

Our Vows to the Lord Must Not Be Violated!

One of my daughters recently made the commitment of her lifetime. The young man was almost speechless as he returned the perpetual pledge. Jeri and I wept as we watched these two young Christians dedicate themselves to one another in front of a massive crowd of witnesses both here and in heaven.

What was really happening? What brought on this flood of emotion? Can anyone accurately define this heavenly bond?

The bond of marriage is a covenant not to be entered into lightly. Scripture implores us to consider carefully who we would join ourselves to in holy matrimony. Scripture then instructs us to guard that relationship by not bringing someone else into the blessed union, thus violating the vows of marriage.

Marriage is the greatest earthly illustration of the relationship we are to enjoy with the Lord. We have made precious personal vows to Him and have become one with our King. Those vows must not be violated!

In 1828, Noah Webster defined the word **violate** as such: “to break; to transgress; as ... to violate the divine commands; to violate one’s vows or promises.”

Before I became a Christian, there were absolutely no standards in my life. Even when given a clear and direct command, I would do whatever I pleased whether it was right or wrong. It made no difference if it was a parent, a principal or even the police. I would violate their authority without giving it a second thought.

This behavior was the source of much of the trouble I found myself in as a young man. Occasionally I would escape the

consequences of violating the rules. When I was caught, I showed little remorse. More than once, the outcome of my disobedience led to a stint in jail or some other serious repercussion that would drag on for many months.

Then I became a Christian. Immediately, I discovered a new authority and a new law that had never been placed before me. Steve Hill was now under the mandates of God and would suffer dearly if he chose to violate them. God's rules and regulations were not subject to my interpretation.

I began to live my life differently. If God said it, I would do it. I now had a deep, reverent fear of violating what the Lord spoke to me.

(My friend, I've got to stop right here. I feel in my spirit the Lord speaking strongly at this very moment. There is someone reading this article who at one time listened to the Lord and followed His voice without hesitation. The very idea of disobedience was unthinkable. Now you live without restraint. If the Lord is speaking to you, return to Him! Renew your vows at once.)

I was quickly labeled a fanatic. Other believers were actually afraid of being around me due to the intensity in which I chose to follow the Lord. That divine fear of the Lord is still with me to this day.

If I was ever in direct violation of a vow I had made to Jesus, I would quickly repent and continue to follow the straight and narrow. Several years earlier, the Lord had said to me, "Steve, if you love Me, you'll obey Me." Those words stuck like glue to my spirit.

I remember one young Christian man saying to me, "Steve, you need to back off and calm down. It's not that big of a thing."

But in my spirit, it was!

I chose to watch the relationships I entered into. When I read Scriptures such as, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers," and was instructed by a godly minister as to the meaning of this verse, that light had no fellowship with darkness, I not only heard the word, but I heeded it as well. I guarded my relationships. I took care to draw my circle of friends tight, not wanting to come into close communion with an unbeliever.

Obeying that word was not optional. It was mandatory!

Early on in my Christian life, I was influenced by **Leonard Ravenhill**. For three years, this great **revivalist** poured truth into my hungry heart, never giving me an inch of space.

He would say, "Steve, everything the Word of God teaches you and everything the Spirit of the Lord pours into your heart needs to be viewed through a great funnel. Everything is poured in, and what comes out the small end is one word: *obedience*."

That was one of the most powerful things he ever said to me.

God is not searching for your interpretation or opinion of His Word. He is not in need of your approval or disapproval either. He said it. Period!

Take a look again at the meaning of the word *violation* and get ready to obey what God speaks to you: *violate*—"to break; to transgress; as ... to violate the divine commands; to violate one's vows or promises."

In modern-day Christianity, especially Western Christianity, there has appeared on the scene a false freedom that slaps Jesus in the face, violating His words without giving a second thought to whether or not our actions should be examined.

I am watching seasoned ministers of the gospel, some of whom are my peers and others who have worked as long as I have in

the ministry, attach themselves to individuals who have no relationship with the Lord. These attachments bring confusion to body of Christ.

For example, if you are a pastor holding a Christian conference on the baptism of the **Holy Spirit**, make sure your speakers are not only filled with the Holy Ghost but also speak in tongues and practice the Spirit-filled life. You need anointed ministers who can help people be filled with the Spirit, not acclaimed speakers who simply help the conference be filled with people.

If you are holding a Christian family conference, make sure those who grace your pulpit are actively living the Christian life in their homes and do not have questionable relationships with the opposite sex.

I could go on, but I choose to stop here.

Leaders, we must ask ourselves a question: Are we guilty of violating our vows of marriage to the Lord by sitting around the same table with those who don't know Him and are known for their immoral lifestyles?

Oh, perhaps someone is pointing out, "Didn't Jesus sit down with sinners? Wasn't He known as a friend of sinners?"

Absolutely! He ministered *to* sinners, not *with* sinners. He was in the world, not of it.

There was a time that ministers would have never linked themselves with those who were not of like faith. It was unthinkable to partner with those in the world in order to attract crowds or have their ministry endorsed by the god of this age. Years ago, there would be an uproar in the body of Christ if major ministries yoked themselves with those who didn't believe.

As I shared before, Paul wrote, "Do not be unequally yoked

together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14).

Ministers, take an honest look at the lives of those you are partnering with. Don't fall for the big names, the bright lights and the bold headlines. Listen to the discerning prompts from Holy Spirit within your spirit, turning you toward wisdom.

Friend, you cannot ignore the clear word delivered in Scripture.

"You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me" (Deut. 7:2-4). This warning is found throughout the Word and can be found in Isaiah 52:11, 1 Corinthians 5:9, Ephesians 5:6-7 and 1 John 1:6, to name a few passages.

Partnerships, relationships and fellowship with unbelievers diminish and dilute the spiritual life of the believer. The lost need to see holy men and women of God who have yoked themselves to the God of the Word, not the gifted of the world.

I began this brief article with a reference to my daughter's wedding. Before the knot was ever tied, I spent many hours with her fiancé. He had been raised in a strong Christian church and was filled with the Spirit at an early age. In several sessions together, I reminded him of his early commitments to the Lord and that if he violated them, it would bring certain destruction to their marriage.

My friend, once again be careful. What you said to the Lord years ago stands true today. He will hold us accountable for our words and ways.

I ask that you would let **Holy Spirit** speak straight to you. Let Him go through your close relationships and partnerships. Let Him clean house and draw the circle tight around you. As Ravenhill instructed me, pour it all through the funnel of His Word and put to practice what comes out the other side.

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