

40 DAY LOVE DARE™

WHAT WAS THAT PROMISE THAT YOU MADE?

The marriage vows we make can sound very different, especially in this day when people choose to write their own. However, the message most vows convey is surprisingly consistent. And those words communicate promises – whether you intended it at the time or even whether you “feel” that way now. In essence, when we vow, we promise two simple things:

FIRST: YOUR SPOUSE IS NOW THE NUMBER ONE PERSON IN YOUR LIFE.

Traditional vows often contain the words love, honor and cherish until death do us part. The essence is Biblical as seen in Genesis 2:24 (NIV), “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” Our marriage partner supersedes all others as illustrated by God’s instruction to leave father and mother, which is the highest priority relationship most of us know prior to marriage. This is reinforced by our legal system with the term, “next of kin”. And it’s validated emotionally and physically by our children. This priority position protects and maintains the internal structure of the marriage – the relationship between husband and wife.

Your spouse, the most important person in your life, deserves the most time. Remember the discussion about “quality” versus “quantity” time? The truth is that quality time is often felt during quantity time. Some things only happen when we spend time together. Working side by side or doing something fun can bring about moments that simply cannot be duplicated.

The benefit of time spent together allows us the privilege of learning to know and understand our spouse. And the consistent message of this priority creates an environment that feels safe – even when we disagree.

SECOND: THE DOOR TO INTIMACY IS CLOSED BEHIND THE TWO OF YOU.

This promise is often expressed in the words “forsaking all others”. We vow or promise that the relational space we promised our spouse, the intimacy of the marriage relationship, will be closed off to others from this point forward. This promise protects and maintains the external structure of our marriage – how the couple interacts with the world outside their relationship.

The obvious relational space is the physical intimacy part of the marriage, but it also includes emotional and spiritual intimacy. It’s not that we won’t have other relationships but rather it’s about what we’ll share in those other relationships. It means we invest more of our energy into the husband and wife relationship than elsewhere. We may even allow someone into that relational space we promised our spouse without having another romantic relationship. It could be a parent, child or close friend. The truth is that the spouse quickly realizes they are not in that priority position we promised and competition ensues.

The benefit of closing that door to intimacy behind the two of you is that we are a united front to face the outside world. The environment created is consistent and feels safe. We feel accepted and out of that mutually beneficial relationship have more to offer those outside our circle.

When we married we made promises to each other. Let’s remember what we promised; remember the benefit those kept promises can bring. Although the words may be simple, keeping our word is often complicated. But it is in the remembering, the keeping of those promises, that we can enjoy the relationship God intended marriage to be and that is worth all our efforts.



Gary and Mona Shriver are co-founders of Hope & Healing Ministries, Inc. After experiencing their own healing from infidelity, Hope & Healing began offering lay support in 1998. Their book, *Unfaithful*, published by David C. Cook in 2005, is scheduled for a revised release in the fall of 2009. They are members of the Association of Marriage & Family Ministries (AMFM) and are an integral part of the Reconciling Troubled Marriages Ministry Team. They have been married 34 years and have 3 grown sons. For more information, go to: www.hopeandhealing.us.