



Christian Report

To Win...To Disciple...To Equip...To Win

Volume 9

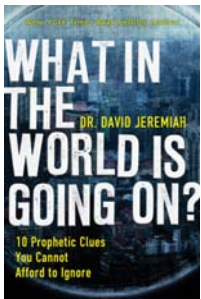
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We are members of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability and Christian Service Charities in order to maintain the highest standards of excellence and accountability.



Next Month



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Marriage Vows — Covenant or Contract — by MSgt Rick Hiltman, USAF, CMF Board of Directors

In our modern society we do not often use the word “vow.” Less often do we hear the word “oath,” and “promises” are those things we fail to keep. Perhaps it is because we are not careful with our words and not very mindful of their meaning.

There are some who would say that we should never make a vow. Yet David advises us to, “Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them.” (Psalm 76:11) and again we see the words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 5:4, “When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it.”

We must push aside our prejudices, preconceptions, and perhaps misconceptions while asking the hard question: “Is marriage a cove-

H5087 נָדַר nādar: A verb meaning to vow. The verbal concept denotes the making of an oral, voluntary promise to give or do something as an expression of consecration or devotion to the service of God.

Vow: A solemn promise; as the vows of unchangeable love and fidelity. In a moral and religious sense, vows are promises to God, as they appeal to God to witness their sincerity; and the violation of them is a most heinous offense. (Noah Webster)

Oath: A solemn affirmation or declaration, made with an appeal to God for the truth of what is affirmed. The appeal to God in an oath, implies that the person imprecates his vengeance and renounces his favor if the declaration is false; or if the declaration is a promise, the person invokes the vengeance of God if he should fail to fulfill it. A false oath is called perjury. (Noah Webster)

Marriage: In a Scriptural sense, the union between Christ and his church by the covenant of grace, Rev 19. (Noah Webster)

nant or a contract?” The article, *Marriage—The Importance of Our Words*, that appeared in the January issue clearly defined from Scripture that marriage is a covenant. In contrast, contracts are

narrow in scope, deal with specific actions, and are generally made for a limited period of time. We lease a car for 36 months. We rent an apartment for 12 months. Sign a service contract for your new appliance, and it will tell you exactly what repairs are not covered, covered, and for how long. Contracts are motivated by the desire to get something we want and are based on performance. A contract is defined as:

“An agreement between two or more parties for the doing or not doing of something specified; an agreement enforceable by law and the written form of such an agreement.”



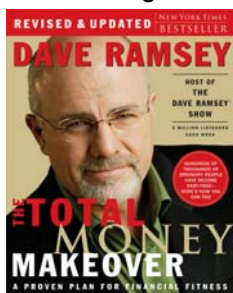
The Old Testament word, **beriyth**, translated “covenant,” is defined as, “a compact (made by passing between pieces of flesh):- confederacy, covenant, league.” (H1285—Strongs) *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* adds: “This word is used to describe God’s making a covenant with humankind. The covenants made between God and humans defined the basis of God’s character in the Old Testament. They showed the strength of His divine promise from Adam all the way through to the exile and restoration.” (Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D., General Editor)

The Lord established the marriage covenant in Genesis

(Continued on page 2)

Monthly Book Offer — *The Total Money Makeover* — by Dave Ramsey

The success stories speak for themselves in this latest book from “money maestro,” Dave Ramsey. Instead of promising the normal dose of quick fixes, Ramsey offers a bold, no-nonsense approach to money matters, providing not only



the how-to but also grounded and uplifting hope for getting out of debt and achieving total financial health.

Ramsey debunks the many myths of money (exposing the dangers of cash advance, rent-to-own, debt consolidation) and attacks the illu-

sions and downright deceptions of the American dream, which encourages nothing but overspending and massive amounts of debt.

This book is available free to our membership while they last. You may order this and other resources from the “Members Only” Resource page of our website or call the Home Office. 800-798-7875

Marriage Vows — Covenant or Contract — by MSgt Rick Hiltman, USAF, CMF Board of Directors

(Continued from page 1)

2:24 saying, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” The NET Bible Translation Notes adds: “The Hebrew word *bašar* refers to more than just a sexual union. When they unite in marriage, the man and woman bring into being a new family unit.” Jesus reiterates this fact in Matthew 19:6, when he says, “So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

To look at this in perhaps a new light, the two that have been conjoined into one flesh (singular-one body in the Syriac) now form a covenant relationship with Christ Himself—a newly created being that is meant to function as a reservoir of Christ’s efficacious love. This was not just because the two have become one flesh, but because this was entered into by covenant vow. Therefore, it is MUCH MORE than any agreement or contract, and greater still than a promise; it is a God-ordained union that is a visible reflection of the marriage between Christ and His Church by the covenant of Grace.

A covenant serves the dual purpose of guaranteeing and unifying. A covenant serves as the ultimate guarantee of loyalty—that both parties will do what they have agreed to do or die trying. It is quite literally a binding agreement which unifies or binds the parties together for life.

A covenant views commitments as permanent. Therefore, it makes a huge difference whether a couple views marriage as a contract or a covenant. Is marriage for a lifetime, or only until one of us gets tired of the relationship? Governments may regard marriage as a legal contract, but in Scripture, marriage is an act of the Almighty. That is why the marriage covenant is made of unconditional promises and holds us together when times are tough. The minister asks, “Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor and keep her in

sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, keep thou only unto her so

long as you both shall live?” When the groom responds, “I will,” he has made a covenant.

It then becomes all important how we view marriage. Will it be like the maintenance agreement for a high definition television? Or will you view it through the eye of Scripture as a covenant with the Lord Himself?

A covenant is initiated for the benefit of the other person. “I love you so much and I believe that I can enrich your life.” That is covenant language.

The paramount words from our wedding ceremony do not signify a contractual agreement but a vow that denotes the giving of one’s life in covenant. It is a ceremony joining two into one.

If a covenant is made by two people, with God as witness (and usually many friends and family), can it be

broken? The answer is, “Yes.” Can it be broken by our mate’s sexual unfaithfulness, abuse, abandonment or any other tragic thing or things? The answer we so often hear from others is, “Yes.” However, this serves to make our covenant wedding ceremony a contract. We then place ourselves into a legally binding, contractual, performance-based relationship. In reality, it makes a mockery of our wedding ceremony and its words meaningless. The truth is, a covenant cannot be broken by the action, actions, or lack thereof by one party. A covenant is made by two people and can only be broken by two people or death. One person cannot break a covenant, only a contract. It is God Who designed and defined covenant. Man cannot change His eternal truth. If we attempt to change this truth, we are making the word of God to no effect.

We talked with words that vowed a lifelong commitment when we were “in love.” Why do we change our attitude when the euphoria of the “in love” experience fades? Covenant love is steadfast love. Okay, you say, that is all well and good, but my spouse did not keep his/her end of the agreement. At the

risk of being too blunt, “So just how does that absolve *me* of what *I* agreed to?” The tendency in this situation is to shift the focus on how my spouse has not kept the covenant he/she entered into. It is humbling to know that every thought I entertain about “moving on” moves me toward being culpable of violating my side of the covenant as well. In God’s divine grace, He has allowed me to see that honoring my vow “till death do us part” has everything to do with me and nothing to do with my spouse.

Covenant marriages are not perfect marriages. Perfection is reserved for God. There are no perfect husbands. There are no perfect wives. When we join in covenant marriage, we agree to love each other. That is, we look out for each other’s interests. But we also agree to hold each other accountable to our covenant. Lovingly confronting your spouse when they hurt you is a part of our covenant. Confession on the part of the one who has wronged the other, and forgiveness on the part of the one offended are both necessary in a covenant marriage. Forgiveness is a willingness to lift the penalty and continue a loving, growing relationship. Covenant marriage requires confronting, accountability and forgiving.

In the recent box office hit movie, “Fireproof,” Kirk Cameron plays a fire chief, a man who is well-respected by those in his community—but his marriage is close to ending. It seems that day by day Caleb (Cameron) and Catherine take one another a little more for granted and move *away* from each other rather than *toward* each other. Both are searching for validation of their emotions—and just simple appreciation. As Caleb decides to “throw in the towel” on his marriage, his father asks him to wait and provides him a 40-day “love dare” challenge.

Maybe we have to ask ourselves as they did, “Will you dare to love him/her again? How far will you go to keep your promise? How much would you sacrifice to save your marriage? Even if your heart is not totally in it, are you willing to take even tiny steps toward never leaving your partner behind?”

Next month we will begin to explore some of our feelings, options, rights, and responsibilities in covenant marriages. May the Lord bless you richly as you take steps to “fireproof” your marriage! †

God himself joined man and wife together; he has fitted them to be comforts and helps for each other. The bond which God has tied is not to be lightly untied. Let those who are for putting away their wives consider what would become of themselves if God should deal with them in like manner. (Matthew Henry)

“What therefore God has ^{G4801}joined together, let no man ^{G5563}separate.” (Matthew 19:6 NASB)

G4801 συζεύγνυμι
suzzeugnumi—conjoin (in marriage)

Conjoin: To join together, without any thing intermediate; to conjoin man and woman in marriage.

G5563 χωρίζω *chōrizō*
to place room between, that is, part; reflexively to go away: - depart, put asunder, separate.

CMF Week at White Sulphur Springs July 31 through August 7. 2009

Register now to attend CMF week at White Sulphur Springs Christian Camp and Conference Center. The topic for our studies will be "Intimacy or Isolation: Choosing God's Plan for Your Marriage." Our speaker will be the Reverend Mr. Larry Hoskins, Th. M, Senior Pastor, Grace Church Aurora, Colorado, Vice Chairman, CMF Board of Directors. Our Mentors in Residence will be Dick and Sue Price, CMF Camp Lejeune Ministry.

Summer Family Camp is the primary ministry of White Sulphur Springs. Families, singles, young and old come together for a week or weekend to worship God, listen to His voice, and fellowship with other believers from the military society. Adults enjoy speakers and relevant discussions during the mornings and evenings, while youth of all ages attend programs

geared for their age group. Afternoons are unscheduled to allow families and friends to hike, bowl, canoe, play volleyball, read, or catch crawdads in the streams. Special activities include horseback riding, a hayride and campfire, an afternoon tea, a square dance, a picnic, and "dress-up" theme meals.

Discounts: WSS offers a 10% discount on lodging and meals for officers in grades O1-O3, and a 20% discount for enlisted members, midshipmen, cadets and other single undergraduate college students, and a 20% discount for combat returnees (within 6 mo.). White Sulphur Springs 4499 Milligans Cove Rd Manns Choice, PA 15550 phone: 814.623.5583 · fax: 814.623.1520 office@whitesulphursprings.org http://www.whitesulphursprings.org/ Click on "Prices & Registration"

Join the Link-up Team!

Remember how you felt when you arrived at your new duty station? You didn't know a soul, weren't familiar with your surroundings, and were generally apprehensive. The most prevalent stress placed upon members of the military and their families is caused by moving or traveling. One way that we can prevent this stress is to "Link-Up" with other Christians. To that end, we publish a yearly Directory of worldwide referrals. We are in the process of compiling our Spring 2009 issue and want to give you the opportunity to participate. If you are interested, click on the Information->"Join The Link Up Team" button at our website and submit the secure electronic form or submit the enclosed printed form to us by mail. http://www.CMFHQ.org

AMCF North American Conference — Building a Wall of Prayer Around Our Military

ACCTS, Christian Military Fellowship, Officers' Christian Fellowship, the Military Missions Network, the Military Ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, and the North American Region of the Association of Military Christian Fellowships are all sponsoring the "Wall of Prayer," but the needs are great, and our numbers are relatively few. Our concept of operations is to mobilize the nation's churches to recruit hundreds of prayer intercessors to stand in the gap with our military as they fight the War on Terror.

Our forces are engaged in irregular warfare against a non-traditional enemy, and they face improvised explosive devices, suicide bombers, and combat operations in urban terrain on a daily basis. This new form of combat is causing significantly increased Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury, as well as other horrific injuries. In addition, a smaller military force means more frequent deployments for most of our troops, which creates additional pressures on the home front – 67% of junior enlisted personnel marriages are now in jeopardy, as young couples who should be together building their relationship are separated by the needs of the service at a critical point in their lives together.

A smaller military also means fewer resources for the chaplains as they seek to meet growing ministry needs. Since chaplains deploy as often (or more) than those whom they serve, they now require additional ministry themselves.

The net result is less capacity for military ministry at a time when more is needed.

The ministry needs of our service men and women have exceeded the capacity of military chaplains and now require the combined resources of our nation's churches, the numerous parachurch organizations which minister to the military, as well as the military chaplains. In Ecclesiastes 4:12, we read, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." While the chaplains and para-church organizations have laid a foundation for the ministry needs of the military, the Wall of Prayer will require 1,000 or more churches across the country to serve as building blocks by becoming informed, intentional, and perennial prayer partners.

But how can you help meet these needs? You can become prayer partners simply by committing to pray for our military on a regular basis. We know from Scripture that, "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16b), and that, "if two of you on earth agree about something, then you can pray for it. And the thing you ask for will be done for you by my Father in heaven. This is true because if two or three people come together in my name, I am there with them." (Mt. 18:19-20)

The ACCTS website: www.accts.org has brochures and other information about the Wall of Prayer initiative, including a list of suggested prayer con-

cerns. On the website there is also a prayer map, and as churches, Christian organizations, and others commit to praying for our forces, we ask that they indicate their participation by adding their names to the map. This will help us track "construction" of the Wall, as well as let prayer partners see who is praying alongside them. The materials on the website may be downloaded at no charge and distributed as the Lord provides the opportunities to spread the word about the Wall of Prayer.

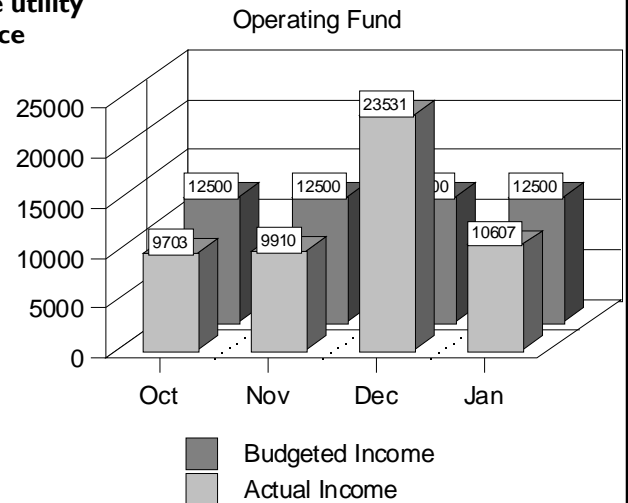
Plan to attend the AMCF Conference this summer at beautiful Estes Park, Colorado, (less than 2 hours from Denver) and invite those from your church who have a heart for Military Ministry. The conference will be held in the brand new conference center and lodge facilities of the YMCA of the Rockies. This unique event, which features international motivational speakers (including Dr. Richard Blackaby, U.S. Army Chaplain General, MG Doug Carver, Canadian Forces Chaplain General, BG Dave Kittle, Dr. Miles Monroe), and a series of military ministry workshops, will equip you to minister and pray more effectively for military personnel and their families. Participants will also hear Steve Green in concert and enjoy the beauty of God's creation in scenic Estes Park! Registration for the 17-21 August conference is now open, and registration forms may also be found on the ACCTS website. You may register at: <http://www.ymcarockies.org>. Don't miss this exciting event! †

Top Ten Reasons To Invest in the Christian Military Fellowship

10. **Makes me a financial partner in what God is doing in the military.**
9. **Allows CMF to continue to publish and mail a really cool newsletter.**
8. **Keeps me in the fight with assurance because I am prayed for in the Battle Plan.**
7. **Helps me know CMF will be there when I need them most.**
6. **Ensures my access to Christian contacts as I transfer or travel.**
5. **Keeps those free monthly Christian book offers available.**

4. **I get to help pay the utility bill at the home office**
3. **Ensures a voice on the CMF telephone when I desperately need prayer or wise counsel.**
2. **Enables me to invest in reaching that next soul for Christ.**
1. **Because I want CMF to be there next year and the year after.**

Prayerfully consider becoming a regular giver.



New Members — Welcome Aboard!

A1C John Angerame, ANG
 PFC Marcus & Tiffany Craig, USA
 GySgt Robert & Lisa Creps, Jr., USMC
 SSgt Bradley & Christine Crum, USAF
 Mr. Peter Dejager, Jr.
 1stLt Bryan & Rhonda Ewing, Sr., USAF
 Dr. Kenneth & Roberta Farley
 Mr. Jorge & Maria Fuentes
 SCPO Edward & Victoria Gambill, USN
 MSgt Mike & Georgia Nelsen, USMC (Ret)
 MSgt Dave & Barbara Rasbold, Sr., USAF (Ret)

Mr. Jonathan & Michelle Reed
 PV2 Ethan Smith, USA
 A1C Brandon & Johana Wile, USAF
 TSgt Jim & Julie Young, USAF (Ret)

We're on Facebook

Promotions

MCPO Steve Dykema, USCG
 SSG Tony Gurr, USA
 CDR Brett Millican, USCG
 Capt. Jason Moll, USAF
 LTC Jim Orbock, USAR
 SFC Mike Rorie, USAR

The Nuggets of Faith— by SMSgt Tony (T-Bar) Barnes, USAF (Ret), CMF Board of Directors

Goodbye soldier... I love you! Those were the words I used as my daddy breathed his last breaths in January. Within a matter of seconds Gordon Barnes was in heaven meeting his Savior for the first time in person. Within those seconds, he was no longer emaciated and sedated from over a month on a respirator. Within those seconds he entered a place with streets of gold and walls of jasper. Because of his faithfulness, I believe when he entered heaven he heard the words, "Well done thou good and faithful servant." He is now gathered with Christians around the throne of God worshipping his Creator.

After the funeral service was over, I snagged one more solitary moment in the chapel where my father lay in state. It was a somber moment realizing it was the last time I would lay eyes upon his body. Although enlisted people rarely salute each other, I snapped to attention and saluted him. He had served in the Army and I had made a career in the Marine Corps and the Air Force.

And just as the Honor Guard from Fort Hood would salute the arrival of the hearse at the cemetery an hour or so later, I felt my father deserved to be saluted by this retired First Sergeant.

I saluted him for being a tremendous role model in my life. I saluted him for his tremendous faith in Jesus Christ. I saluted him for living out that faith in his nearly 35 years at Mack Trucks. And, I saluted him for the 47 years of his faithful marriage to my mother. His faithfulness to God has been related to me by countless stories from his colleagues regarding the difference he made in their lives. There was one who told me he had never had a father. He related to me how my dad had been like the father he never had. One man logged on to the virtual obituary guestbook featured by the local paper and told how my father was like a grandfather to him.

I knew my dad was a great man already. However, through his death I was privileged to meet the many people who expressed their appreciation for

my dad.

Thank you to the many people who prayed for my dad. He is certainly not walking the streets of Fort Worth anymore. But, he is now in heaven having received his eternal reward.

Please don't misunderstand. My father's heavenly inheritance isn't because of things he did while living on this earth. His going to heaven was due to him having accepted Jesus Christ's death on the cross as a gift from God. His good works were due to who he had become in Jesus Christ. The Bible says that when we accept Christ, we become new creatures and old things are passed away.

My father was a mentor, friend and hero to many because of his relationship with Jesus Christ. I long to see my father again. Maybe he is helping Jesus to prepare my dwelling place ready in heaven. A mighty man left this earth and a loyal follower of Jesus Christ entered into glory. †