

Covenant Love and an Undivided Heart

Marriage, spiritual faithfulness, and the seriousness of belonging to God

"Teach me your way, LORD... give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name."
Psalm 86:11

The Central Truth

A covenant is more than a feeling or a convenient agreement. It is a solemn, binding relationship established through promises, responsibilities, and faithfulness before God. Marriage is meant to make covenant love visible, and our relationship with God calls for the same undivided loyalty.

Feelings can become divided, but covenant faithfulness cannot. Our choices reveal which relationship we protect and which love rules the heart.

1. What Is a Biblical Covenant?

A biblical covenant says, "I am giving you my word. I am binding myself to this relationship, and I will remain faithful to what I have promised." Covenants in Scripture included identified parties, promises, responsibilities, witnesses, signs, blessings, and serious consequences for unfaithfulness.

A contract says: "I will do my part as long as you do yours."

A covenant says: "I have given you my word, and my character will be revealed by whether I keep it."

God's Covenant With Abraham - Genesis 15

God placed His own name and character behind His promise to Abraham. Abraham's confidence rested not in his ability to control the future, but in the faithfulness of the God who made covenant with him.

The New Covenant Through Jesus - Luke 22:20

The New Covenant was established through Christ's blood. The cross reveals the seriousness of sin, the cost of forgiveness, and the sacrificial nature of covenant love. Jesus did not merely say He loved us; He gave Himself to redeem His bride.

2. Marriage Is a Covenant Before God

Malachi 2:14 calls a wife "your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant." Marriage is not merely a private arrangement. God witnesses the promises made by one man and one woman. A wedding vow is not a description of today's feelings; it is a promise before God about tomorrow's faithfulness.

Marriage Pictures Christ and His Church - Ephesians 5:21-33

- Christ loves sacrificially; spouses are called to put selfishness to death.
- Christ remains faithful; marriage requires exclusivity.
- Christ gives Himself for His bride; covenant love seeks the other's genuine good.
- Christ's love is truthful and holy; marriage requires honesty, repentance, forgiveness, and growth.

Why Adultery Is So Serious

Adultery is giving to someone else what was promised exclusively to a spouse. Betrayal can begin before a physical act through secret communication, cultivated affection, fantasy, or protected emotional intimacy. We may not choose every feeling that appears, but we choose which feelings we feed and which relationship we protect.

3. An Undivided Heart

Spiritual adultery occurs when we claim to belong to God while giving our deepest trust, affection, obedience, or loyalty to another master. James 4:4 warns against friendship with the world. Even a good thing becomes an idol when it receives the devotion, dependence, identity, or obedience that belongs to God alone.

Spiritual adultery is wanting God's name, protection, and blessings while giving our heart's ruling loyalty to something else.

Can a Person Truly Love Two People?

A person may feel real affection or attachment toward two people. But biblical love is more than emotion. Covenant love includes loyalty, sacrifice, responsibility, deliberate choice, and faithfulness. The decisive question is: "To whom have I given covenant faithfulness?" Jesus said no one can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24).

Can We Love God and the World?

First John 2:15-17 uses "the world" to describe a rebellious system of desires and values that rejects God's authority. The issue is not simply what we possess, but what possesses us.

Struggling with the world: Feeling temptation but fighting it, confessing failure, returning to God, and desiring freedom.

Loving the world: Protecting and justifying sin, refusing correction, and choosing disobedience over God's authority.

4. Returning to an Undivided Heart

- **Identify the competing love.** What occupies your thoughts? Where do you run for comfort?
- **Call it what God calls it.** We cannot repent of what we continually defend.
- **Stop feeding it.** Establish boundaries, remove access, end hidden relationships, and seek accountability.
- **Return to your first love.** Draw near through prayer, Scripture, worship, repentance, and obedience.
- **Remember Christ's faithfulness.** Jesus forgives those who genuinely repent and return.

Questions for the Heart

- What is the difference between a contract and a covenant?
- Why should vows made before God govern us when feelings change?
- What competing love or loyalty is attempting to divide my heart?
- What practical act of repentance would demonstrate covenant faithfulness today?

Marriage is meant to make covenant love visible: one man, one woman, one covenant, faithfully kept before God for life. In the same way, God does not ask to be one love among many. He calls His people to belong to Him with an undivided heart.