

## The Vow Intro Message

Do you remember in the 1980's the real life fairy tale marriage of Prince Charles and Lady Diana. This was one of the most-watched romantic real-life events of the twentieth century. It was estimated that almost 1 Billion people tuned in around the globe to watch this union. Why was the world so captivated? I personally think people are watching way too many Disney movies with the "they lived happily ever after" crammed into our brains...or perhaps it's the longing of every human being's heart to be loved so lavishly...

As you know – it didn't end with a they lived happily ever after...they lived separately ever after. Their marriage lasted 11 years.

What was interesting is that the Archbishop of Canterbury, who presided at the royal wedding, gave an amazing sermon that day. And he warned them so eloquently - In it he said this,

***"Here is the stuff of which fairy tales are made, the prince and princess on their wedding day. But fairy tales usually end at this point with the simple phrase, 'They lived happily ever after.' This may be because fairy tales regard marriage as an anticlimax after the romance of courtship. This is not the Christian view. Our faith sees the wedding day not as a place of arrival but the place where the adventure begins."<sup>1</sup>***

What was he alluding to?

The fact that people think that the truest and most impressive kind of love happens during the courtship – it is romantic, and blissful, and exciting but then marriage happens...listen to some of these modern day thoughts regarding marriage...

LOVE - When your eyes meet across a crowded room.

MARRIAGE - When you try to lose your spouse in a crowded room.

LOVE - When you argue over how many children to have.

MARRIAGE - When you argue over whose idea it was to have kids.

LOVE - When you share everything you own.

MARRIAGE - When the [bank](#) owns everything.

LOVE - When your only concern is for your partner's feelings.

MARRIAGE - When your only concern is what's [on TV](#).

LOVE - When you are [proud](#) to be seen in public with your partner.

MARRIAGE - When you never see each other awake.

LOVE - When your heart flutters every time you see them.

MARRIAGE - When your wallet empties every time you see them.

LOVE - When you're only interested in doing things with your partner.

MARRIAGE - When you're only interested in your golf score.

LOVE- You only leave the house to buy coffee and croissants.

MARRIAGE- You only leave the house when you're allowed to.

Isn't it true that this is how our modern culture sees marriage?

So what the bishop was saying is that instead of muddying up the waters of this perfect blissful romantic love affair with marriage we'll just slap on the "they lived happily ever after to summarize it." And spare everyone the sorry details...

**Now- any other time I would be like – that's horrible – but here's the thing – there's truth in it or else we wouldn't be laughing and smiling.**

So in a sense we're saying yes, that initial romance, red-hot-burning passion fades when we get married, **things DO get harder once we're married**, our spouses will annoy us, our perfectly chiseled man will get fat, bald and ugly, they will test our patience, trials will come, our perfect bride will wake up with bad breath and our handsome stud will do all of

those nasty things that guys do... BUT – AND THIS IS THE POINT OF THE ENTIRE MARRIAGE SERIES – ITS OKAY!

WHY? BECAUSE IT OPENS THE DOOR TO THE MOST ASTONISHING, MARVELOUS, ASTOUNDING, GLORIOUS LOVE KNOWN TO MAN- AND THAT IS WHAT THE BIBLE CALLS AGAPE LOVE!

This is a sacrificial, giving, committed, selfless, godly love!

But it is only possible to experience it when the circumstances are less than perfect. If this love is sacrificial we can only experience it when one of us has to make a sacrifice- if its committed its only tested when we are presented with an option to not commit...

It's a tough love but a glorious love...that you get to see in people that have been through trials and stuck it out and have a depth of security, intimacy, passion, friendship, and maturity that most people will never experience.

**CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF - It is THIS next level of love that sustains a marriage...**not the infatuational love.

BUT LET ME TELL YOU, **YOU MUST** MAKE AN INTENTIONAL MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL COMMITMENT TO TRANSITION TO THIS KIND OF LOVE...IT DOESN'T HAPPEN AUTOMATICALLY. IF YOU DON'T – YOU WILL TRY TO GET BY ON INFATUATIONAL LOVE AND WHEN IT FADES YOUR MARRIAGE WILL CRUMBLE

LET ME ILLUSTRATE: let's suppose you want to go from San Diego to New York. And so you go and buy a plane ticket. You can buy a ticket that gives you the ability to get into the terminal, go past security, and get on the plane. And it's essential because without it you don't go on a journey. But the next step is you gotta get on the plane and stay on the plane. If you only buy the ticket but never get on the plane – your ticket will expire and you will never make it across country to your destination. And you gotta stay on it no matter how

Closter phobic you get, or how bad some parts of the flight are because even though it may be bad in the plane – its gonna be worse if you get out mid flight...you know...

So ... Agape love is like the plane that you get on to go across country – infatuation is like the ticket in your hand that makes it possible. And agape is staying on trusting God that it is better for you to remain on the plane than to get out mid-flight!

WHY DO I MENTION THIS: well because many of us never make it past this first stage of infatuation and so when it fades our marriage crumbles...

AGAIN – WE NEED TO INTENTIONALLY SAY – IM IN THIS NO MATTER WHAT!

NOW, here's the thing – intuitively we know this. In fact isn't this what we are committing to on our wedding day?

Listen to some of these popular vows:

**Traditional Wedding Vows 1:**

I, (name), take you (name), to be my (wife/husband), to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do us part.

**Traditional Wedding Vows 2:**

I, (name), take you, (name), to be my [opt: lawfully wedded] (husband/wife), my constant friend, my faithful partner and my love from this day forward. In the presence of God, our family and friends, I offer you my solemn vow to be your faithful partner in sickness and in health, in good times and in bad, and in joy as well as in sorrow. I promise to love you unconditionally, to support you in your goals, to honor and respect you, to laugh with you and cry with you, and to cherish you for as long as we both shall live.

**Traditional Wedding Vows 3 (traditional civil ceremony vows):**

(Name), I take you to be my lawfully wedded (husband/wife). Before these witnesses I vow to love you and care for you as long as we both shall live. I take you with all your faults and your strengths as I offer myself to you with my faults and strengths. I will help you when you need help, and I will turn to you when I need help. I choose you as the person with whom I will spend my life.

### **Traditional Wedding Vows 4:**

I, (name), take you, (name), to be my beloved (wife/husband), to have and to hold you, to honor you, to treasure you, to be at your side in sorrow and in joy, in the good times, and in the bad, and to love and cherish you always. I promise you this from my heart, for all the days of my life.

### **Have you ever thought about what these vows are saying?**

Basically no matter what!

I'm in this to give you love regardless of what I get!

You're the only one I am giving my heart to.

This is not an anticipation of "happily ever after" – this is in anticipation of "even if it's not happily ever after" or "whether happily or unhappily ever after"

This for most of us should be the time when we are getting on the plane...deciding that no matter what we are going on this journey and not getting off.

So then why is the divorce rate in our culture is at an all-time high. Why do so many Christians

Well I think I have a couple reasons:

- We are caught up in the ceremony of it all – and this simply becomes a ritual rather than a true commitment to each other – its part of the festivities. Hey Im guilty of that – I think if you were to go to a married person the next day and say hey what did you commit to?
- We don't revisit our vows and think through them
- Mostly guys – our minds are clouded by the wedding night!
- Others, we're just in lala land! ILLUSTRATION: we were so out of it...we were crying through our whole thing because we had been through so much to get to this point and so I don't remember one thing that her dad said – I had to watch the video to remember. But here's how out of it we were – we were crying and during her dad's prayer we shared our first snot bubble together – caught on video. Sometimes you're just oblivious man!

- Those are just a few examples but the point is that in this moment when we are supposed to be getting on that plane – and making that transition from infatuation to agape – we miss it. And we never do it!

**ILLUST: I've done many weddings probably close to 50 and one couple stands out to me because during their engagement they asked me for a copy of the vows they were going to be reciting to each other – it was a busy time for me so it slipped through the cracks. So he called me a little perturbed and rightly so, and said hey I really would like the vows – he said I want to read them, pray about them and think through them before I actually say them...**

This is a man who intentionally made that transition. Have you done that? This is what this series is about. Making the VOW, praying through, and keeping it. This is what God desires from our marriages.

-----Now really quickly- what does Agape look like? And how can I implement it in my marriage?

TO look at this subject there really are many places we can go in the Scripture but the one place that God impressed upon my heart as I was preparing for this message was the book of Hosea! This is one of the most potent examples of Agape love you will ever find in the Scriptures.

Since we don't have time to read the entire book – I will give you the gist of it.

Hosea was a prophet used of God to convey to the nation of Israel a very crucial and heart-wrenching message from God. His name means salvation or He saves which is a fitting name for this book because it is such a major theme.

God comes to him and tells him that he is going to use him to convey the message to His people and he is going to do it in a very visual way – like an object lesson.

The lesson is this: God is faithful to His covenant of love even when His people are unfaithful!

The way God tells this message is by asking Hosea to go and marry a prostitute and to love her.

<sup>2</sup> When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, “Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the LORD.” Hosea 1:2

Hosea obeyed and married a woman named Gomer

<sup>3</sup> So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. 1:3

Now don't let this be insignificant because in this culture reputation was everything and a respectable man would not dare marry someone like that. But he does and entangles himself with this woman. This woman receives Hosea's love, favor, provision, protection and his good name. In exchange Hosea's name, reputation, and hope of a life of loving and fruitful family are sacrificed on the altar of this shameful and worthless woman.\

**GOSPEL: Just a side note – but do you see the gospel in this? Isn't this just like what our Lord has done for us – he takes us in while we are in the depths of our sin, he cleans us up, saves us, loves us, provides for us and gives us His good name – and in exchange he gets people who are unfaithful, complaining, flippant, flakey, moody...**

<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— <sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.  
Romans 5:6-8

It boggles the mind to think about it – even David expresses it...even David is all like dude what the heck

what is mankind **that you are mindful** of them, human beings **that you** care for them? -  
Psalm 8:3-5

so he marries Gomer and she bears him a child – in fact she bears 3 children.

Now the gist of the story is that Hosea gives her all of the love, devotion and kindness anyone could ever desire and yet in spite of this she unfaithful. He is the only man to truly love her.

And yet in spite of this she grows bored and desires her old life. Marriage to one man is no longer enough. She longs the adoration of many lovers so at the birth of their first son she goes back to her old ways and begins to cheat on Hosea. She would stay away from home for long periods and when she things don't go well – she says I might as well go back to Hosea – at least I have some good stuff with him

Hosea 2:7 She chases after her lovers but doesn't catch them;  
she looks for them but doesn't find them.

Then she will say,

'I will go back to my husband as at first,  
for then I was better off than now.'

Hosea takes her back and loves her faithfully. She comes home for a while but gets restless again and continues cheating gets pregnant again with a third child.

The text suggests that these last two children are not Hosea's. They are born of prostitution. The text gives a strong clue.

The name of the third one God tells them to name him( **Lo-Ammi – which means not my people.**)

**Which was symbolic that although the people of Israel were technically the “people of God” they really weren't because they worshipped other gods – they were the people of another god!**

In Hosea 2:4-5 it says this:

I will not show my love to her children,  
because they are the children of adultery.

<sup>5</sup>Their mother has been unfaithful  
and has conceived them in disgrace.

So get this – Hosea gives everything for this woman and she continues her unfaithfulness and has children that are not his – its pretty bad right.

It gets worse – Hosea, although knowing that these aren't her children takes them I, cares for them, provides for them and continues loving Gomer. You'd think she gets the picture – she actually leaves for good and runs away leaving Hosea with two small sons and a daughter to care for himself. She leaves Hosea, the only man who truly ever loved her, to experience the shame agony and ridicule of all the people – including perhaps even some who had had sex with her.

And she is brash and hardened through this whole thing...

This is what she says:

**She said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my olive oil and my drink.' (Hosea 2:5)**

She goes back to her old life of sin and vice and depravity and she reaches rock bottom. She gets used and abused so badly that she ends up becoming a slave.

What this means is that she basically was all used up. No one wanted her – she couldn't get business. Although very beautiful and attractive at one point – the excessive partying and sin eventually got the best of her and she became undesired. So the Bible says that she is sold into slavery – which means that she is lower than even a beggar unable to pay her debts, most likely unable to even sustain herself and beg for food – she is taken by into slavery.

Hosea never stops loving her, so he goes one more time, searching for his wife and finds her and purchases her as a slave

**""You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you."(Hosea 3:2)**

The book of Hosea ends in a powerful upswing which suggests to us that Gomer finally learns her lesson and accepts the love of her faithful husband...His love literally transforms her!!! Wow!

Just like when we realize and ingrain the love of Christ in our hearts – we will be transformed.

So what do we learn about making that leap from infatuation love – to true agape, marital love?

4 things you must commit to:

## ***1. Commit to God's purpose for your marriage not yours***

One of the things we must realize is that marriage is not primarily about us. It is for the glory of God.

Hosea illustrated this by giving up his "own marriage" for the purposes of God. Think about it, how hard it must've been for him to take this step. A lot of times we think these Bible characters were like – what was that Lord – go marry a prostitute – okay sure.

Hosea was human – he had dreams, he had fears, he experienced what any normal human being would've experienced. Im sure he had thought about what kind of family he wanted. And im pretty sure that marrying a prostitute was not in that plan.

Im sure in his plan he envisioned camping trips, laughter, love, family times around the dinner Not sure but I don't think he envisioned having to field questions from his kids who ask – daddy where is mommy? Why is that man at the door?

### **But what do we see – he submits his own will to the will of God.**

And through this we see this principle: Our marriage is not our own. This too is for God, not for us.

You see one of the traps we fall into is that we know that our lives belong to God – but sometimes we forget that our marriages belong to God.

If I were to ask Christians – why did God give you this life? Most would likely say – to glorify God

If I were to ask that same Christian – why did God give you this marriage? You may get a different answer...

Friends – there are many benefits of marriage but the purpose is always – TO GLORIFY GOD!

The sooner we get that in our brains the better. We need to be faithful and show agape love not because it benefits us primarily but because it glorifies our Lord and Savior.

So what is His purpose for our marriage?

For companionship? Yes

for love? Yes

for procreation? Yes

But **primarily - in this scripture its to represent the relationship between Christ and His church and through it to woo the world to Him!!!!**

**For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”<sup>c</sup> 32This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. – Eph 5**

**So heres the point – I may have a purpose and desire out of my marriage but this is not the highest motivation – my highest motivation is to simply glorify God and to represent him well.**

**Just like Hosea – I wanted and thought I would get something different but God wants this so I choose God**

## *2. Commit to a Covenant not a Contract*

**Mark 10:9 What God has joined together let no man separate.**

One of the things you see is Hosea’s determined love and commitment. This represents Gods unfailing love to us that when we are unfaithful God remains faithful.

And notice that Hosea had plenty of Biblical reason for divorce – Gomers actions not only gave him the green light but she could have been stoned to death in that culture.

But Hosea doesn’t take that route – why?

First because of what we talked about – God’s glory was His first priority – God wants me to do this...so even though its hard Im gonna do this...

But secondly because of His covenant. One of the things we sometimes lose in translation is the covenant idea of marriage.

In western culture we have made it into a contract. And there is a big difference.

ILLUST: A contract is a business exchange. For example if for my business I enter into a contract with a supplier. What the contract does is it says – you provide these supplies at a reasonable cost and timely shipping and I give you money for it. Contracts are great as long as things are good between the two parties. Im happy to be in relationship with you, in fact I may brag about you and tell my friends about your company.

If however my supplier no longer provides the goods at a reasonable price and time of delivery – no longer have to fulfill my part of the contract. In fact I may go and look for other suppliers and even take you to court. Vice versa if I don’t pay you do the same...

A covenant on the other hand is a vow to be faithful no matter what – whether I get something good out of the deal

NOW – ARE WE NOT TO HAVE ANY EXPECTATIONS? IM NOT SAYING THAT...IN FACT THE BIBLE TALKS ABOUT SOME EXPECTATIONS THAT IF UNMET ARE REASONS FOR BREAKING YOUR COVENENT.

THE POINT IS HAVING BIBLICAL AND REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS.

For example: expecting that your spouse is to be the source of your happiness...not good

Expecting that if you are truly in love marriage will just get better and better on its own – yeah bad one.

### *3. Commit to the chase not an escape*

**Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9**

The next thing we learn about Hosea is that he was the primary pursuer of the marriage.

Agape love does this. It doesn't say well Im just gonna wait and see what she does.

Sometimes we get caught up in the 50/50 marriage which doesn't work – that's part of the bad expectations. What works and what we our vows say is 100/100% - im gonna do 100% all the time. I take the responsibility for this relationship...why? Because its God's plan and it glorifies Him and because I made a covenant.

You never hear Hosea saying – geez Im doing all the work here. He instead kept taking responsibility, kept honoring God and trusted God to change Gomer.

And by the way, this chase is going to happen for the rest of our lives – why? Because life naturally tear us apart – busyness etc.

ILLUST: I remember a youth pastor friend saying my ministry is a ministry of chasing – I asked why? Because life is so busy for students these days that if I don't stay on them I will lose them. That's a good shepherd...

You say are you serious? That's marriage? Sounds exhausting!

ILLUST: I remember my mentor sharing with me what he said to his son in law when he asked if he could marry his daughter. He asked are you ready to chase her for the rest of your life? I give you permission to pursue me the rest of my life. You see that's really what

he was asking when he asked will you marry me? if she had said no, the pursuit would've stopped. She would have been saying – no I do not want you to pursue me any longer.

#### *4. Commit to radical forgiveness not score-keeping*

Hosea went into this marriage with this mindset. I imagine that he had to think long and hard about forgiving her offenses. He had to continue forgiving? Why? Because she was a prostitute.

We have to go into marriage with the same mindset. Why because we in essence only marry prostitutes...

Many times we hear a story like this and we identify with the hero right – yes im like Hosea – my husband is like the other person...we always do that –

But I would like to suggest that we are all prostitutes – we're nowhere near being Hoseas –

#### **All have sinned and come short of the glory of God – Romans 3:23**

This marriage series is about these four things played out in different ways – we will be referring back to these principles over.

- 1. Commit to God's purpose for your marriage not yours**
- 2. Commit to a Covenant not a Contract**
- 3. Commit to the Chase not an Escape**
- 4. Commit to Radical Forgiveness not Score-Keeping**

*Questions:*

*Is it hard for you to think that God's purpose is higher than yours for your marriage? Why? Why not?*

*What evidences can you see of the fact that marriage in our culture is more of a contract than a covenant?*

*What kinds of things tear couples apart necessitating a constant chase?*

*What kinds of expectations might be good and Biblical in a marriage? Can you think of Scripture?*

*What happens if you are the only one holding up your end of the bargain?*

*When is it time to see someone for help with your marriage?*

*Is it hard or easy for you to forgive?*

Tom and Janice

1. When have God's purpose for your marriage and your own purposes have come clashing? What happened? What did you do? What would you advise other couples?
2. Sometimes God's purpose is clear. Other times its not, or you each may have a different idea of what it might be. How do you decide?
3. What does it look like for you to escape your marriage?
4. To Jan: Whats something you had to radically forgive Tom about... because we know he never had to forgive you about anything... ☺
5. Have either of you ever been guilty of score keeping? How have you learned to get past that?
6. We talked about how we are all prone to wander from our marriages like Gomer – what have been some things that have distracted you or tried to pull you away from your marriage?
7. Can you give us examples from your marriage of what it looks like to chase after your spouse?