relationship on earth).

Unless the wife submits domestically and respects the husband spiritually and domestically, she will not be in the place she needs to be for the husband to love her in the way Jesus loves her.

It is like sex. Unless the husband prepares the wife for it she will not be able to respond and give him the pleasure she desires to give him.

The union of their souls resulting from sex is the equivalent of their union with Jesus in the spirit and the submission of the wife to the husband is the same as her submission to Jesus. The provision for the wife and her protection by the husband is the same as Jesus does for His Church.

The domestic submission of the wife is necessary for the household to be in proper order to carry out the mandate for which sex was made, to populate the world. Sex also has the additional function of being intimate and personal to both husband and wife. Sex is the one thing they alone can do with each other and this makes it special to them which is why Satan tries to pervert it so much.

When this physical side of marriage is gone (with one partner rejecting their spouse and so not fulfilling their sexual role) then there is only the spiritual left so this needs to be cultivated in marriage more than the physical and it is the spiritual that will continue into eternity, not the physical.

Where a physical disability prevents sex occurring, the love of God in them for each other will stop this causing problems in the marriage as the person is loved for whom they are and not their sexual abilities.

The honeymoon period is not a holiday for the purposes of unlimited sex or having a good time with your spouse but more importantly to sort out any remaining relational problems and get the household started in a correct way spiritually so that Jesus is Lord of the relationship. It is a continuation of the process started in the betrothal period but it is more intimate. This time enables them to develop their unity of purpose and direction as one in Jesus through the commonality of The Holy Spirit in them both. It allows them further time to work out how to relate to each other as Jesus relates individually to them.

It is also a time to work out the basic routine of the household so that when you return from the honeymoon you know how things are to be organised in the household.

Notes on the Vow

The vows you make to God are listed in Ephesians.

The wife is to submit domestically to her husband and respect but does not need to love Him. The husband is to love his wife with the same type of Love that Jesus has for her.

This was the attitudes for many years when arranged marriages were the norm and wives did not get to choose their husbands.

However, as both are Christians they would also have to love each other with the same type of Love with which Jesus Loves each of them.

Jesus only spoke of one type of Love. When the Greeks translated it from the original they imposed their view of love on the translation so we have four Greek words for Love used. God's type of Love is the only one we are to have and its expressions only varies according to the type of relationship it is being expressed in . Which is why sex is only in marriage.

Stewardship of Love

True Pure Love is very precious to God and He expects you to treasure it as a rare jewel... a jewel rare in the sensuous world of the kingdom of darkness. It is through their love the early Christians were marked in their sensual times. Should it be any different now? Only as God's Love is expressed through us in a loveless world will people see anything worthwhile in our faith! True marital love is also a rare jewel these days and is to be cared for as a faithful steward and like other things that you are steward of will need to be given account of to God when you face Him and are judged for how you carried out the various stewardships He gave you.

Faithfulness

Faithfulness is tied up with Love, If you love someone you will be faithful to them.

As a steward

As a Servant

As a spouse

If you Love someone with Gods Quality of Love you will serve them not for your benefit as worldly love does, getting all you can get for yourself out of the relationship. But you will serve them faithfully for their benefit.

Only as you faithfully serve God out of love for Him and those He sends you To serve on His behalf, will you satisfy God's requirement of you as His servant.

Headship can only be domestic

Pauline Gill makes an interesting comment on the obedience aspect

Modern society may misconstrue the original meaning of the vows from the Book of Common Prayer. The word "obey" does not mean that one person is subservient to the other. The Latin dictionary offers the definition: "to mean, listen deeply." Biblical references further define the word. Paul's letters emphasize the importance of submitting to one another. "*To thee I plight my troth*" is in the Book of Common Prayer as well. "Plight" means promise and "troth" means faithfulness.

Pauline Gill

http://www.ehow.com/about_4675080_history-wedding-vows.html

In otherwords, the original meaning of 'obey' in the wedding vows meant to respectfully listen to the other person to hear their side of the argument.

However that was misused by men quoting the infamous passage in Ephesians which implied women were subservient to men both spiritually and physically.

Women are to obey a husband but only domestically and even then he should not command but ask so that when he commands the wife knows something important is happening he does not have time to explain to her. It also means he has the decision to break any deadlock but must do so out of His Love for the wife.

Having said that, if both are led by The Spirit, then headship is not a problem as Jesus is the head of the family and they obey Him guided by The Holy Spirit.

Now to explain why headship can only be domestic. I refer to the following passage:

1 Per 2:25 (ESV) For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

We are plainly told that Jesus is our spiritual head (overseer)

Now for the submission part. The EMTV puts it as follows:

1Pe 3:1 Wives, likewise, subject yourselves to your own husbands, so that even if some are disobedient to the word, that by the conduct of their wives, without a word, they shall be gained for Christ,

1Pe 3:2 when they observe your chaste conduct with fear.

1Pe 3:3 Of whom let it not be the outward adorning of braiding of hair, and wearing of gold, or of putting on of fine clothes,

1Pe 3:4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible attitude of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious before God.

1Pe 3:5 For thus formerly, the holy women who hoped on God also adorned themselves, subjecting themselves to their own husbands,

1Pe 3:6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, of whom you became children, when you do good and are not afraid of any terror.

Note: there is a non-Christian husband and a Christian wife mentioned in this passage. If the husband is her spiritual head then she has been placed back under the authority of Satan from which Jesus has freed her from. So spiritual headship cannot be meant here. All that is left is domestic headship and so Ephesians must mean the same or these verses will contradict each other.

1Pe 3:7 (EMTV) Husbands, likewise, live together according to knowledge as with a weaker vessel, with the wife, showing her honour as also a fellow heir of the grace of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered.

The husband is steward of the wife and in his headship is also the role of steward which means he must do all he needs to do for her care and development, both spiritually and physically, as well as protect her and meet all her needs.

Like Jesus said, those in charge are your servants and not your masters.

In Summary

The key is for the man to love his wife as Jesus loves her and for the wife to submit to the man so he can love her this way as well as love Him in the way Jesus loves him. Note she is to respect and obey her husband according to Ephesians as love may not be there because God has arranged the marriage. The promise in 1 Pet 3 is that as she does this, Love will develop.

The wife is to respect her husband as Jesus has made him domestic head over her and her steward. If she does not respect this authority she will not respect the man it has been given too (her husband) and will disobey Jesus.

If she does not submit to the man she is disobeying God as well as preventing the man from loving her as Jesus desires him to love her. He will also not be able to serve her as God requires him too.

If the husband loves her in the same way Jesus loves her, she will gladly submit to him as all he does will be for her best.

This is why they never should argue, react, reason or assume things but ask The Holy Spirit what to do so you they not be disobedient to God in the marriage.

Invalidated Spouse

God has given you stewardship of your spouse regardless of their state or condition. Out of love and faithfulness to God you look after your invalid spouse as well as out of love and faithfulness to them.

The fact they may not be able to return your love is not an excuse for not loving them. After all, God's type of love does not depend on the other person being able to respond to His love.

This is why a person with God's quality of Love can love when the world would walk away.

The Importance of Love

The Lord said to me once:

“To be blameless before me you must love as I Love with no impartiality or favouritism. You may not like what they do but you must love the person for whom they are:

Someone I created

My property to be a good steward of (to the degree they allow you to be their steward)

Someone for whom I died

Someone I value and desire to be in heaven with me

Someone for whom I have a Perfect plan and with which your correct interaction is a part of.

Love as I love if you would be like me.”

Then he showed me the following:

God is Love and unless we love as He Loves we cannot really say we have His Character. If we do not have His type of Love we will not exhibit the fruit of that love (Gal 5:22,23). We will not see Him as He is and not worship or fellowship with Him as we should.

The Highest form of worship to Jesus is when you mirror His Character so it is like He is looking in a mirror (character wise) when He looks at you. Then there is unity of spirit and purpose and worship is completely unimpeded. Love (charity) is the key to this relationship.

The Holy Spirit also drew my attention to 1 Cor 13:13 which says “v13. *For there are these three things that endure: Faith, Hope and Love, but the greatest of these is Love.*”

He pointed out that spiritual gifts will become redundant in heaven and that faith will not be necessary as we will not need these there and hope will be fulfilled so that all that will remain is Love.

He said to seek God’s Love and its expression as that is the basis of all ministry and relationships and that what you **need** to express God’s Love will be given you: gifts, finances, marriage partner, faith, all you need to seek God’s Love and express it to others will be given you (Mat 6:33). This explains why Jesus gave only one new commandment as this summarised all the law and the prophets and is the basis for all ministry as well as the Great Commission:

Jn 13:34-35 “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

It was actually God’s attitude behind The mosaic Law but Jesus had to tell them this because they had not realised it and so to them it was a new commandment.

There are no exceptions to this command! There is no escape clause! The only difference in its expression is the degree that culture allows you to express it physically.

God is Love and from this flows all else. The more we grow in God’s Love the more we will grow like him and the more we will express it to our spouse and others.

In a sense life is a continual pursuit of the love relationship we have with God and its expression to those around us and marriage is the earthly arrangement that demonstrates this best.

Married Christians are to love each other as Jesus Loves them so that their marriage will bring honour and glory to God, be a form of worship as well as draw people to them so that they can explain the Love God has for these people and what Jesus has done for them and their marriage. They should also be able to explain why their marriage is so happy and teach others how to have marriages like theirs.

It is only as you love others with a pure love that you will truly experience the joy this love brings to you which is why one of the fruits of The Spirit’s expression of Love is joy.

The next vow is as follows:

“With this Ring I thee wed, with my Body I thee worship, and with all my worldly Goods I thee endow; In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Amen.”

This is broken up into three parts: The public witness of the rings (symbols of their undying eternal love for each other), worshipping with their bodies and the sharing of all they have in this world.

The ring is also a symbol of eternity and symbolises the fact that before the fall Adam and Eve would have been married for eternity and not just for a short period on earth. The Garden was part of heaven so they would have been married also in heaven.

So do not think of marriage as being only on earth as in eternity the deepness of the relationship continues if you desire it too.

The people being married state:

With this Ring I thee wed

Marriage is not made because a person has been given a ring. Neither is it there because a person wears a ring. Marriage is a heart commitment and the ring is just a warning to others that you are taken. It is not necessary for there to be a ring to have marriage.

God looks at the heart commitment that has been made before Him and not at words that are spoken. This heart commitment is the reason a married person is so devastated when it is ended in any way as the heart is torn so to speak from the loss of a part of it as the partner is removed. Healing by Jesus is needed after an event like this and not another marriage, which unfortunately many seek too soon after a divorce rather than the necessary healing in the belief it will heal the hurts of the divorce. In reality it may be hurts from before marriage that really need to be healed before the ones of the divorce are dealt with.

No one should get married until healed of the hurts that may later destroy a marriage and also knowing for certain that is the person they are to marry. Deliverance is usually necessary for this to happen.

The second part of this statement is:

“with my Body I thee worship”

Ministry is always to Jesus first and then as He directs to others. So we worship Jesus by obeying the way He directs us to use our body in marriage. The sexual aspect is only a part of this. The point to make here is that our mind and will direct our body and in a sense by this statement is meant the complete focus on the needs of our partner as an act of worship to God.

“and with all my worldly Goods I thee endow”

We are all stewards as God own everything so you cannot really give anything to your spouse. This statement is more to do with commonality - an attitude where property in our stewardship is treated as being under the stewardship of both spouses and not just one, being available by either to use, as guided by The Holy Spirit, for the purposes of The Kingdom of God.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Amen.

The three witnesses in heaven are now mentioned to remind us that the vows are made before God. This is why the vows are so important and to be kept as they have been made to God and not just man.

What is left out of the modern versions of the marriage vows is the part that asks a women if she will obey (submit to) her husband and the fact these vows are unto death ...

“Til death you do part”.

Perhaps if these were included in the ceremony marriages may be more permanent and God’s order be in them.

Conclusion

If you believe God has called you two to marry, then divorce is disobedience. Deliverance will help solve many marital problems so that divorce can be averted but this will only happen if you want to solve the problems. But then this wrong attitude is usually helped by deliverance and/or forgiveness.

If you have vowed before God to marry for better or for worse, then not to do anything to resolve problems is disobedience to God.

Remember that you fight Satan and not your spouse, so never attack her but attack the demons suggesting to her the course of action she is doing.