



2024 | Week 34

Taking The Vow Seriously

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Exchanging wedding vows is a highly anticipated moment in a wedding ceremony. Do you still remember the details of the vows you shared? Did you have a chance to reflect on those vows after the wedding? Does your marriage today reflect the vows you exchanged during that ceremony?

DAY 1

Not until our discussion on this week's topic did we realize how much less intentionality we've shown regarding wedding vows over time. We remember our own wedding ceremony, where we reassured ourselves of the familiarity in every word we had to say. We didn't want to stumble over the words in front of many people. Reflecting on it now, we wonder whether we truly understood the importance of these vows in our marriage.

When we did a little research online about wedding vows today, we were surprised to discover that many couples are ditching the word "obey." This prompted us to question ourselves about whether we included the word "obey" in our own vows.

In an online article from "The Knot," written by Chapelle Johnson, we noted how recent weddings are abandoning

the word "obey" in their vows. The article also referenced Tirzah Stein, an officiant, and owner of NearlyWed Coaching, who states that traditional wedding vows involving honor and obey aren't a requirement. Stein said, *"None of the newlyweds I work with have requested adding the word 'obey' to their wedding ceremony. I always ask folks what they don't want in their ceremony, and I often hear that they don't want any language that indicates a power dynamic, one partner being submissive to the other, or overly gendered messaging and wording."*[1]

This isn't the first time concerns about wedding vows have garnered attention. In the "Love Talk Devotional" book by Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott, they mentioned a May 2010 article in USA Today entitled, "Couples Take Their Vows in a New Direction." The article noted, *"The Bible is losing ground on the wedding aisle, and 'forever' may follow 'obey' into oblivion, particularly for those who marry in civil or nondenominational ceremonies."*[2]

It is a sad discovery, knowing that weddings are supposed to be very sacred ceremonies declared not just before people but also before God. Yet, in this simple yet profound essence of a wedding ceremony, culture has shifted, leaning more toward the "comfort" or "preference" of individuals.

In the traditional wedding vow, the word "obey" is spoken only by the bride to the groom. Many experts share that this vow reflects the verses in Ephesians 5: "I, [Bride's Name], take thee, [Groom's Name], to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish, and to obey, till death us do part; according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I give thee my troth."

Couples often overlook the significance of these terms in their wedding vows if they don't recognize the importance of Ephesians 5. Furthermore, wedding vows resonate differently when couples do not recognize and submit to God's design for marriage.

We used to be in a similar situation and learned the hard way how we wrongly perceived marriage. Reflecting on our past leads us to a clear conclusion: our intentionality toward our wedding vows was at a very different level

compared to now. Today, we clearly recognize God's authority and His Word in us and in our marriage.

Whether you are in a good relationship with God and understand the tremendous impact of the wedding vow or navigating a rocky marriage and feeling hopeless about the beautiful promises you and your spouse once declared, we pray that this week's topic allows you to learn more about these vows and reflect on their meaning in your current marital relationship.

'Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ' (Ephesians 5:22-25)

Keep Journeying with Christ!

Your Fellow Couple,

Rey & Annie

DAY 2

In yesterday's post, we shared the surprising discovery that many weddings are now ditching the word "obey" in marriage vows. This word is supposed to be included in the bride's vow, declaring her commitment to her husband. We concluded that our understanding and commitment to such vows, anchored in God's truths—His design and purpose for marriage—significantly affect how we perceive the marriage vow. Indeed, there is a long list of reasons that validate this choice regarding the term "obey." However, we may overlook the importance of including "obey" in the vow if we do not understand the strength of that reason. Perhaps examining the current status of marriages in the U.S. will provide insights into how understanding marriage vows and maintaining a continuous commitment to them can impact marital relationships.

According to a [2013 PEW Research Center](#) survey [3], people are getting married for the following seven common reasons: (1) love, (2) making a lifelong commitment, (3) companionship, (4) having children, (5) a relationship recognized in a religious ceremony, (6) financial stability, and (7) legal benefits. If we take a closer look at this list, the top three reasons are heavily anchored in the couple's perspectives and understanding of marriage. Ideally, such perspectives and understanding should be communicated even before saying "I do," as they shape how the couple will view their marriage vows.

On the other hand, [Divorce.com](#) [4] released the top 13 most common reasons for divorce, based on surveys conducted by Business Insider, The Huffington Post, and Forbes. The following list is ranked according to the accumulated survey results from these three organizations:

1. Lack of commitment
2. Infidelity/relationship outside of marriage
3. Conflict/irreconcilable differences
4. Marrying too young
5. Money issues/debt
6. Substance abuse/alcohol addiction
7. Communication problems
8. Inability to have children
9. Domestic violence
10. A child with a mental illness or incapacitation
11. Health problems/mental illness of a spouse
12. Lack of support from family
13. Religious differences

From the sincere reasons for marriage, we can see a painful contrast in the reasons for divorce. It is not to undermine the challenges within marriage; it is indeed a difficult road. However, understanding these reports alerts us to a loud call for help—help in changing our perspective on marriage and its ongoing journey. Such help may include a constant reminder of the vows we declared during that wonderful wedding ceremony.

Let's not view the wedding vow as merely a couple's part in a ceremony requiring memorization. Instead, let's embrace this wedding vow as a continuous commitment in our marital journey. We need to stand firm in that commitment, despite the many challenges of life, by anchoring our wedding vows in God's intent for marriage. Just as the Apostle Paul detailed in Ephesians 5:22-33, we

are called to have a marriage that reflects the relationship between Jesus Christ and His followers.

Keep Journeying with Christ!

Your Fellow Couple,

Rey & Annie

DAY 3 | For Husbands

Well, I'm a clear example of someone who misunderstood wedding vows. Looking back, I realize how little I understood about marriage and how far my understanding was from God's design and from Jesus Christ, who modeled it in His relationship with the church.

Sadly, the essence of the wedding vows didn't communicate well with my parents. I was around 12 years old when they decided to end their relationship. While this separation was undoubtedly equated with a misunderstanding and mispractice of the vows they once declared, the sad effect extended to their only child.

Although I didn't witness a good translation of those vows in my parents' marriage, I had a wonderful example with my grandparents. My mother's parents were blessed with seven children and had 23 grandchildren before passing away. My grandfather was a firefighter, while my grandmother was a teacher by profession, choosing instead to be a stay-at-home mother. Despite life's challenges, I witnessed how their relationship stood firm. While I don't have many memories of their faith journey, one thing that resonates with me is seeing my grandfather as a constant viewer of the late Billy Graham. They celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. I may have missed this significant milestone in their marriage due to deployment, but I'm sure they had the chance to declare their vows again. Reflecting on their relationship truly touches my heart. Manuel and Virginia Sison genuinely embraced their vows.

Now, as I embark on my third marriage with Annie, my heart overflows with gratitude because of Jesus Christ. My failures in the first two marriages made discussing

weddings and vows uncomfortable for me. It was only when I accepted Jesus Christ and became intentional in learning about and seeking Him that everything changed, including my outlook on marriage. I'm grateful that my relationship with Christ has brought me to a place where I deeply appreciate marriage and every word of the wedding vows.

As Annie and I continue this wonderful journey of marriage, we look forward to where God will lead us. May He guide us as we embark on a continuous learning journey inspired by the vows we declared to each other. I find peace in knowing that Annie and I share a commitment with God at the center of our relationship. We're thankful that He has fostered such a strong friendship between us. All of this is due to His grace through His Son, Jesus Christ.

"His mouth is full of sweetness, and he is wholly desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." (Song of Solomon 5:16)

Keep journeying with Christ Jesus.

Your Fellow Husband,
Rey

DAY 4 | For Wives

Let's admit, it's not very often that we give much attention or intentionality to remembering the vows we declared during our wedding ceremony. Rey and I were surprised to find out that many people are ditching "obey" in their vows. I don't even remember if I was asked about it, nor do I recall if I included that term in my vows to Rey. In either case, we realized that our focus was not on the deep meaning of the vows but rather on ensuring we didn't mess up the words we had to say in front of our guests.

As Rey and I reflect on this week's topic, we can't help but be thankful to the Lord Jesus Christ for keeping our marriage in His hands. We don't feel we deserve the quality of our relationship today, especially since we didn't fully understand the significance of the vows we made when entering into this commitment. It's only

through His grace that we have the opportunity to hear His voice, learn His design for marriage, be encouraged to follow His example and stay committed day by day.

Discovering the harsh realities presented in surveys and studies of today's marriages is truly heartbreaking. It paints a clear picture that many are losing hope. The fact that divorce rates are highest among Protestants here in the USA is indeed a surprising and sad reality. Straying from the truths of our wedding vows illustrates the ongoing battle of division among couples.

As a fellow wife, my heart goes out to every woman who finds herself in a difficult situation or facing a rough road leading to divorce. None of us desire to enter marriage expecting it to end. Statistics show that love is the top reason for marriage, a clear indication that we all desire to love and be loved. Unfortunately, this sincere desire can become burdensome when faced with challenges and difficulties.

I once found myself on the edge, feeling disconnected from Rey. At that moment, I wasn't thinking about the vows I had declared. My attention was consumed by heartbreak and frustration. I thought we were approaching a dead end. Little did I know that this dead end was of our own making—living life relying on ourselves. We encountered a crossroads where we had to choose between surrendering our marriage to Christ or continuing to endure it until we could no longer bear it. Thank God, Rey and I made a conscious decision to anchor our relationship to Christ.

The vow we declared to our husbands in front of many witnesses has now turned into a guiding verse—a verse that directs our encouragement to the One who truly sustains our marriage, relying on the Holy Spirit to fulfill our roles.

"Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." (Ephesians 5:22-25)

Keep journeying with Christ!

Your Fellow Wife,

Annie

DAY 5

This week, we had a great opportunity to reflect on the supposed impact of wedding vows in marriages. We explored reality through statistics and studies, but we also have biblical truths that encourage us not to lose hope.

Challenges in marriage and in life are inevitable. They happen, but what's important is how we respond to these difficult times. The wedding vow is not just a part of the wedding ceremony; it comprises words to hold onto that should inspire, motivate, and encourage us to stay committed to this relationship. However, we must also acknowledge the truth that we cannot fulfill these vows on our own. We need help! That help is Jesus Christ—accepting Him as our personal Lord and Savior, who protects and sustains marriages. Together with the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be empowered to turn those commitments into actions. At the end of the day, it's not truly us who are fulfilling them; it's Jesus Christ who lives in us!

So, for this week, we encourage you to take a moment to reflect on these vows. Meditate on Ephesians 5:22-33. By the grace of God, you'll be able to renew your commitment to embody those vows today.

For Husbands:

I (Husband's Name) take thee (Wife's Name) to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, honour, and cherish, 'til death do us part.

For Wives:

I, [Wife's Name], take thee, [Husband's Name], to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish, and to obey, till

death us do part; according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I give thee my troth.

Your Fellow Couple,

Rey & Annie

NOTES

[1] Johnson, C.. March 2024., "Here's Why Traditional Wedding Vows Like "Obey" Should Be Given the Boot."

www.theknot.com

[2] Parrott, Drs. Lei & Leslie., "Love Talk: Devotional for Couples".

[3] Geiger, A.W. and Livingston, G., Pew Research Center. "8 Facts About Love and Marriage in America". February 13, 2019

[4] Divorce.com."51+ Divorce Statistics in the U.S., Including Divorce Rate, Race, & Marriage Length". July 15, 2024



Let's embark on a comprehensive learning experience with this week's topic by following the **D.R.A.S.H. - 5 Steps of Learning Method!**

Step 1 | Discover the Truth

- Read carefully (a) Ephesians 5:22-33 and (b) Song of Solomon 5:16. In your own words and understanding, what do you learn about marital relationships and the roles of husband and wife?

What particular Biblical truth had the most impact on you?

Step 2 | Reflect and Meditate on the Truth

- With other Biblical perspectives, statistics, and recent studies on marriage, how do you find this information valuable for wedding vows, your marriage, and your role in marriage?

Step 3 | Apply the Truth

- After learning the Biblical truths and other related facts mentioned in this week's topic, what will you do differently that relates to the vow you once declared to your spouse?

Step 4 | Share

- Using a storytelling concept, compose a short story about how you will share the truths you discovered in this week's topic with your spouse or other married individuals journeying with you. You may want to consider a 1-minute or 5-minute storytelling technique.
- You can use the following guiding questions in your composition:
 1. What truths did you discover and reflect on in this week's topic?
 2. How are these truths and reflections related to yourself and your current marital status?
 3. What actions do you plan to take in the coming days that relate to this week's learning?

Step 5 | Help in Navigating the Truth

- Besides your spouse, identify another person (or member/s of your small group) who will journey alongside you as you take intentional actions based on this week's learning. Consider what additional help you may need, such as further discussion or a regular prayer partner.

Let us know how this guide has helped you!

May this study tool be effective and helpful for every fellow seeker and believer who is intentionally journeying with Jesus Christ. We would be grateful to hear how this tool has significantly impacted your journey and your relationships with your spouse and others. Please share your feedback or experiences through this [link](#) (or scan QR Code)



Couples' Journey with Christ Jesus

www.couplesjourney.org

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