

Our relationship with God is the firm foundation of our life, and that relationship is expressed through the concept of covenant. While covenants are contracts, they are more than modern contracts in scope. They are the foundation of relationships where an exchange of identities takes place, and something new is created out of the parties that enter into the agreement. The new relationship is like an entity in itself, and becomes the goal of both of the parties. To enter into this kind of relationship, some qualities must be present:

Day 1

Good Faith

In order to enter into a covenant relationship, the place of faith is vital. Faith here is not about belief, which is the modern interpretation of the word. It is not that we must believe in the existence of the other, for that is assumed. What is vital is having confidence in the other, to believe that they have your best will in mind, for the lack of that faith is destructive to the whole concept of covenant. Covenant entails a giving of the whole self, including the future, to the one with whom one has a covenant. There is nothing left out. Because of this, we must be convinced that the other is doing the same and that we therefore will not be losers in the deal. If we do not enter into the covenant with good faith, we will hold ourselves back and be robbing the other party in an attempt to protect ourselves. Entering into a covenant is the ultimate act of faith, and we see the ramifications of failing to do this in the garden. Adam and Eve fell into sin the moment they believed the lie of Satan that God did not have their best interest at heart, but believed instead that God was trying to keep good from them, afraid that they would become like Him. Even if it is possible to give oneself fully in a covenant where one does not trust the other, the outcome would be a disaster for both, for there would be no way to be happy and truly enjoy the covenant where one believed they were being robbed. This is why faith in Christ is always seen in scripture as a necessity, for without that faith we cannot be in the covenant.

Verses: Deuteronomy 4:13, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Luke 22:20, Hebrews 9:15,

Prayer Topics: Trust, Confidence, Exchange, Commitment

Day 2

Good Will

In a covenant the heart matters. It is not enough to have the right actions only, for in a covenant the whole self is pledged to another, and a new creation is made as the two become one and both seek the good of the new entity of "us". Because the whole self is pledged, there can be no holding out of the heart, for if the heart is held out, the other is robbed. How is this so? If the other person has given all of themselves, then they have given their heart to you. If you have not given your heart, then clearly they have lost in the transaction. But beyond that, if they have given their heart and you have not, there is no way for them to be happy because there is no way for you to be happy. You cannot be happy dividing yourself between your heart and your actions. You cannot be happy taking actions your heart is not motivated towards. In fact, it is pure tyranny to be forced to do things that your heart is not in favor of, it is the very definition of tyranny. How can someone who has pledged their heart towards your good feel good about tyrannizing you? In order for the covenant to bring the promised land rather than the land of slavery, we must bring our whole heart, trusting that God has done the same. Do not be deceived into believing that outward obedience to God's word is enough, that your true loves do not matter, or that a grumbling Christianity will suffice. The only firm foundation for our life is to be wholeheartedly committed to the covenant with Christ.

Verses: Ezekiel 36:26, Psalm 51:10, Matthew 5:8, 1 Samuel 16:7

Prayer Topics: Integrity, Character, Heart, Intention

Day 3

Good Hope

Do you want more? I remember sitting through an unexpected network marketing meeting and being asked that question repeatedly. Because I knew the game from experience, I continued to (truthfully) tell the inquisitor that I was completely satisfied with my current position financially. This was true at the time, and is true now. I am quite content financially. Money is a responsibility as well as a blessing, and God has been gracious to me. The wrong turn for my business minded “friend” was that he didn’t go far enough, but only asked about money, but that was all he could offer. You do not joyfully enter into a covenant unless you want more, because that is the whole purpose of a covenant. You must be at a place in your life where you are unsatisfied with the status quo, where you dream of something better. You must be in this place because without this, you will never pledge everything you have and everything you are, which is the entrance fee of a covenant. Just like the man who found a treasure in a field, you must “sell” everything to get into the covenant. If that man had been completely content, if he did not want more, he would have never joyfully sold all he had to buy that field. Perhaps this is why, in Jesus’ day as in ours, it is the people who do not have a lot that make up the majority of those who respond to the gospel. Do not be fooled, however. No matter how much you have, you do not have enough. The greatest prince of this world is a pauper in the kingdom, and everyone needs what Jesus has, and is willing to give in the covenant. Do you want true riches? That is what is being offered. Don’t be content in the wrong way, but seek the kingdom of God with all your heart.

Verses: Matthew 19: 16-22, Luke 14:25-33, Luke 16:13, Luke 16:13

Prayer Topics: Cost, Contribution, Devotion, Return, Collect, Obtain

Day 4

Good Trade

We must be wise about the covenants we enter. Too many times we allow wishful thinking to influence us into being yoked into a covenant with the wrong people. The truth is, a covenant cannot work unless it works from both sides. Each side must pledge themselves to the other in order for the covenant to create something new that is a blessing to both sides. I have witnessed many times over the years one party to the covenant thinking that they can want the covenant enough for both parties. If this were true, everyone would be saved just by God wanting it to be so. This dire situation usually arises when one person tries to help someone else by trying to do their side of the covenant as well as their own. Everyone has witnessed this at some point, usually many times in their life. We want to believe we can do it all, and we fool ourselves into believing they want to be blessed as much as we want them to be blessed. I have seen parents treating 40-year-old children like teenagers, giving them allowances and endlessly bankrolling their lives, while the “child” does nothing to enhance their own future or the future of their parents. I have watched Christians endlessly helping the less “fortunate”, all the while creating a co-dependent relationship that only allows the one being helped to engage in endless self-destructive behavior. In the end, a covenant must be kept from both sides, which is why we needed Christ to keep the covenant. A covenant is a good trade, where both parties pledge all they are, or it is nothing. A covenant is a good trade, and because of that, a great blessing.

Verses: James 1:5, James 3:17, Proverbs 3:13-18, Ephesians 5:15-17

Prayer Topics: Wisdom, Experience, Discernment, Fruitfulness

Day 5

Good Judgment

Within a covenant, judgment is important. This judgment is often frowned upon, often run from, and often ignored. Judgment, however, is often what keeps us in the covenant, and therefore allows the blessings of the covenant to continue to flow. This is most often seen between parents and children, as the child is disciplined over and over again so that he can stay in the grace of the covenant. A child is taught to have table manners, and usually has no idea why this is necessary. He chafes at the constant rebukes by his parents, and wonders why he can't eat in any way he sees fit. When he is grown, he finds himself at the table with someone who has no table manners, and finds the experience unpleasant, resulting in his not sharing the table with his unappealing companion. Then he understands. He was taught to have manners so that he would make a pleasing companion at table, allowing him to continue in the grace of community. He was taught to take thought of others, so that they would take thought of him. His parents, by rebuking his lack of concern for the experience of others, were showing good judgment. Judgment can mean two things; it can mean rebuke or it can mean condemnation. Rebuke means we seek the good of the other, and condemnation means we seek the destruction of the other. Judgment can be good, and we must practice good judgment that graciously brings those we are in covenant with into greater blessing.

Verses: John 7:24, Romans 2:5-12, Romans 14:10-12

Prayer Topics: Foresight, Deliberation, Heedfulness, Discipline