

Covenant Marriage Sunday Celebration

(The following Covenant Marriage Affirmation Ceremony can be incorporated into your morning corporate worship as you see fit. It is designed to take a minimal amount of time and to serve as a beginning point for couples in your congregation to understand and live their lives in relationship to God and each other in covenant.)

Based on the size of your congregation and the number of couples participating in this ceremony, you may want to invite couples to come to the front of the church to participate. If not, have the couples stand together throughout the congregation with others remaining seated. Another suggestion would be to have those family members of the couples cluster together as a symbol of support and for the concluding congregational charge. We are sensitive to the fact that there will be “single” adults, and “single-again” adults present in the service. However, this ceremony is to celebrate the activity of God in the lives of those couples that are part of your Family.

Therefore, we have sought to include the total congregation in the concluding portion of the ceremony. This is not to be considered an attempt to be “all inclusive” but rather to point out the significance God places on the role and responsibility of the church family in affirming, nurturing, and maintaining strong marriages in the local congregation.)

Minister to Congregation: We have gathered here today as a Body of Believers uniting with thousands of other Believers in affirming marriage as a covenant relationship. Today, congregations around the world are celebrating marriage as a covenant relationship during their morning worship services.

At this time we want to invite those of you who are married to join with us in a time of affirmation and celebration of marriage as a covenant relationship. We want to affirm our belief that marriage is a covenant relationship intended by God to be a lifelong fruitful relationship. We also want to offer you an opportunity to affirm your belief about your own marriage as you participate in this act of worship and sign the covenant marriage commitment card being made available to you.

Those of you who are not married, we ask you to participate in this celebration by praying for the couples that are a part of our Body. If you have a personal connection with any one or several of these couples, please keep them in your thoughts and prayers throughout this celebration and the coming week. At this time I would like to invite husbands and wives to stand together.

Minister to Couples: God is always pleased when we dedicate our lives to Him. He is equally pleased when we dedicate our lives to one another and our marriage to Him. Today, we share together in this sacred time of worship as we commit our lives and our home to God, our Heavenly Father, through His Son, our Living Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In the very first chapter of the Bible it is recorded that as God created man, He determined that it was not good for him to be alone, so He created Eve and brought her to Adam, that they should live together in a relationship as we know it to be – husband and wife.

From that day to this, marriage has been God’s supreme arena of human relationships through which He can express the fullness of His loving presence with us. God, who blessed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, offers His blessing to us today. God intends for our marriage to be a covenant relationship that reflects the relationship of Christ and the Church. Our Covenant

Marriage will become a testimony to others of God's unconditional love for them. Therefore, it was ordained that you should leave your father and mother and cleave unto your wife, and the two of you should become one flesh, united in faith, hope, and love until death separates you.

God desires that we experience the fullness of His intent for marriage as a covenant relationship. As Christians we affirm that when the people of God come together to worship Him, the living Christ blesses them with His presence. He made a promise to us that where two or three are gathered in His name, He is with them (Matt. 18:20, RSV). In light of this promise we know that He is present with us in this worship experience today.

Minister to Husbands: Husbands, do you rejoice in the gift of God's love to you through your wife? Do you give thanks to God for allowing you to join Him in loving your wife? Will you always seek to love her, encourage her, and challenge her to become all that God intends for her to become? Will you always seek what is best for her even to the point of self-sacrifice? With God as your Enabler, will you seek to be a blessing to her and to allow God to bless others through your marriage? Will you walk beside her in faith, believing that God will enable the two of you to fulfill His call on your marriage and bring completion and wholeness to your lives as individuals and as a couple for His glory? If so, answer, "I will."

Minister to Wives: Wives, do you rejoice in the gift of God's love to you through your husband? Do you give thanks to God for allowing you to join Him in loving your husband? Will you always seek to love him, encourage him, and challenge him to become all that God intends for him to become? Will you always seek what is best for him even to the point of self-sacrifice? With God as your Enabler, will you seek to be a blessing to him and to allow God to bless others through your marriage? Will you walk beside him in faith, believing that God will enable the two of you to fulfill His call on your marriage and bring completion and wholeness to your lives as individuals and as a couple for His glory? If so, answer, "I will."

Please unite your right hands and repeat after me.

Minister to Husbands: On this the 15th day of February, / in the year 2004 / I affirm this covenant with you, (Wife's first name), to live with you / in accordance with God's will for our marriage / and to reflect our covenant relationship with Him. / I will love you, comfort you, / honor and keep you / in sickness and in health. / I will forsake all others / and remain faithful to you / so long as we both shall live, / to the glory of God, our Heavenly Father.

Minister to Wives: On this the 15th day of February, / in the year 2004 / I affirm this covenant with you, (Husband's first name), to live with you / in accordance with God's will for our marriage / and to reflect our covenant relationship with Him. / I will love you, comfort you, / honor and keep you / in sickness and in health. / I will forsake all others / and remain faithful to you / so long as we both shall live, / to the glory of God, our Heavenly Father.

Please turn to face me and repeat the following statement of affirmation.

"Believing that marriage is a covenant / intended by God / to be a lifelong, fruitful relationship / between a man and a woman / we vow to God / each other / our families / and our community / to remain steadfast / in unconditional love / reconciliation / and sexual purity / while purposefully growing / in our covenant marriage relationship."

PRESENT THIS CHARGE TO THE CONGREGATION.

Minister to Congregation: As these couples have committed themselves to God's Covenant of Marriage, will those of you who bear witness to this affirmation, encourage and support them in their usefulness in God's kingdom? If so answer, "We will".

Witnesses: We will.

Minister to Congregation: Will you stand by them in sickness and in health, in adversity and prosperity, and be true and loyal to God in your support of their covenant relationship, so long as they both shall live? If so answer, "We will."

Witnesses: We will.

Minister to Congregation: Do you affirm your belief that marriage, as God ordains it, is a covenant relationship through which He expresses His love relationship with us as individuals? If so answer, "We do."

Witnesses: We do.

Minister's final word to the Congregation: In Philippians 4:8, Paul's final words to the church at Philippi were, "Finally, brother, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you."

Brothers and sisters, whatever is true about these marriages, whatever is noble about these marriages, whatever is right about these marriages, whatever is pure about these marriages, whatever is lovely about these marriages, whatever is admirable about these marriages--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy about these marriages—think about such things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in God, practice these things; and the God of peace will always be with us. AMEN."

You may now seal your covenant with a kiss.

Minister's final word to the Couples: As a couple, you received a Covenant Marriage Commitment Card that may be used to further symbolize your covenant. Please fill out the information on both the top and bottom halves of this card. Tear the card in half. Keep the top half and leave the bottom half of the card in your seat or hand it to the usher as you leave the service. The Covenant Marriage Movement wants to affirm your commitment today and to document the activity of God in the lives of couples throughout the world regarding covenant marriage.

Covenant Marriage Celebration Preparation

The third Sunday of February has been established as Covenant Marriage Sunday. We encourage you to begin preparing for this church-wide celebration during your morning worship time on the third Sunday of February.

Organizational Suggestions: As soon as possible, select a Covenant Marriage Couple, or a couple who obviously demonstrates a covenant commitment in their marriage, to serve as chairpersons for Covenant Marriage Sunday. This might be the same couple who would become the Covenant Marriage Movement Coordinators for the church and lead the church to becoming a, “Covenant Marriage Congregation” if the church has not already registered with the Covenant Marriage Movement.”

Promotional Suggestions: Immediately add the Covenant Marriage Sunday to the Church Calendar. Begin immediately promoting Covenant Marriage Sunday with posters, displays of covenant marriage materials, bulletin announcements, pulpit announcements, skits, etc. Make covenant marriage commitment cards available and easily accessible to the congregation. The pastor may want to consider a sermon or series of sermons on covenant marriage leading up to Covenant Marriage Sunday.

Resource Materials for Promoting & Observing Covenant Marriage Sunday: The Covenant Marriage Movement Congregational Kit is available through the Covenant Marriage Movement Office, P.O. Box 681706, Franklin, TN 37068-1706, 1-800-311-1662 or from the CM Store at www.covenantmarriage.com. The kit contains resources such as posters, bulletin inserts, commitment cards, and sermon helps.

Suggestions for ways to celebrate covenant marriage in worship:

- ♥ Develop a visual presentation celebrating the marriages in your congregation. This could be in the form of a power point or video presentation to run prior to or at some point during the actual service.
- ♥ Have the message focus on the covenant of marriage. (*sermon helps in kit*)
- ♥ Provide bulletin inserts on the sanctity of marriage. (*100 inserts in kit*)
- ♥ Ask a couple in the congregation married over 50 years to give a testimony. (*personally or via a pre-taped message*)
- ♥ Ask couples to be involved with the special music for the service.
- ♥ Present a live drama sketch or video that addresses some aspect of marriage or the stages of marriage. (*Go to the CMM website for video option.*)
- ♥ Acknowledge the widowed in the congregation. (Include pictures from their wedding in the visual presentation.) Perhaps have the Deacons present each widow present with a corsage or rose.
- ♥ Include a time for couples to have the opportunity to publicly commit themselves to a Covenant Marriage using the ceremony above. (*50 commitment cards are included in the kit to be used in conjunction with the ceremony.*)
- ♥ Recognition of Married Couples in Attendance: oldest, youngest, married the longest and shortest period of time.
- ♥ Include a time of thanksgiving and intercessory prayer. Include thanksgiving to God for those couples that have been a part of the congregation in the past. Include a time of intercession for those whose spouses have died or have abandoned them. Pray for those who are newly married and are beginning their journey together, for those whose marriages are strong and growing, and for those whose marriages are struggling.

Next Steps to Consider

You have heard the old adage, “After all is said and done, more is said than done.” Well, we want to encourage you to take the next steps to provide ongoing support to the couples who have affirmed their belief in marriage as a covenant relationship and have committed themselves to living out their relationship with one another according to this belief.

- ♥ Begin a small-group study on marriage as God intends it to be. (Begin a study of *Covenant vs Contract: Experiencing God's Blessing In & Through Your Marriage*)
- ♥ Ask those who feel lead to help develop a ministry to married couples sign up following the service.
- ♥ Begin a prayer ministry focused on marriage.
- ♥ Consider taking the appropriate steps to initiate a comprehensive ministry to married couples in your church.

Actions You Can Take:

- As a congregation, establish and affirm an intentional marriage policy. This policy must focus on the couple, their relationship, and the congregation's commitment to their marriage.
- Provide at least six marriage preparation sessions, and provide two follow-up sessions during the first year of marriage.
- Provide an annual sermon series on relationships, marriage, and family. The focus on these messages should be on biblical teachings and life applications for establishing and enhancing relationships, building strong families, and growing as Christian families. They should also provide a biblical understanding of "Covenant" and how it applies to marriage and family.
- Provide media resources such as books, magazines, tapes, videos, and interactive learning resources. These resources can be checked out and/or purchased.
- Provide at least one biannual marriage enrichment retreat. This should be an overnight experience for couples only. Focus on relationship enhancement, skill development, and spiritual renewal.
- Pair up newly married couples with older covenant couples for the purpose of providing guidance for a period of two years.
- Provide at least one annual Covenant Marriage Commitment service where couples have an opportunity to publicly affirm their marriage as a covenant relationship. We recommend the third Sunday in February.

For those who are still interested in celebrating covenant marriage by raising the banner of covenant marriage, please feel free to download this [Covenant Marriage Affirmation Ceremony with Celebration Suggestions](#). It's never too late. Any Sunday is a good Sunday to celebrate covenant marriage. All of our resources are undated and can be used at any time.