



Covenant Hearts: Marriage and the Joy of Human Love

Bruce C. Hafen

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Many books claim to offer the secrets of a good marriage, but this book offers the absolute truth. Satan is ever striving to blur and contort the truth; modern society is experiencing a shifting toward a culture of divorce. In a way that no other book has, this book provides an eternal perspective about marriage. Noting that marriage can be the most sanctifying — yet the most demanding — experience of our lives, Elder Hafen observes that marriage is "the home room of the earth school our Father created to give his children a place to learn and grow. Families are the laboratories where we test and develop our religion." See through the confusion in our society and create an environment in which human love overcomes all opposition and lasts forever.

Covenant Hearts: Marriage and the Joy of Human Love Details

Date : Published November 30th 2005 by Shadow Mountain

ISBN : 9781590385364

Author : Bruce C. Hafen

Format : Hardcover 305 pages

Genre : Religion, Christianity, Lds, Nonfiction, Church, Marriage, Self Help

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From Reader Review Covenant Hearts: Marriage and the Joy of Human Love for online ebook

Heather says

I really love this book! It seems like a continuation of Elder Hafen's other books about the heart and I think it's the most important and timely. It powerfully teaches the importance and joy and significance of marriage and having a covenant heart. It teaches the plan of salvation and happiness, helping us understand who we are and what the vision is and how we get there. We make personal covenants, face challenges, but learn and grow through sacrifice. Jesus makes this plan and this love possible. Marriage is a CRUCIAL part of the plan and the learning and growing.

This book not only teaches us how to strengthen our marriages, but is a call to protect and preserve and teach the important tradition of marriage to future generations, not just contractual marriage, but covenant marriage. These are such important truths that bless individuals, families, and communities.

I love the story of the Irish claddagh ring. This ring has three parts. The bride brings the first part--a hand bringing a heart--to the altar. As she offers her heart her husband brings the second piece--another hand to hold the other side of her heart. As they covenant with each other and their hearts are joined together the clergyman adds the final piece of the ring--a crown on top--symbolizing the community and church and God's part in this marriage as well.

This book increased my desire to build an eternal marriage and faithfully live my covenants and to do all I can to honor and protect and preserve marriage in anyway I can. I turned down almost every other page. It is full of so many important principles and quotes and sweet stories. Here are a few of my favorite quotes:

"We may feel lonely or even strange, because we are going against the grain of a laid-back, permissive society in a counter-cultural way. But we cannot let the world's values dictate our own--there is too much at stake for that....Marriage really can be the most satisfying and sanctifying--and the most demanding--experience of our lives (p. xi)."

"Once a couple is married in the temple, they are not yet living a celestial life. Rather, they walk out of the temple much the way Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden--to enter a sometimes tough and lonely world. Their temple marriage gives them the authority of eternal marriage, but they will spend the rest of their lives working to create a marriage of celestial quality, striving and growing against opposition" (p. xi).

"Adam and Eve's story sets the pattern for our own lives....The plan of happiness deliberately includes the universal Love Story, history's most familiar and most hoped-for story line: boy meets girl, they fall in love, and then together they face trials and conquer their opposition, until they prove worthy of an eternal love, ultimately inheriting the right to be where love lasts forever. But getting there is very hard work. And even when they give that process every particle of their strength, the story couldn't have a happy ending without Christ's part in it" (p. 15).

"Authentic married love, rare as that may seem today, still holds its ancient power of mutual sacrifice and striving, until 'I lift thee, and thou lift me, and both ascend together'" (p. 22).

"All among them who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me. For I, the Lord, will cause them to bring forth as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit' (D&C 97:8-9)....Finding the strength and

patience to sacrifice for our covenants blesses us, our families, and society--not just because it's good to endure challenges and misery but because loyalty to those covenants helps us grow" (p. 31).

"The Lord gave us that child to make Christians out of us" (p. 31).

"The changes in recent decades have portrayed marriage as an individual adult choice, rather than as a crucial knot in the very fabric that holds society together. We have increasingly lost sight of how much every marriage, and every divorce, affects other people--especially children" (p. 42).

"Don't try to make him into what you want him to be. You fell in love with what he is. He will still grow. But you'll learn from experience to trust what he does rather than jumping to negative conclusions when you don't understand something" (p. 72).

"I read somewhere that loyalty is greater than love--and now I know it is, as hard as that can be. Your loyalty to each other is what gives power to your covenants--and you have to learn how to do that. It will take time. Marriage will show you more about your weaknesses than his; but it's worth it" (p. 73).

"A covenant marriage differs from a contractual one in scope, duration, intensity, and conditions. Covenant marriage is unconditional, unlimited, and eternal, a reflection of the kind of love and commitment on which it is based" (p. 80).

"Happy families are all alike. Every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" (p. 84, from Anna Karenina).

"Life's problems never seem to cease, but trying hard to deal with the problems somehow makes you dig deep enough that you learn things you'd never understand without digging. A happy life isn't about getting what you want; it's about the attitude you develop toward whatever happens to you, an attitude that lets you grow" (p. 89).

"When we allow ourselves honestly to be afflicted in the afflictions of our marriage partner, we are doing something Christlike--absorbing another's pain, carrying another's burden. We are then Good Shepherds, not hirelings" (p. 96).

"Elder Hunter always hurried home to take his wife to her hair appointment....Because it mattered to her it mattered to him" (p. 102).

"Our motive is more toward our companion's interest than our self-interest" (p. 123).

"Lucifer huffed, and he puffed, and he blew down the doors of our houses of family belonging" (p. 138).

"Because Satan will never marry, he is determined to destroy our relationship....He wants each of us to be alone and separate as he is" (p. 139, Doug Brinley).

"Sometimes people believe in little or nothing nevertheless they give their lives to that little or nothing. One life is all we have, and we live it as we believe in living it, and then it's gone" (p. 161, Joan of Arc).

"Men and women share the traits of human nature and often perform the same tasks. But some strengths are gender-specific. And we are losing what women have traditionally contributed to cultural cohesion. Like the mortar that keeps a brick wall from toppling over, women have held together our most precious relationships--our marriages and child-parent ties. But now we're seeing cracks in that mortar, which reveals some things we have too long taken for granted" (p. 179).

"For all the clergy you can despatch, all the schoolmasters you can appoint, all the churches you can build, and all the books you can export, will never do much good without... 'God's police'--wives and little children--good and virtuous women" (p. 189, Caroline Chisholm).

"No organization in the world teaches men to value women and children as much as does the priesthood of God. The men in my life listen to me because that is what holding the priesthood means to them. The priesthood teaches them to be servants, not masters. I thank the Lord for the influence of the priesthood" (p. 194).

"Personal covenants lead to community covenants in the doctrine of building Zion. We come unto Christ individually, we work to become pure in heart personally, but as we do, we and others who share those desires join together to build Zion--the community where the pure in heart dwell" (p. 212).

"The association of man and woman in wedlock has from time immemorial been of such importance in every society that its regulation has always been a matter of morals" (p. 229).

"Not all formal families are stable and caring,...but the commitments built into long-term marriage do increase a child's chance for stability and continuity....Family commitments teach people--both parents and children--how to overcome self-interest and live the civic virtues that make a free society possible. Much of what family members 'owe' each other cannot be enforced in a court of law; yet the very idea of family ties has an uncanny power to help people learn to obey such unenforceable duties as responsibility, cooperation, and self-restraint. A sense of voluntary duty is the lifeblood of a free society. But civic virtue will not exist socially until it has been learned individually and voluntarily assumed. The government cannot force people to live a moral life. But living in a real family can instill the moral 'habits of the heart' that make secure homes our civic foundation" (p. 244).

"The salvation of man is through love and in love" (p. 261).

"Newlyweds cannot really grasp, as beautiful as their own wedding day might be, what it takes a lifetime of sacrifice to understand" (p. 266).

"What is the sacrifice? It is all of my heart, might, mind, and strength placed on the altar and burnished by the fire of the covenant that refines the gold, the gold that is passed from generation to generation. Being true to the refined love you are handed and then answering back with your own love keeps the fire burning....What is the joy? The joy is in that love....I want you to know and feel for yourselves that this love is made pure because of Jesus. It is possible to know this kind of love only when we are willing to give everything we have for Him, no matter what. That is our covenant with Him, and His with us" (p. 272)

*"For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth, and friends above,
For all gentle thoughts and mild,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise"
(back cover, For the Beauty of the Earth)*

Marcy says

I only read Part I of this book. One of my favorite parts is where Elder Hafen describes the two attitudes people can have about marriage. Are you a hireling or a true shepherd regarding your marriage? One of the

reasons I didn't finish it was that I need maybe a LITTLE encouragement/reinforcement about how rewarding marriage can be--despite all its challenges--but by and large, reading a book that makes me want to have an eternal marriage is not necessary. I already want it!

Katie Lynn says

"The promise of living together in love, both here and beyond time, is worth waiting for, worth trying and crying for, through all the days of life."

This book was a good refresher on why it's worth all the work we put into our marriages and families. It didn't blow me away, but it was interesting and informative. I would recommend it to anyone that wants a renewed perspective on the role of families for individuals and society for the here and hereafter.

Jasmyn says

I think everyone should read this book! It was such a refreshing, positive, wonderful book on marriage and how to make your marriage a covenant marriage--working with the Lord.

Just a few quotes:

"Sometimes our dream of joyful marriage and family life is obscured by fog and dense clouds. The mists in Lehi's dream tell us that this obscurity is natural in this telestial world--there are even good reasons for the mixture of misery and joy these mists symbolize.

I testify that we can experience the fulfilment of our desire for eternal love, if we really want it, so long as we don't want anything else more. The longing of the heart for this fulness is a central vision of the gospel. It is also the source of great spiritual power, especially on those cloudy days or years when our dreams seem impossible.

Our longing to belong forever to a loving family comes from God, and He has promised its fulfillment, if we are faithful: "For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Psalm 107:9). His promise is sure." -p. 263

"I too feel what Malachi must have felt in his last recorded prophecy (Malachi 4:5-6). I want for you what he wanted--hearts turned, softened--hearts that care enough about babies and children to take on the soul-stretching work of raising them up to put on the "beautiful garments" of Zion (2 Nephi 8:24)." -p. 272

Read it. It will give new meaning and purpose to your marriage and your family life.

Mommywest says

Elder Hafen has a broad perspective of family relationships, particularly marriage, from his experience in family law, as a church leader, and as a husband and father. So far, I am absolutely loving this book! Especially in the light of the controversy surrounding Proposition 8, it is so good to read a well-documented book backed up by scripture that helps us understand the importance of marriage and its purposes.

Kelly says

This book is about why marriage is important, not just to the people involved in the marriage but to society as well, and the shifting worldly views on marriage and having kids. A lot of good insight.

One of my favorite quotes, "Vision without effort is daydreaming, effort without vision is drudgery; but vision, coupled with effort, will obtain the prize." -Thomas S Monson

Kendel Christensen says

This was the perfect Sunday read and kept me enthralled for weeks. A must-read in my opinion. Brother Hafen has insights to life and marriage that are remarkably deep and complex... yet summarized and presented in very simple, natural way. Truly remarkable. I can't quote some of his more complex thoughts, but here are some of my favorite quotable parts of this book:

"A happy life isn't about getting what you want; it's about the attitude you develop toward whatever happens to you."

(Bruce C. Hafen, Covenant Hearts, Deseret Book: [Salt Lake City, 2005] p.89)

"Whether we "strive" to make the marriage work may be the most important ingredient in whether it does work. As President Spencer W. Kimball taught, marriage is never easy:

"Happiness does not come by pressing a button. . . . It must be earned. . . .

"One comes to realize very soon after the marriage that the spouse has weaknesses not previously revealed or discovered. The virtues which were constantly magnified during courtship now grow relatively smaller, and the weaknesses that seemed so small and insignificant during courtship now grow to sizeable proportions. . . . The habits of years now show themselves. . . .

"Often there is an unwillingness to settle down and to assume the heavy responsibilities that immediately are there. . . .

"[Still,] while marriage is difficult, and discordant and frustrated marriages are common, yet real, lasting happiness is possible, and marriage can be more an exultant ecstasy than the human mind can conceive. This is within the reach of every couple, every person . . . if both are willing to pay the price."30

Because this is a true principle, the survivability, the happiness, even the "exultant ecstasy" that is possible in a marriage may depend—more than it depends on any other single thing—on whether spouses (and their family and community) expect their marriage to succeed. ”

(30.Kimball, Marriage and Divorce, 12–16; italics added; or "Marriage and Divorce" (address); see also Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, 305. President Gordon B. Hinckley has similarly said, "There is no greater happiness than is found in the most meaningful of all human relationships—the companionships of husband and wife and parents and children." "Marriage That Endures," 4.)

(Bruce C. Hafen, Covenant Hearts, Deseret Book: [Salt Lake City, 2005] p.47-48)

"Don't try to make him into what you want him to be. You fell in love with what he is. He will still grow. But you'll learn from experience to trust what he does rather than jumping to negative conclusions when you don't understand something.

I don't agree with whoever said don't go to sleep when you're upset. Most things that have me upset by bedtime aren't really a problem by morning. We all have moods; we all get tired. A good night's sleep really helps.

I agree with Sister Marjorie Hinckley. Someone asked her the secret of her happy marriage, and she said, "I lowered my expectations."

I have found that, as a mother, my spiritual mood really does set the spiritual tone for my home. If I'm stressed, my kids are stressed, my husband is stressed. So I try to control myself more than I try to control others.

Communicate. Say what you're thinking, in a kind way. Don't make the other person read your mind, and don't let unspoken things build up until some event triggers a reaction that's out of proportion.

Up to now, your first question has naturally been "what is best for me"—how to use your time, money, school, work, whatever. But after your wedding, the biggest question is, "What is best for our marriage, our family?" And that is a very hard thing to learn.

As you hear all this advice, remember that each couple is unique, so different things work for different people. But whatever you do, show in every action that your spouse has the highest priority in your life. If one of you does things that suggest you give higher priority to other things or other people, that undercuts the confidence your marriage has to have. ”

(Bruce C. Hafen, Covenant Hearts, Deseret Book: [Salt Lake City, 2005] p.71-72)

“Consider the general distinction between contractual and covenant attitudes toward marriage. One bride sighed blissfully on her wedding day, "Mom, I'm at the end of all my troubles!"

"Yes," replied her mother, "but at which end?"

When troubles come, the parties to a contractual marriage seek happiness by walking away. They marry to obtain benefits and will stay only as long as they're receiving what they bargained for.

But when troubles come to a covenant marriage, the husband and wife work them through. They marry to give and to grow, bound by covenants to each other, to the community, and to God. Contract companions each give 50 percent. But covenant companions each give 100 percent. Enough and to spare. Each gives enough to cover any shortfall by the other. Double coverage. Because their covenant is unqualified, they simply plan on solving their problems together—whatever trouble comes, no matter what it is, how long it takes, or what it costs. ”

(Bruce C. Hafen, Covenant Hearts, Deseret Book: [Salt Lake City, 2005] p.77)

“Good marriages (and the individual growth of each marriage partner) actually thrive on a couple's ability to share gentle and loving correction with each other when needed. Most of us are not always aware of our weaknesses or the way we affect other people. We need the help of an honest, caring spouse to provide corrective vision for our blind spots. That correction helps most when we really extend ourselves to communicate with kindness and a charitable spirit.

So whether our suggestions help or hurt our partner (and our marriage) usually depends on the way we choose to give advice, not on whether we give it at all.”

(Bruce C. Hafen, Covenant Hearts, Deseret Book: [Salt Lake City, 2005] p.111)

“American writer Wendell Berry once described why relatives and friends come so gladly to wedding receptions. These happy gatherings have the feel of a community event—because that's what they are: "Marriage [is] not just a bond between two people but a bond between those two people and their forebears, their children, and their neighbors." Therefore, Berry continues: "Lovers must not . . . live for themselves alone. . . . They say their vows to the community as much as to one another, and the community gathers around them to hear and to wish them well, on their behalf and on its own. It gathers around them because it understands how necessary, how joyful, and how fearful this joining is. These lovers . . . are giving themselves away, and they are joined by this as no law or contract could ever join them. Lovers, then, 'die' into their union with one another as a soul 'dies' into its union with God. . . . If the community cannot protect this giving, it can protect nothing. . . . It is the fundamental connection without which nothing holds, and

trust is its necessity." 14

Picture the community silently saying to the new couple, "We need your marriage to succeed—for our sake!" And picture the new couple silently saying to the community, "We need your support to help us succeed—for our sake!"

Most people in the past understood Berry's insight enough to know that shattered families would damage children and parents and thus destabilize society. That's why G. K. Chesterton once remarked that we should "regard a system that produces many divorces as we do a system that drives men to drown or shoot themselves."15

The need to protect children from this kind of harm was traditionally the basis for the idea that marriage is a social institution, not just a private partnership—because "marriage brings into being an organization to serve interests beyond those of [the husband and wife]"such as those of "the children of that marriage, the extended family," and society at large. "Marriage is the principal institution for raising children. . . . If it is undermined, children will suffer and are suffering. In the end, society and the state will be afflicted and are being afflicted."16

14.Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community*, 125, 137–39; italics added.

15.Chesterton, "Superstition of Divorce," *Collected Works*, 4:239.

16.Moir, "New Class of Disadvantaged Children," 63 n. 2, 65; italics omitted.

(Bruce C. Hafen, *Covenant Hearts*, Deseret Book: [Salt Lake City, 2005] p.42-43)

Elizabeth says

This book was enlightening, strengthening and incredibly helpful. The law history portion was a bit close to the academic line but you must remember the author's background is in the study of law. I loved the personal stories and experiences shared and left feeling hope and little less "maybe it's just me" that there are seasons in marriage where you struggle and learn together how to make it work. I would definitely purchase this book to reference and re-read.

This quote in the beginning was heart and mind-changing for me: "I have known some people who feel like broken links in a family chain, yet who develop so much compensating spiritual depth that they help heal not only their own wounds but larger wounds in a family pattern. Of them Isaiah wrote, 'And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in' (Isaiah 58:12)

Lorena says

Non-fiction. Church book. Not a "how-to" on marriage, but a "why" from a doctrinal and legal point of view.

Fantastic book. Every adult should read it. The only down-side is that it makes marriage sound too difficult to my liking, but still - VERY GOOD.

Favorite part - Pg. 66 We should let our companions learn from their experience without condemning them for it. And others - too many to quote!

Ryceejo says

Excellent book! It was recently republished and advertised as brand new, so I was disappointed to find that none of the statistics were updated. For such a critical topic that is rapidly changing in the world today, current data are imperative. For example, the chapter on homosexuality was very out of date, since homosexual marriage has been legalized in many states, whereas in the book it was only on the brink of that. It is still definitely worth a read for LDS couples.

Ellen says

Someone gave this book to my husband and me for our wedding and I finally got around to reading it. This book was a wonderful, testimony strengthening defense of marriage in society today. It approached the topic from a number of different viewpoints, and explored the weakening of the family unit in our culture and the tragic effects it is having on our nation , particularly children.

One of the greatest parts of the book, for me, was the comparison to the "Love Story" of Adam and Eve and our marriages. This was a new way for me to think about our earliest scripture story. It explained how in our marriages we too will eventually leave our "Eden" of happiness and find trials and hardships but these challenges are what will bring us closer to each other and the Lord.

It also discussed the different roles parents have in the family and how roles can be separate, yet equal and explained how many of the equality movements today are actually destroying women in many ways.

It was an all around enriching and uplifting book. I highly recommend it.

Andrea says

This is not a "how to" for marriage, but a "why". I read it while studying "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" for Institute and was encircled by the deep meaning of God's laws and why God's laws are always to be followed regardless of what is going on in the world. I appreciate the stories Elder Hafen shares; some are heart-breaking and others are so inspiring. I read it from two perspectives: a) keeping a healthy marriage strong and b) educating children about the eternal doctrine of marriage long before they ever start planning for it.

One of my favorite quotes:

"Marriage is a partnership of equals whose most essential roles both revolve around their families. Each of them also strives individually to become a fully rounded disciple of Christ, developing Christian attributes as a complete spiritual being. In that quest, both husband and wife have strong reasons to listen to each other, to follow each other, to discipline themselves so that the voice of each deserves to be heard by the other."

Mary says

First off, a disclaimer: I am not planning on getting married any time soon. I just really like Bruce C Hafen books in the genre of churchy books, and this is one he wrote. So.

There's some great wisdom here, especially I like the idea that relationships shouldn't be about dependence, or even independence, but should be about interdependence, really learning to trust and care for each other in a deep, loyal sense. I also kind of liked the chapter on the moral influence of women, which sounds so cliché, but biologically, as well as spiritually, women have the most investment in stability and so they often get to set the terms for what a relationship is. Over all, the theme is that love is a deep and crucial connection, one that by definition is going to include a lot of pain and work, but that pain is the inverse of the depths of joy attainable in a relationship.

(I was less wild about his wife's epilogue, which--is that okay to say? Is that mean? Gosh, I hope she doesn't read Goodreads reviews.)

Monica says

This is a very good treatise on marriage; what marriage can and should be, how we've "lost the plot", how we can improve, and how marriage can ultimately enrich our lives, the lives of our children, and our society as a whole. The biggest complaint I've hear is that it is a slow read - I didn't find that to be true, but it does approach things from the academic side, so be forewarned (someone said it was like reading a lawyer, which I thought was pretty funny considering Bruce C. Hafen is a lawyer). It does have a good balance of doctrine, personal experience, background of family law, and modern trends and statistics, some of which I had never even realized or heard of before. What amazed me is how much of our cultural outlook on marriage and family many of us (including me) digest throughout our lifetimes - sometimes even to the point of standing somewhat opposed to marriage and family without even really realizing it. It gives a strong reminder for the importance of lasting marriages, family, community, and self-sacrifice not only for a better society, but for our individual betterment and welfare, and the betterment and welfare of our relationships in general.

Lisa says

This is the book I read that prompted me to get married. Yes, *really!*

I had a pretty dismal Christmas that year. I felt an acute sense of loneliness for the first time in my life, so when January rolled around, I was determined that I would never let that happen again. But the hitch was this (yes, there was a hitch): I wasn't excited about getting married. I knew that I needed to desire marriage. It wasn't that I had any bad previous experience (I'd been single all my life), or came from a divorced family (had parents happily married). I just didn't have a testimony of marriage.

This book changed it for me. I just adore Bruce Hafen and how he clearly shows how marriage is important as an institution for society and for individuals to grow. This book wasn't the intended to persuade singles to marry, I'm certain, but it certainly helped me in my journey to understand marriage more.

The happy ending is that I *did* end up meeting someone just months after finishing that book and two years later married that same fella.
