

## 2. kinship -

...the rhythm of covenant

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her...” Eph 5:25

1 Tim 5:4 – “but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God.”

The Love of Christ is not so much seen in the conditional relationships that we maintain, but more in those where we give what we have with no thought of payback or contract. These “covenant” relationships are life-long friends, and family - What we refer to as “*Kinship*”.

**Jesus our Lead:** “And He said to them, ‘Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?’”  
50 But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.  
51 And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. Luke 2:49-51

“When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ From that hour the disciple took her into his own household. John 19:26-27

### What is a Covenant?

The word “Covenant” is not well understood in our culture. To put it bluntly, we have become far too self-centered to value the meaning of the word today. But if we are going to make Jesus Christ our center – our source of life – in place of ourselves and all the false “gods” we arrange our lives around, we desperately need to learn the meaning of this word - “Covenant”.

Covenant can be defined as: **a promise and commitment to invest attention, time, and money (ATM) in someone that is not conditioned on the other person’s performance, health, or return to us.**

There are two purposes of covenant:

1. It **establishes the unconditional value of the other person.**
2. It **allows God to shape our lives through serving that person**

So while a covenant with someone could end up “costing us” (even our lives) the act of covenant is what reflects the ultimate value of the other person, and releases our own personal growth plan to God. (See John 15:13)

In our culture we tend to avoid covenant relationships. Instead we make “contracts” with people (usually unspoken) – In doing so we make them responsible for our ultimate happiness instead of God.

For example:

- I will clean the garage if you do the dishes;
- I will pay the rent if you sleep with me;
- I will go to family gatherings if you let me deal drugs from the house...

...and on, and on. Yet even when this deal-making approach takes over relationships, there is often a secret hope that the other person might somehow think we are worth doing his or her part ***even if we don’t do ours***. But in the end, we reap what we sow; and it all breaks down...except with Jesus.

### Covenants and Families

Covenant relationships in families can be seen as those that do not end while we are alive: Our spouse, children, parents, and siblings. **Scripture** comments on these relationships in terms of life-long relationships:

“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” 1 Tim 5:8

### Covenant in Marriage

Paul wrote the following to the believers in Corinth about the covenant of marriage:

“But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.” 1 Cor. 7:10, 11 RT

It is clear further into this passage how the purpose for the believing spouse to stay in the relationship is different – it’s not selfish, but for the realization that he or she is bringing the presence of Christ to the home for the benefit of others.

The “rhythm” of Kinship in our life is seen by the **attention, time** and **money (ATM)** we put into these relationships that is not based on “pay-off”, but on covenant. It is expected that we will need the help and support of our discipleship relationships (*next Rhythm*) to maintain these and grow in the skills needed to live in covenant.

Finally, living in covenant with our family members reflects the love covenants of God, starting with Noah, and extending to Abraham, Moses, and ultimately to us. Ephesians 5:25 states the connection: We will grow to love others the same way God has loved us – **because they are worth it.**