



The Ten Commandments with regard to Marriage

Recently I conducted the wedding of our Sri Lankan minister Partheepan Shanmugam and his bride Dinoge. Prior to the marriage I was asked by someone if I was going to provide them with pastoral counselling. Personally I am not greatly enamoured with counselling. Nowhere is there more marriage counselling than in America and nowhere are there more divorces amongst evangelical Christians than in America. I believe that the faithful preaching of the Word, general pastoring and faithful Christian upbringing are the best preparation for marriage. After having had Parthee in my congregation for the last four years I felt he had no lack of teaching in this area. However, on reflection, aware that Dinoge came from a different ecclesiastical background and not really knowing her, I felt that it might be profitable to meet them both before the wedding and offer some words of advice. One night reflecting on what I might say the thought came to me that it might be profitable to apply the Ten Commandments specifically to marriage. Interestingly after speaking to them on this matter I discovered that Parthee had already bought his fiancée a wedding necklace with two little golden tablets on which were engraved the summary of the Ten Commandments — 'Love your God' and 'Love your neighbour'. It is normal Sri Lankan practice to buy your new wife a gift which you give her on the day of the wedding. This confirmed how appropriate the words would be. Briefly I share them with you.

First commandment: *Do not make an idol of one another.* Remember to love God with all your heart and to give to Him first place. Seek Him first and all else will fall into its proper place.

Second Commandment: *Worship God as a family.* In Old Testament times there were the morning and evening sacrifices. Draw near to God each day — if possible morning and evening — read His Word, sing His praises and pray to Him. It was an old saying, 'Those who pray together stay together'.

Third Commandment: *Fear God.* Give God the place of honour that is due to Him. Be aware constantly that His eye is upon you. Live out your lives in His presence. Fear His chastisement.

Fourth Commandment: *Remember the Sabbath day as a family.* This is vitally important for a happy family life. Spend as much of the day as is possible in the public, family and private exercises of worship. Talk together of the things of God and teach one another.

Fifth Commandment: *Wives submit to your husbands and husbands love your wives.* Husbands win the submission of your wives by loving them as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. Wives submit to your husband's as the church does to Christ (Eph. 5:24-25). If your husband loves you so much as to die for you it should be easy to submit to such a husband. He will not oppress you.

Sixth Commandment: *Do not retain anger towards each other.* 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath' (Eph. 4:26). Be sure to make peace at least by nightfall. Beware of sulking and keeping up resentment towards each other. There will be disagreements but they can be solved and the sooner the better.

Seventh Commandment: *Cherish one another and banish impure thoughts of others.* Of course adultery is wrong. But Jesus also said that it is wrong to look on a woman (or man) to lust after her (or him). We are all easily tempted but aim at the root of sin. Strive after purity of heart. Remember that the marriage bed is pure (Heb. 13:4) and enjoy it together. A healthy marriage is a safe marriage.

Eighth Commandment: *Live within your means.* It is a fact that the commonest cause for quarrelling in marriage is financial matters. The husband or the wife spends more money than the other is happy with. One feels vulnerable because no money is being saved and the other feels that life is not worth living unless he or she has this or that. It is essential to agree policy and to stick with it.

Ninth Commandment: *Be totally honest with one another.* Do not keep secrets from each other. Spend time talking and sharing together. Be open with each other, frank and free, while at the same time courteous and encouraging to each other.

Tenth Commandment: *Be content with what you have.* God provides and give Him thanks. *'Godliness with contentment is great gain'* (1 Tim. 6:6). Those who are jealous of others cannot be happy. *'Having food and raiment let us be therewith content'* (1 Tim. 6:8).

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