Covenant Relationships

Scripture is clear that one of the most outstanding things about Christians should be their relationships. John 13:35 in the Amplified says “By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love and unselfish concern for one another.” The way we relate to others should be so lavishly loving and distinctly different than the way the rest of the world relates, that it automatically identifies us as disciples of Jesus.

However, love for one another does not appear to be the predominant reputation of many Christians in our culture today. Love and covenant do not appear to bind us anymore. In generations gone by, people would make life-altering deals by a word and a handshake. Now, even a legally-binding contract is often not enough to keep a deal or relationship together. Our culture, even in the church, has too often been to look for the easy way out, a loophole in the agreement, or an excuse to not live up to the terms of an agreement. Our word is far too often no longer our bond.

God does relationships differently. Regardless of the type of relationship, God does relationships based on covenants, not contracts, emotions, or preferences. For many, even the word covenant seems antiquated. The word covenant actually means to cut. Contracts are written, agreements are signed, but covenants are cut. So what in the world does cutting have to do with relationships? To say a relationship is based on covenant communicates how we operate in that relationship. When we see a relationship as a covenant, it means we would rather be “cut”, than for us to cut and run when things become difficult or do not go our way. However, many relationships today are based on shaky, shallow ground that encourages people to cut and run when things get difficult, rather than allowing our disagreements to cut away at our own sinfulness.

Covenant relationships are God’s design and model for relationships because Godly covenant brings life, peace and freedom. We pray this devotional provides you a deeper revelation of God’s covenant with us and how walking in Godly, covenant relationships bring about our good and God’s glory. Daily prayer points are provided on the last page.

PURPOSE OF THE DEVOTIONAL
We have provided a daily devotional for the purpose of inspiration and greater unity during these days of consecration. Each devotional will include a section called READ with key scriptures for study and memorization. A second section of the devotional called REFLECT provides a brief study as the heart of the devotional. Finally, each day concludes with a RESPOND section to assist you in applying the READ and REFLECT portions.

information on fasting
Visit bethelworld.org and the January 2017 devotional for information on the purpose of fasting, helpful tips while fasting, and appropriate things to do and not do during a time of fasting.

bethel prayer schedule
Monday: Prayer at 6am and Noon in the sanctuary (Fasting optional)
Tuesday: Prayer at 6am and Noon in the sanctuary (Fasting optional)
Wednesday: Monthly Church-wide Day of Prayer and Fasting - Prayer at 6am and Noon in the sanctuary – 7pm service
In Biblical culture, covenants were sealed and ratified by the fatal cutting of an animal life and shedding of blood. Both parties involved in the covenant would then customarily “pass through,” walk through, the stream of blood and say “be it done to me as has been done to these animals if I should break this covenant.” Our best example of the Biblical picture of covenant is found in Genesis 15, when God instituted His covenant with Abraham. An astounding thing from the example in Genesis 15 is Abraham did nothing but go to sleep. God is the one who, as the light and fire, passed through the blood and took the full weight of the agreement on Himself. God has been, and always will be, faithful to fully execute all of His promises, even when we are everything but faithful.

As remarkable as that is, it gets even better! Scripture says in Hebrews 10:4 that the blood of bulls and goats was not enough to take away our sins, so in the new covenant Jesus was cut, pierced, for our sins. Wait! What?! God has always been faithful. We as His creations are the ones who have sinned and turned away from Him and disobeyed His laws time and time again. And yet, God took the punishment of the broken covenant upon Himself even though we are the ones who break it over and over. The perfect blood of Jesus was poured out to cover our sins. Once again, God took the full weight of the covenant upon Himself.

However, in order for us to receive the promises associated with God’s new covenant in Jesus we must first “pass through” the sacrificial blood of Jesus. We no longer need to walk through a stream of blood as they did thousands of years ago. Now, we repent of our sins, turn to God, believe in our hearts and confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and ask Him to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Jesus’ death bought our covenant life and freedom. How beautiful is God’s covenant!

Why is it significant God took the full responsibility of the covenant on Himself?

How should we respond to Jesus perfectly fulfilling all of the covenant for us?

What is God speaking to you through this devotional?

☐ Repent for your sins and breaking our covenant with Jesus.
☐ Thank Jesus for taking the punishment of our sins and bearing the full weight of the covenant on Himself.
☐ Ask the Lord to help you more faithfully walk in covenant relationship with Him.

Author Gary Thomas explains the cutting covenant of marriage well in sharing that God designed marriage for our holiness, not our happiness. God’s heart for marriage is that we allow difficulties and disagreements to cut away at our sinfulness rather than use them as an excuse for us to cut and run, even if only emotionally. When we want to cut and run it is a sign we have made marriage about our happiness. When we make marriage about our happiness we use the relationship as a tool to build our own kingdom of comfort. However, if we are willing for God to cut away at our sin it is evidence we are pursuing God’s holiness. When we see marriage as a covenantal pursuit of holiness we make marriage about honoring God and building His Kingdom, which enlists not only His help, but also His blessing.

Traditional marriage vows end with the phrase “til death do us part.” The ironic truth behind those five little words is in order to make it “til death do us part,” you are going to have to die many times to yourself and your own sinful emotions, agenda, and desires. As in all things, God leads us by example in this. He first laid down His life for us to have abundant life. In our sin nature, it is not natural to put others before ourselves and honor when we are hurt. However, when we take on God’s nature and look to His love and sacrifice it enables us to love as He loves us. 1 John 4:19 says we love because He first loved us. However, in marriage we often, unsuccessfully, try to live the opposite of His example. We demand others love us first, and in return we might show them love. As bearers of His covenant, we are to follow His example and both love first and lay down our lives first. We pray your marriage will abound until death do you part, as you choose to do your part in dying to yourself daily.

If you’re currently single, what things might God be trying to cut away at in your life?

If you’re currently facing any struggles or frustrations in your marriage, what might God being trying to cut away in your own life?

Whether single or married, why is it important to see marriage as about our holiness rather than our happiness?

☐ Ask God to show anywhere you have “cut and run” in your heart and ask for forgiveness.
☐ Repent of expecting others loves you first. Ask God to help you love first.
☐ Give God permission to use His Word as a scalpel to cut away your sinfulness.