



101 Marriage Promises I dare you to make

And Dare You To Keep

A person is known more by the promise he keeps than by the promises he intends to keep.

J.J. Turner, Ph.D.

*I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep.*
--Robert Frost

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What if your partner made and kept promises like you do, what would that look like?

A PROMISE

WHAT IS A PROMISE?

A promise is a commitment

A promise is an oath

A promise is a beginning

A promise is a pledge.

A promise is a revelation

A promise is a guarantee

A promise is a challenge

A promise is openness

A promise is a truth

A promise is a declaration of intent

A promise is a specific goal

A promise is very valuable

A promise is a healer

A promise is an act of love

A promise is a glue

A promise is an opportunity

A promise is a belief

A promise is an act of faith

A promise is a feeling

A promise is an incentive

A promise is sharing

A promise is an exposed heart

A promise is a test

A promise is a trust builder

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How do you feel when someone fails to keep a promise he or she made to you?

How do you feel when you fail to keep a promise you have made?

What are your children learning about keeping promises from watching you?

PREFACE

If you are wearing a wedding ring or own a wedding ring, you have a continual reminder of the wedding promises you made to your spouse. Think about this fact!

The wedding vows you swore when you married, if they were the traditional ones, had these sobering words: *For better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health... until death parts us.* These vows made it clear that there may be some challenges ahead in your marriage. But for some reason you may seem surprised to discover the vows are prophetic. Wedding vows do come true!

You hold in your hand a small book that is powerful enough to turn an unhappy marriage into a joyful and renewed adventure. As the title says there are 101 dynamic marriage promises in this book. This is more than just a list of nice promises one may take or leave. These are promises that every married couple or couple thinking about marriage, need to take seriously.

I have been married to the same woman for more than 50 years. Like most marriages we have had our ups and downs. I wish, however, I had known and applied these 101

promises early in our marriage. The good news is it's not too late.

Whether you have been married one day or decades, you need to look seriously at these promises. If you are engaged or contemplating marriage in the future you would be wise to begin making some of these promises now; as well as knowing what some of the promises are you need to make once you are married. Knowledge is power only if used properly.

This list of 101 marriage promises has grown out of my own marriage, 48-years of ministry, counseling married couples, pre-marital counseling, earning a master's and doctorate in counseling, teaching workshops and seminars, and writing several books on marriage, family, and parenting. I am pleased to share these promises with you

I believe if these promises are made and kept every couple can experience Brownings' promise, *Come grow old with me, the best is yet to be.*

If you are serious about having a successful and happy marriage, this book is for you. If you are not, please pass it on to someone who is serious.

Why yes, you can read it if you are only curious.

J.J. Turner, Ph.D.

31 January 2013

INTRODUCTION

In 48-plus years of ministry I have performed more marriages than I can remember; as many as two in one day. I have never married a couple who was not serious about their wedding vows. Some wrote their own, most wanted the traditional vows. As a Christian minister I have always approached weddings from a biblical perspective. God ordained marriage and “makes them in heaven”.

The Holy Bible teaches that the husband must love, honor and cherish his wife, and the wife in turn must love, cherish, and honor her husband. Both husband and wife affirm in the traditional vows to forsake everyone else and cleave to each other in sickness and in health; in poverty and in wealth; for better or for worse; until death parts them. The vows are sealed with rings and a wedding prayer.

The seven or eight basic promises in the traditional vows are only the beginning of the marital journey. In order to make these wedding promises (vows) come true, numerous supportive promises must be made and kept. This is where the rub comes in for many marital partners.

Sadly, many marriages are operating on the old lie, *Promises are made to be broken*. This attitude contributes to 50 percent of marriages ending in divorce. This is where I enter with my tongue-in-cheek dare. Asking nicely rarely gets the motivation juices working. To the sincere person a dare fuels the fire for action. How about you?

Let me be honest. I used the word *dare* in my title to get your attention; to challenge you to move out of the nominal unhappy marital crowd and return to the dream of making your marriage vows come true. If you are among the happy, happy married couples these dare promises will take your happiness to the next level. These 101 dares are communication exercises. You'll love them—I hope!

Let me be quick to add that these 101 promises will be a great pre-marital exercise to help couples establish lines of communication. They will help them *look before they leap*; eliminate issues that arise once the wedding cake is eaten and the honeymoon bills start coming in.

Communication is continually at the top of the list relating to why marriages have problems; even ending in divorce. Communication requires work; making promises.

Here are some suggestions for using these 101 marriage promises (pre and post marriage promises).

Obviously it will not be possible to keep all 101 promises at one moment. The key is to read and analyze each one carefully before making it to your spouse. As you read the promise ask, “What steps are necessary in order to keep this promise?”

I suggest that you work on one promise at a time, while at the same time remembering your ultimate goal may be to make and keep all 101 promises. Intentionally working on one promise at a time will guarantee success.

In order for this exercise in making and keeping promises to work more effectively, both partners need to be engaged in a commitment to practice these promises (More later, page 27).

The Bible and Keeping Promises

As a Christian minister I am not reluctant to share what the Bible affirms about making and keeping promises. Here are a few specific Bible passages on keeping promises:

1. *If a man makes a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do all that proceeds out of his mouth (Numbers 30:2).*

2. *My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips (Psalm 89:34).*

3. ... *He who swears to his own hurt and does not change... He who does these things shall never be moved (Psalm 15:4, 5).*

4. *God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? (Numbers 23:19).*

5. *Or if a person swears, speaking thoughtlessly with his lips to do evil or good, whatever it is that a man may pronounce by an oath, and he is unaware of it—when he realizes it, then he shall be guilty in any of these matters (Leviticus 5:4).*

6. *But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one (Matthew 5:37).*

7. *When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vowed—Better not to vow than to vow and not pay (Ecclesiastes 5:4, 5).*

God's word leaves no doubt about the seriousness of making and keeping promises. God sets the example in making and keeping vows; therefore, as his children we must imitate Him (cf. Ephesians 5:1). The fact that God is the witness to our marriages (cf. Malachi 2:14), reinforces

the essentialness of keeping our promises made in the wedding vows, as well as all other promises.

WHY SOME ARE RELUCTANT TO MAKE AND KEEP PROMISES

It is ironic that success in marriage depends on making and keeping promises; yet, in reality many married persons or persons planning to be married are reluctant or resistant to making promises.

We are continually exposed to the rhetoric of politicians who make grand promises, but when they get in office they fail to keep them. Trust is a major issue in our nation as the evening news is filled with stories that have dishonesty and broken promises featured in them. Movies, reality TV shows, and talk shows are filled with examples of broken promises. We are a nation that is conditioned to making and breaking promises. No wonder there is a reluctance by many to make marriage promises.

In my counseling, research, and general observations, I have documented numerous reasons why some persons are reluctant to make promises; even in marriage. Here are some of those reasons:

1. Some are reluctant to make promises because they are marrying for the wrong reasons. Deep inside they aren't planning on staying in the marriage for the long haul.

2. Some are reluctant to make marital promises because they want to keep future options open.

3. Some are reluctant to make promises because they have serious issues with self-discipline in other areas of their lives.

4. Some persons are reluctant to make promises because they have been the victims of broken promises.

5. Some are reluctant to make promises because they don't want to feel obligated to keep them.

6. Some are reluctant to make promises because they tried to keep promises in the past but failed.

7. Some are reluctant because they don't want the pressure keeping promises brings into their lives.

8. Some are reluctant to keep promises because on a subconscious level they have been influenced by society and the media.

9. Some persons are reluctant to make and keep promises because they lack character and a deep sense of values.

10. Some are reluctant to make promises because they don't want to disappoint the person they made the promise to, by not keeping them.

11. Persons are reluctant to make promises because they don't trust people; even the one they have married.

12. Some are reluctant to make promises because they are pessimistic about the future; they had rather play it safe by not making promises.

13. Some are reluctant to make promises because they have no idea how to keep them.

14. Some are reluctant to make promises because they have been hurt in times past by broken promises; they don't want to experience it again as a giver or receiver.

15. Persons are reluctant to make promises because they want to be flexible by keeping future options open; promises close the doors to options in marriage.

16. Persons are reluctant to making promises because they admit they have always had a problem with keeping their word.

17. Some are reluctant to make promises because they are "players" and have gone from "partner to partner" in dating. They don't want to be tied down by marriage promises.

18. Some are reluctant to make promises because of the consequences and boundaries keeping them will bring into their lives.

19. Some are reluctant to make promises because they approach marriage with “I’ll try it to see if I like it” attitude.

20. Some are reluctant to making promises because they were exposed to one broken promise after another as they grew up.

21. Some are reluctant to make promises because they have little or no faith in God and His power to help them keep promises.

22. Some are reluctant to make promises because they have weak character and are tempted very easily.

23. Some are reluctant to make marital promises because they have problems with truthfulness and loyalty.

24. Some are reluctant to make promises because they don’t understand (agape) true love that makes marriage vows come true.

25. Some are reluctant to make promises because they don’t know how to keep them. They need help in understanding promises; making and keeping them.

A casual reading of this list helps us quickly see that making promises, for some persons, is not easy or, sadly, even possible. This should cause us to take promise keeping very seriously; and to examine our attitude and actions relative to making promises.

Can you think of three (3) additional reasons some may be reluctant to make promises?:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

REASONS TO MAKE AND KEEP MARRIAGE PROMISES

Growing up I frequently heard this expression, *A man is as good as his word*. Through the years I have come to believe in the truth of this saying. When we make a promise of any kind, in any context, we are facing the challenges involved in keeping that promise. This is also true of making marriage promises, which is the greatest of challenges.

Here is a list of positive reasons for keeping marriage promises (Study each one thoughtfully):

1. Keeping marriage promises is an affirmation of your **integrity**.
2. Keeping your marriage promises is a commitment to **imitating** God.
3. Keeping your marriage promises is an act of **obeying** God's commands.

4. Keeping your marriage promises demonstrates your **sincerity**.

5. Keeping your marriage promises is a pledge of your **honesty**.

6. Keeping your marriage promises is proof of your **truthfulness**.

7. Keeping your marriage promises is an action affirming your **dependableness**.

8. Keeping your marriage promises is a demonstration of your **love**.

9. Keeping your marriage promises is a mark of your **maturity**.

10. Keeping your marriage promises is a commitment to personal **growth and change**.

11. Keeping your marriage promises is a sign of **loyalty**.

12. Keeping your marriage promises is a gift of **reassurance**.

13. Keeping your marriage promises keeps your marriage **alive and vibrant**.

14. Keeping your marriage promises is insurance against **divorce**.

15. Keeping your marriage promises gives meaningful **direction** in all areas of life.

16. Keeping your marriage promises is a pledge of your continual **faithfulness**.

17. Keeping your marriage promises is fulfilling the payment of a **debt** owed your spouse.

18. Keeping your marriage promises is an affirmation of the **value** of your spouse.

19. Keeping your marriage promises results in the satisfaction of a wonderful **accomplishment**.

20. Keeping your marriage promises proves you are a person of your **word**.

21. Keeping your marriage promises has a positive **influence** on your children and extended family.

Can you list three (3) additional reasons for making and keeping marriage promises?:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

I could go on with this list of reasons for making and keeping marriage promises. Hopefully, these 21 reasons are sufficient for opening your eyes and heart to the importance of making and keeping marriage promises.

*Guess what? The more you invest
in your marriage the more valuable
it becomes.*

WHAT IS A MARRIAGE?

In recent years there has been an increase in asking the question, “What is a marriage?” Before I get into the social and legal definitions of marriage, I want to remind us of what God’s word says about marriage in the Holy Bible:

1. *And the Lord God said, ‘it is not good for man should be alone, I will make him a help meet for him’ (Genesis 2:18).*

2. *Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Genesis 2:24).*

3. *Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant (Malachi 2:14).*

4. *So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate (Matthew 19:6).*

5. *For the Lord God of Israel says that he hates divorce, for it covers one's garments with violence, says the Lord of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously (Malachi 2:16).*

6. *For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband (Romans 7:2).*

7. *Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge (Hebrews 13:5).*

What is a marriage? If we let the Bible speak it is a covenant between two eligible persons who exchange covenant vows before God. Once joined by God the couple has the right to all the blessings and privileges of marriage until death parts them.

We we ask the question "What is a Marriage?" in a general context (apart from the Bible), there are several answers:

1. Marriage is a legal joining of a couple together who satisfy the laws of the state in which a license to marry is

granted. The marriage is performed by a person authorized by the state. Witnesses are required.

2. Marriage is a social, religious, and cultural practice that involves numerous and varied celebrations referred to as weddings. Ceremonies vary from couple to couple.

3. Marriage is an interpersonal institution in which a couple is afforded all the rights of marriage, intimacy, including sexual cohabitation, and having children.

4. Marriage is an exchange of covenant vows by persons who have decided to marry for numerous reasons: social, financial, companionship, sexual, and religious.

5. Marriage is a contract that obligates each party to certain financial and property responsibilities. A legal divorce determines settlements.

Biblically and legally speaking, marriage is a covenant between two persons to be married. The success of the marriage is determined by how the couple keeps the promises made in the vows, as well as how they keep additional promises made and kept during the marriage.

In marriage each partner is to be an encourager rather than a critic, a forgiver rather than a collector of hurts, and enabler rather than a reformer. (H. Norman Wright)

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THESE 101 MARRIAGE PROMISES

By now your mind and emotions should be engaged in the possibilities and challenges of making additional promises to your spouse beyond the ones you made in your wedding. Success in marriage revolves around making and keeping promises. If your marriage is in the future this information will help prepare you for marriage success.

Living in a society and culture that takes making and keeping promises lightly, it requires a unique dedication to making and keeping marriage promises. Obviously, no one can force you to make or keep marriage promises; they must be made and kept from a loving and dedicated heart.

The assumption is that you were serious when you took your wedding vows; or you are serious as you contemplate taking your wedding vows.

Here are some suggestions for accepting my dare to make and keep the 101 marriage promises:

1. If you don't have a copy of your wedding vows, or a copy of the ones you will take, secure a copy and reflect on them. Think about what they mean. Imagine you and your mate fulfilling them. This is a reality check.

2. Next, take some quality time to read and think about the 101 marriage promises in this booklet. Ask yourself these questions: (1) What is this promise really saying? (2) Why is this promise important to marriage success? (3) What steps are needed to make this promise a reality? (4) How strongly do I desire to make and keep these promises?

3. Please keep in mind I am not advocating that you make a rushed or thoughtless promise. Take time to reflect on each promise before you make it. There's no need to rush, but don't stall too long before deciding.

4. Remember, you are not expected to try and implement all 101 promises at once. It will take time to apply all 101; maybe months or years. The challenge is to see the big picture of how all 101 will benefit your marriage. Looking at the list choose the one, two or three, etc. that you feel are

the most essential at this time in your marriage. Your spouse will probably have different ones.

5. You and your spouse should set aside a block of time, maybe an hour, to communicate about one or more of the 101 marriage promises. Arrange two chairs facing each other so you can look each other in the eyes. Hold each other's hands, and while looking lovingly into each other's eyes, take turns sharing one or more of the 101 promises.

6. Caution: As you share promises don't argue or get into a debate. Listen! This is an affirmation of your spouse's promise to you. This is a vital key to the successful use of the 101 promises. Accept it graciously.

7. Be sure to write down your promises so that you can keep them before you on a daily basis. Also, make a small list of steps (goals) you will take to keep your promise. Actions are the keys to success in keeping promises.

8. Every day pray about and think about keeping the promises you have made to your spouse. This will help to reinforce your commitment. Prayer works!

9. Remember you are not limited to sharing your promise with your spouse. You can choose a promise and go about keeping it without having gone through the above chair exercise. The fruit of keeping the promise will show in your relationship with your spouse. You may have to do

this if your spouse will not cooperate with you. You can make and keep marriage promises even if your mate won't cooperate.

10. Chose a time to come together for the specific purpose of reviewing and continuing the chair exercise. Weekly would be excellent. More is better! Too long a gap can cause a loss of interest.

11. Never, never, no never surrender your practice of making and keeping marriage promises. There will be times when you are tired, frustrated, discouraged, prone to make excuses, and procrastinating.

12. Frequently review the 21 reasons for making and keeping marriage promises. Just DO IT! Only YOU can make the decision and then act upon it. Only YOU can make and keep marriage promises.

What are your tentative plans for sharing the marriage promises in this booklet? Take a few minutes and write your tentative plan:

When do you plan to start?:

101 MARRIAGE PROMISES

Well it's time! Time to accept my dare to make and keep marriage promises. I wish you success, joy, and happiness as you make and keep some, if not all, of these marriage promises.

Pledge to Making and Keeping Promises

In order to affirm your commitment to making and keeping these marriage promises, please take a few minutes and complete this pledge form.

I, _____, hereby make a pledge to make the marriage promises in this book, within a reasonable amount of time, a reality in my marriage.

This _____ day of _____ in the year _____

Signature

The future of your marriage is in your hands. Here are the 101 promises:

1. I promise to love you forever, regardless.
2. I promise I will always need you in my life.
3. I promise you will always be special to me.
4. I promise I will be totally committed to you for life.
5. I promise I will never intentionally hurt you.
6. I promise that you will always be my best friend.
7. I promise to always hold your hand.
8. I promise you will always be the keeper of my heart.
9. I promise I'll always be glad I'm married to you.
10. I promise to always stand by you.
11. I promise I will openly listen to anything you want to tell me.
12. I promise to always forgive you, regardless.
13. I promise you are my lover forever.
14. I promise I will never divorce you.

15. I promise you will always be first in my life.
16. I promise I will never violate your trust.
17. I promise to always adore and honor you.
18. I promise to always pray for you and for us.
19. I promise I will never abuse you physically or emotionally; or in any other way.
20. I promise never to intentionally insult or ridicule you.
21. I promise to share parenting responsibilities.
22. I promise to do my share of the chores at home.
23. I promise to protect your individuality.
24. I promise I will live without our budget.
25. I promise I will always openly discuss sexual issue with you.
26. I promise to always respect you and your faith.
27. I promise to honor our special times together.
28. I promise to respect and honor your parents and family.
29. I promise I will avoid being selfish or self-centered.
30. I promise to practice real listening when we talk.
31. I promise to never keep secrets from you.

32. I promise to support your intellectual, emotional, and social growth efforts.
33. I promise to work to have a positive and happy home.
34. I promise to always appreciate your gifts and talents.
35. I promise not to be a “loner” in our home or marriage.
36. I promise I will continually work on controlling my temper and attitude.
37. I promise to keep my ego in check at all times.
38. I promise to join you in continuing marital education.
39. I promise to never say, “I have outgrown you.”
40. I promise to always work to resolve our marital conflicts; if they ever arise.
41. I promise to work on being a positive role model for our children and for you.
42. I promise to share my frustrations and worries with you; asking for your advice and help.
43. I promise to work on making our wedding vows come true. Together we can make them come true every day.
44. I promise I will guard against being strong-willed or pig-headed.
45. I promise I will work on keeping the romance alive and vibrant in our marriage.

46. I promise I will help keep us on an exercise and proper diet program for better physical health in our marriage.

47. I promise never to leave the gas gauge on empty.

48. I promise to guard my physical health.

49. I promise to hold family conferences with you to discuss the pluses and minuses in our relationship.

50. I promise never to embarrass you in front of others.

51. I promise I will always discuss any of my habits you have questions about?

52. I promise I will review with you our wedding vows at least yearly.

53. I promise to share equally with you the TV remote control.

54. I promise not to ignore you by staying on electronic gadgets.

55. I promise to treat you as an equal in our marriage.

56. I promise to dress appropriately for special occasions.

57. I promise to put forth daily effort for the success of our marriage.

58. I promise to never fake caring or pretend to care; I will always care.

59. I promise to never make fun or light of your feelings; I will respect them.

60. I promise not to minimize your hurts or tears.
61. I promise to always behave myself in public and other places.
62. I promise to drive safely at all times; even when in a hurry.
63. I promise to share my dreams for our future with you.
64. I promise never to create false fear.
65. I promise I will never rag on your appearance, or make fun of how you look.
66. I promise to always tell you the truth when you ask me a question or for my opinion.
67. I promise to always work on having a positive and optimistic attitude.
68. I promise never to act like I am perfect, or expect you to be perfect.
69. I promise to affirm your right to grow and change as a person.
70. I promise never to pay our children against you.
71. I promise I will always cooperate to adjust expectations.
72. I promise never to red flag a subject as being out of bounds for discussion.

73. I promise I will always admit my mistakes and say, “I am sorry.”

74. I promise I will never ask you to do anything to violate your ethics or moral standards.

75. I promise to always respect and obey the laws of the land.

76. I promise I will never engage in illegal activities.

77. I promise I will never make an important decision without conferring with you.

78. I promise I will refrain from holding grudges.

79. I promise I will never dig up past dirt or old issues to fuss about, or for any other reason.

80. I promise to work on my sense of humor; to lighten up.

81. I promise I will strive to be balanced in my work assignments at my job.

82. I promise I will support you in your hobbies.

83. I promise never to make a snap judgment before I have the facts.

84. I promise not to be thoughtless relative to special days.

85. I promise to respect your right to privacy in certain matters.

86. I promise to work with you to plan for our vacations.

87. I promise to help the children with their homework.
88. I promise to respect your family and personal culture.
89. I promise to discuss pets and other animal issues with you.
90. I promise to never keep you guessing, or play guessing games with you.
91. I promise to frequently remember our earlier days of dating, and why we decided to marry.
92. I promise to work with you to deal with problems one at a time.
93. I promise to try and see the positive or the bright side in every situation.
94. I promise to respect your right and need to be alone at times.
95. I promise never to be too rigid to compromise or give in on an issue.
96. I promise to understand and respect your time with friends.
97. I promise to avoid procrastination relative to tough tasks or distasteful chores.
98. I promise never to be ashamed to ask you for what I want or need.
99. I promise to guard against jealousy

100. I promise never to talk at you or down to you.

101. I promise to keep my promises as we grow in our marriage together. Thanks for helping me.

MAKE A LIST OF TEN ADDITIONAL PROMISES YOU ARE MAKING IN YOUR MARRIAGE:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

ADDITIONAL WORKS BY THE AUTHOR

The author of this booklet, Dr. J.J. Turner, has written a number of other books related to marriage, the home, and parenting. Here is a list of some of these books:

- 1. How to Keep the Lock Strong in Wedlock*
- 2. Love May Be Blind, But Marriage is an Eye-Opener*
- 3. Intentional Parenting*
- 4. 1200 Positive Expressions of Love*
- 5. Thinking About Home*
- 6. 7 Keys to Marriage Success*

These may be ordered from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

