

The Marriage Covenant #3

(The Fourth Commandment, "Not in Vain")

Sunday October 1, 2000

This morning I would like to continue our mini series on the marriage covenant. As you know, last week we began this series in which we will examine each of the ten commandments of God. We can see how that God gave us the ten commandments, not as LAW to be obeyed, but rather they were given to us to establish and confirm our relationship with the Father. These ten commandments help to direct us, guide us, and show us the proper way to establish the atmosphere of Love and respect that is needed in not only our relationship to the Father, but to one another. We have discovered in our study that these ten commandments were also given to us that we might apply them in our Marriage Covenant. Last week we examined what a covenant is and we saw that you cannot have a covenant or contract unless you have a meeting of the minds.

As we pointed out last week, God is the author of marriage, and as the author and designer of marriage He knows what it takes to have a successful and lasting marriage.

In **GENESIS 2:18** It was God that said, ¶ *[It is] not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*

Brother Branham pointed out to us told us that God instituted the marriage in the beginning. From his message entitled, **FLASHING RED LIGHT OF HIS COMING, 63-0623E** 68 he said, *Marriage, God instituted that in Eden, but He certainly condemned adultery.*

And in the message **COUNTDOWN 62-0909M 34** he told us, ... *We take, for instance, the marriage for union. We find out that the marriage; we find the courtship, and **the agreements, and then the marriage.*** And we noticed here he spoke of an order beginning with **courtship**, next an **agreement**, and then the **marriage**. Therefore there are three elements that make up this Holy Union.

#1) Courtship. Now, last week we did not go into the definition of courtship, because we had already done that several years ago when we preached the series on dating and courtship. But to refresh your minds, let me say there is a major difference between courtship and the modern concept of dating.

#1) Courtship has rules, dating has none.

#2) Courtship involves family first, dating excludes everyone but the two who are dating.

#3) Courtship takes time, whereas dating is instant, and therefore leads to instant gratification that leads to immorality and fornication.

#4) Therefore, Courting teaches patience whereas dating gives in to instant gratification.

#5) By teaching patience, Courting builds character and reinforces commitment, whereas dating opens the door for non commitment. If you don't get what you want from this one when you want it, shop around until you do.

Let's look further into these five principles of courting for just a moment.

#1) Courtship has rules, dating has none.

Rules are necessary to keep order and purpose. One of the greatest curses to any civilization is a

break down of the rules of order. And when courtship was tossed aside for expediency, long-term marriage went out the door as well. As we mentioned in our study of the first commandment of the Marriage Covenant last week, the first commandment is "*Thou shalt have no other.*" However, dating does away with this first rule of the marriage covenant. People date. Dating is not considered a lasting thing.

Dating is a thing for the here and now. Dating does not look long-term, but simply looks to the now. It does not consider consequence, but only expediency.

Without order there is only chaos. And without rules there can be no order. Rules guide, rules direct, rules point the way, and rules protect.

This is why we see a rise in promiscuity and even date rape, which shows a total lack or disregard for the woman. There was never such a phrase known as courtship rape. It was unheard of. The man knew that if he did not obey the rules, he would not make it through the process. She on the other hand used the rules for her protection. She knew there were boundaries where he could go and where he could not go. And he dare not go beyond those boundaries without endangering any hope of a long-term relationship. Therefore the rules of courtship were established as a safety zone where she could go and this gave her a sort of security blanket that also helped to create an atmosphere of rest and relaxation.

Courting rule #2) Courtship involves family first, whereas dating excludes everyone but the two who are dating. It is important to note that in the courtship rules, the family came first. In fact if a young man took a fancy to a young woman, he would first have to pass the test of family. He would come and visit with the family and if he

wanted to talk to her they would sit in the parlor, or in the front room in plain view of all and do their talking. Again, this rule gave her a safety zone where she could not be intimidated into a relationship that she might not feel comfortable in. This is one of the most important rules in preserving the virtue of young women.

If the young man had trouble with his own hormonal explosion, there was no outlet for it in this family setting. If he got fresh, he had not only her emotions to contend with, but he would have her angry older brother to face or perhaps her angry father as well. Her father and brothers being men, can read the actions of other men and they are more than aware of any advances that she might not understand. They would be there to stop it and even warn her. But with women it is different, they do not fully understand men and perhaps never will. Just as men will perhaps never fully understand the workings of their wife.

The Apostle Paul said in, **I CORINTHIANS 2:11** *For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*

Here Paul is telling us that there is no way that we can understand the things of God except God's Spirit is in us. It takes the Spirit of God to understand the things of God. And He says it takes the spirit of man to understand the things of man. That is why they say men are from Mars and women are from Venus. Men and women are so different from each other, it sometimes appears that we are from different planets altogether. We

are not only different physically, but spiritually as well. And it takes a man to know a man, just as it takes a woman to know a woman.

As a pastor I have talked to men and women over the years and it is not surprising that it does not matter in many cases if the woman is a Christian or not, women all have certain attributes which they possess in their spirit that men just don't possess, and have trouble understanding. The wife seems to nag, and it isn't just a bringing up a difference of opinion, but rather, it is like water dripping from a spigot. It is a constant, drip and her nagging is not just of things present, but women seem to have a gift of great memories, and when the nagging spirit turns on they bring up not only the present disagreements, but everything from the past that she does not like as well. The men naturally complain, but their complaints cannot change the nature of the woman. And then some of them, perhaps not having a believing wife, think the reason their wife does this is because she is not a believer.

But when it comes down to it, most of the time the thing that really bugs the men about their wife has nothing to do with whether they are a believer or not, it has to do simply that their wife is woman and they are man.

And a young woman no matter how smart she might think she is, and no matter how well she might think she knows the young man, she really doesn't, and she will allow herself to read into a situation, especially if she is desirous of the young man who is calling on her. How many young girls have lost their virtue because they felt trapped. Being left to their own self to work through their relationship, they felt that if they didn't give in to his demands he might think that she didn't love

him. She wanting to show her love then feels obligated to satisfy him and before she knows it she has lost her virtue and he has lost his respect for her.

But in a courtship environment, the family is involved, helping her and coaching her, and this gives her that needed safety zone where she knows that she will not be taken advantage of. Dad knows the thoughts of the young man because dad was once a young man himself. Older brother knows the thoughts going on in the young man's mind, because he too is young and perhaps has had those same desires for perhaps someone else's daughter. But this is his sister and he will not stand by and let someone take advantage of his sister. She also knows, that if she is rejected, she still has her family to loves her and cares for her, and therefore she is not alone in this trial.

Mother is also a part of the courting team, and she is there also to help and encourage and perhaps teach her daughter the proper way to build a relationship. The whole courting ritual is after all a maturity building exercise and there is much experience to be gleaned from mom, and dad, and perhaps even granddad, and grandma.

Rule #3 of Courtship) You must takes your time. Dating on the other hand is instant, and therefore leads to instant gratification that leads to immorality and fornication. But the time element involved in courtship also is part of the safety zone because decisions can be put off until there is a surety. This creates security, and helps to build up a lasting relationship. Decisions don't have to be made without the proper thought, and preparation. When pressed upon for some sort of a decision, she can enter into the time rule and

feel the security of knowing that there is a certain expectation that she wait. Many times the young people will hear their parents say, wait, wait don't rush into this relationship, and it is not until they have been hurt deeply that they finally understand why their parents warned them to wait.

One of the greatest benefits of courting is that it differs from dating in that it seeks to take time. The purpose behind taking an extended amount of time is that it allows you to either grow together or grow apart before you really have to make a choice. The Scripture plainly teaches us "*They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength*". Brother Branham said, "*them that waits, gets the promise*." Therefore, that which takes time to grow will be stronger, and more lasting. The time element in courtship teaches you to have patience in your relationship. It teaches you that all things do not have to be immediately resolved, but that through time you can work together to find resolve.

The scriptures teach us, **JAMES 1:4** *But let patience have [her] perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing..* And the word perfect used here comes from a Greek word teleios and it speaks of arriving at full age. In other words patience is to produce in us maturity. And As I look out among the young people in this message that have gotten married in the past 10 years I have seen very little patience among them. To be very candid, most have not been ready for marriage, but it was better for them to marry than to burn, as the Apostle Paul suggested. But, the fact still remains that had they controlled their hormonal rush, they could have entered into marriage more fully prepared to take on the tremendous responsibility that Marriage demands of them.

But very few young men growing up today seem to have a mature level of patience and as a result they have some very trying times with their spouses.

Many of them have not learned that Marriage is a sacred trust where two become united in life. They still have their little boy toys, and their friends and expect their wife to fit into their little culture when she perhaps was raised totally in another setting among a different people. And usually she marries him thinking that she will be able to change the things in him that she does not like, and they both start off on the wrong foot.

Rule #4) Therefore, Courting teaches patience and patience is the outcome of faithfulness. What woman is willing to wait for a man she thinks will be unfaithful to her if she waits too long. What woman will wait if she thinks he won't? You cannot have patience when there is no faithfulness, and if there is no faithfulness, why would you want to wait? Therefore the courting process can be seen as a trial of your faith. What faith you have in each other is put on trial during this process, and by extending the period of time, it allows the faithfulness of each to be placed on view for all to behold.

**224-1 THYATIREAN CHURCH AGE -
CHURCH AGE BOOK CPT 6** ' *Now faithfulness and patience go together. In fact patience is the outcome of faithfulness, for it says in **James 1:3**, "The trying of your faith worketh patience." There is absolutely no other way in which to gain patience. It has to come by the trial of our faith. **Romans 5:3**, "Tribulation worketh patience." How highly God regards this outworking of our patience is seen in **James 1:4**, "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye*

may be perfect and entire lacking nothing." God's will for us is Perfection. And that perfection is patience--waiting on God and waiting for God. This is the process of character development.

If the young people courted today instead of dating, they would definitely learn patience, and patience teaches you, that if I can wait for her to be comfortable enough to marry me, then I can also wait to have relations with her. Then I can also wait to buy that first house until we can afford it, and I can wait to start our family, and I can wait for other things as well. Yet today we do not see many young people who are willing to wait for anything. They have to have it now. And thus the amount of out of wedlock pregnancies is at a staggering 70% for the blacks, and 40% for white children.

Courting slows down the pace and allows you the time to reflect upon what transpired in your conversation, it allows family to be involved in your decision making process. It also allows family to give you another opinion, another view and often helps you to be more careful in your decision making.

Therefore we come to **rule #5) By teaching patience, Courting builds character and reinforces commitment**, and commitment is faithfulness.

Brother Branham said, *God's will for us is Perfection. And that perfection is patience--waiting on God and waiting for God. This is the process of character development.*

The families involvement is very important because after all, when you marry, you marry into a family. The young and immature think they can

make decisions without family involvement, but that is neither wise, nor is it healthy for a lasting relationship. When you are raised up in a family and have ties to your family that go very deep, you cannot just walk away from that. An immature person will often say things and do things and perhaps run away from the situation, but then when she begins her life long journey with her husband, her own family values are bound to come forth, her childhood training is bound to come forth, and her expectations from a life together with her parents and siblings is bound to show forth in her marriage as well. "*As a tree leaneth, so shall it fall.*" **PROVERBS 22:6** Tells us, ¶ *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* It becomes part of your life, part of your makeup, and you cannot just toss out 18 to 20 years of training and start all over.

Therefore the courting process, by abiding time, helps a couple to grow together, and to work out any differences that can be worked out before the marriage takes place, or at least helps the other to cope with the differences going into the marriage, and thus a certain level of maturity is gained before the marriage takes place.

Last week we examined the first commandment in the marriage covenant and we found it is the same first commandment God gave to His People.
Thou shalt have no other besides me...

EXODUS 20:1 ¶ *And God spake all these words, saying, 2 I [am] the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness [of any thing] that [is] in heaven above, or that [is] in the earth*

*beneath, or that [is] in the water under the earth: 5 **Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them:** for I the LORD thy God [am] a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth [generation] of them that hate me; 6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*

Notice, God is the Husband, and He sought Israel for a Bride. And His first Rule that He laid down for this marriage relationship, is "**THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER BESIDES ME.**". Brother Branham uses this same rule when he issued forth the wedding covenant each time he performed a Wedding.

Now this morning I would like to examine rule number two of the Marriage Covenant: And I would like to call it the , "**NOT IN VAIN**" rule or commandment.

In **EXODUS 20:7** we read, *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

Now the word "vain" that is used here has several meanings. The first according to Webster, *is Having too high an opinion of oneself. In other words, · conceited · self-satisfied and the opposite of being vain is to be · modest · humble · self-effacing · unassuming*

THE NIV translation of Exodus translates this verse thusly: *"You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God; for the Lord your God will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name."*

The AMPLIFIED translation says, "*You shall not use or repeat the name of the Lord your God in Vain, that is, take it lightly or frivolously, in false affirmation or in profanity, for the Lord will not hold guiltless the man who takes His name in vain.*"

Jesus told us, "How be it in vain do they teach for doctrine the commandments of man, and by your traditions you make the Word of God on non effect.

And the same holds true of the spouse in our marriage covenant. That is why if we are to apply the ten commandments to our marriage covenant, we should never take our marriage covenant lightly.

To do something in vain shows there is no thought being placed upon what you are doing. You take it lightly, and you do not think of what the consequences will be.

So often today we see the young woman go to extremes to attract the young man. They will self scrutinize every hair on their head, they will look in the mirror for hours making sure that what they see will be attractive to him, and the way they talk, the way they dress, the way they act is all in an effort to win his attention and perhaps his hand in marriage. But once the wedding day has come and gone, off go the kindness, off goes the self effacement, off goes the attention to detail in her appearance , off goes the commitment to him and winning his affections, and then off goes the marriage right there.

On the other hand, he enters into the courting process hoping to attract her with the way he looks, and acts. He dresses nice, putting on his best when he visits her. He combs his hair just so,

and cleans out his car, and puts on a touch of cologne to hopefully keep him smelling sweet even when his nerves might cause him to sweat as much as he would playing sport. But he does all these things, he works hard to have spending money to shower her with gifts, and all to attract her attention and her love.

But what happens after the wedding vows have been said. The attitude seems to shift gears, downwards, and he soon forgets she is around. She forgets about making herself attractive to him, and pretty soon if they are not careful they become common to each other and begin to take one another for granted. At this point they are taking their marriage in vain. They are taking each other in vain. And Jesus said when you take it in vain, it becomes of non-effect.

How can a relationship blossom if it is taken lightly? How can a marriage be fruitful and full of happiness if the other is taken lightly? Or if their feelings are taken lightly? Or if their opinion is not longer important to you? The marriage union has become in Vain. It has become useless. And the atmosphere which now prevails is one of self centered indulgence. NO longer is it self effacing for the benefit of the other, but has become self indulgent.

The scriptures tell us, "*How can two walk together unless they be agreed.*" Years ago at family reunions, the young couples would participate in a game. This game was called a hopsack race. The young married couples would each put a leg into a hopsack and would race against other couples. If the couple worked together they could move pretty fast, and perhaps win the race. But if they could not walk in sync

with each other then they were doomed to fall down in their race.

I believe when we are united together in marriage we have an obligation to walk together . No longer is she to consider her needs above their needs, and no longer is he to consider his needs above their needs. But they have agreed to untie which means that the common needs of the two take precedent over the individual needs of each other.

In the message **Flashing Red Light**, Brother Branham said, *“Notice, there is nothing that God could give a man outside of salvation better than a nice wife. There's no man can console, no person can console a person when they're tired; they'll won't confide in anyone like they do their own wife. And what a fortunate thing you brothers are when you've got a nice little wife that's clean, and upright, and moral, and you can come in when you're tired and weary and set down, and she can talk to you. She can do more with you than anybody else. That's right. She's a jewel; she's a queen.”* But what happens when that relationship has become of no use, or has become in vain?

In his book, **His Needs, Her Needs**, Dr. Willard F. Harley, Jr. contends that meeting each others needs is the key to making your marriage happy and affair-proof. Dr. Harley, who directs a network of mental health clinics throughout the state of Minnesota, has had more than twenty years of experience in counseling hundreds of couples. He writes: *“Once a spouse lacks fulfillment of any basic need, it creates a thirst that must be quenched. If changes do not take place within the marriage to care for that need, the individual will face the powerful temptation*

*to fill it outside of marriage.” Notice how he speaks of these innate needs for fulfillment that create a thirst if not attended to. Did not brother Branham speak the same things to us when he said, “**God places a thirst in man, and man tries to quench that thirst on his own?**”*

When we have needs which are not being met, this is a good indication that we have become isolated in our marriage at least in those certain area's. But so many times we would rather slide into a state of isolation than to have to deal with the problem. Just like the person who has come from anxiety, through compulsion, and possession, fear depression, and into isolation or disassociation, those who slip into isolation do not do it because they want to be hurt, but rather they think there is solace and comfort and safety in solitude. The “Peace of avoidance is better than the pain of dealing with reality”, but this form of death is very deceptive.

Isolation is not forced upon any married couple. We delude ourselves by the atmosphere we have set up in our homes. We create the delusion the we have time pressures, and work demands, and economic anxieties which lead us to believe that we are excused for our lack of interest in meeting the needs of our spouse. Every day we face choices that we must make and it is these choices we make that will either bring us into a further blessing in our relationship, or will lead us into depression and eventual isolation.

As I have said before in the mini series I preached a few years ago called, “**Home and the House of God,**” And in the series entitles, “**As a man Thinketh in His Heart,**” you might remember where we found that the seeds of every trial, and every reaction we go through, is only the result of

what we have already been sowing in our mind. It is our minds that get in the way of our having the most wonderful relationships. It is our minds that get tired, and look to find an easy way out. It is in our mind where we have the opportunity to take God's provided way for our marriage or to take the way which only seems right for the moment. And it is in our mind where the atmosphere is created to either cause a wonderful harmonious relationship to exist or destructive isolation to occur. It all begins in our minds.

We know that this is the hour when the church ends up in divorce-ment because she isolates herself from the Groom, Jesus Christ the Word. He's on the outside knocking, trying to gain entrance but she won't open the door. Oh, how I hope you see that this is the spirit of the age. Don't get caught up into that or your marriage to one another and your marriage to Him will end up on the ash heap of history. It's time to arise and shake ourselves. Pinch yourself to make sure you are awake. Remember, Brother Branham taught us to *look at the women and you will see the condition of the church.*

From the Message, **I WILL RESTORE**, brother Branham said, *"not only among the Pentecostal denominations, but all denominations, this great palmerworm has broke down brotherhood. It's did it with the Lutherans. It's did it with the Baptists. It's did it with the Presbyterians. It's did it with the Nazarenes. It's did it with the Pentecostals. It's always been that old worm in there to make them isolate themselves. "We got it. You ain't got nothing." What a pity. He goes on to say .. And did you notice it's the same insect all the way down. Now, this old devil cankerworm has come in, and he crawls in the skin too, you know, cankers you up. Once they ever find a little thing*

*and when he does, it don't make any difference what somebody else tries to say, he will just hold to that, and he **will isolate his little group into something**, "but this is this." Brother, it ain't, "This is this."; this is "that."*

WHY SOME PEOPLE CAN'T KEEP VICTORY *So it takes the baptism of the Holy Ghost to come into that human heart there to make the thing run right. The love of God, God is love. And unless each one of these gifts is put right in the center of love, it'll become selfish and indifferent, and pull itself off, and isolate itself, and cross over, and fuss and stew. But when it's anchored right into the middle of love, it'll fellowship everywhere. And that's right. That's exactly what we need. The church is dying for love, brother.*

HEAR YE HIM *But you'll never isolate yourself and get anything from God,*

Eric Fromm once said, "To feel completely alone and isolated leads to mental disintegration just as physical starvation leads to death.