

Marriage

“In the original creation, God made male and female to be together. Because of this, a man leaves father and mother, and in marriage he becomes one flesh with a woman—no longer two individuals, but forming a new unity. Because God created this organic union of the two sexes, no one should desecrate His art by cutting them apart.” Mark 10:6

Some friends of mine moved into a new house that, unbeknownst to them, was contaminated with mold, which the builder had covered up with paint. After a few months of living in that atmosphere, the wife became very ill. Subsequent inspections found the cause, and they were forced to move into another house. However, the mold had so compromised the wife's immune system that she became so sensitive to almost anything of a chemical nature, including carpet, perfumes or any type of scent or fragrance, solvents, glues, out gassing from appliances or furniture, etc. This sensitivity caused her to need to almost live in a “bubble.”

Her health deteriorated rapidly. The medical bills continued to pile up. After a few years of this, the marriage began to fall apart, as the husband saw his life savings and retirement plans going down the tube. I'm sure there is much more to this story that I'm able to say here, but suffice it to say – divorce was the result.

The wife moved out into an environmentally safe house and neighborhood. The husband took over the house and bills that had piled up trying to make their house “safe” for the wife. It all happened because of a concern for money. Did I mention they are both Christian people who love God and want to please Him?

This is hard to understand. How do you love God and want to do His will in your life but go against some of the very teachings in His Book? For you see, how can one make such a difficult choice to end what you vowed to love and cherish, for better or worse, in sickness and health, till death parts us? These are vows you made in front of witnesses, with God being the ultimate Witness.

A vow that a husband and wife make to one another when they are married surely means something more than mere words. When Darlene and I were married in 1958, there were

a number of vows we made to each other in our traditional wedding ceremony in a small church in Wisconsin.

We vowed to love and cherish each other, to stick it out in sickness as well as in health, and to forsake others and be true to one another, "till death do us part." Although I have disappointed my wife at times, we have stuck together through thick and thin all these years. It seems the hard times have made us more aware of the strength we each bring to the marriage.

This is especially true in our latter years, as our own health issues have become so evident. You see, Darlene had a stroke a few years ago that has limited her mobility and the use of her right hand, which was her writing hand. Her mental faculties were unaffected so she is operating with limited physical abilities, but with above normal mental brilliance, keeping her bookkeeping skills going strong.

As for me, a cancerous polyp was discovered during a routine colonoscopy. Subsequent radiation and surgery got rid of the cancer but left me with a few problems, none of which are life threatening, but they have changed my quality of life.

So, here we are, two individuals living with health issues we didn't expect, didn't plan for, didn't and don't want, but we made a vow! We cannot break the vow, at least not in good conscience. We have witnesses. We have tradition. But most of all, we have love.

Some things have changed. We don't travel anymore. We don't attend many functions anymore, other than an hour church gathering every Sunday morning. We don't eat out (in fact I'm about ready to go to Olive Garden for "take out" for tonight's dinner). I have learned to cook most of our meals, as Darlene's limited use of one hand presents problems in food preparation, not always, but often. She does prepare some meals. I also do most of the housekeeping duties.

Does this arrangement bother me? A better question might be: Does loving my wife enough to do things for her bother me? To this I answer with a hearty NO!

A vow is a vow, not to be broken. A promise is a promise, not to be overthrown. An agreement is an agreement, not to be weakened with any type of rationale that allows a person to be shattered or defeated.

“Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?” How do you answer that? How do you keep that promise?

How you answer those questions, in fact, defines who you really are.