

**We Made
a
PACT**

Promise of Accountability,
Commitment and Trust

by
Chris and Carol Green

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the New King James Version of the Bible.

We Made a PACT:

Promise of Accountability, Commitment and Trust

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Introduction

Chris and Carol Green found themselves celebrating their 30th wedding anniversary with sober reflection. They did not have the festive feelings of the previous years. There was mainly a strong desire to put their story in writing so that their children and grandchildren would know about their legacy of love.

Their 20th anniversary celebration had been very exciting. It included a vow renewal ceremony, their first real wedding ring, a wonderful celebration with family and friends, and the release of several songs on a CD to commemorate the occasion. The 25th came and went with very little fanfare because they were deeply involved in their new ministry in Pennsylvania.

However, the 30th anniversary was spent taking a long drive, a late night of dining, and sharing countless memories. It also reminded them that they had never really told their story or focused on marriage in their ministry in Pennsylvania. They had taught in their home church's pre-marital classes, and in seminars and workshops as part of itinerant travels.

Behind the scenes they have advised scores of couples that were contemplating marriage or divorce. They didn't have piles of data, charts, diagrams and official analysis based upon years of research to back up what they offered a couple. All they had was their life's experience and the Bible, yet they were bold and forthright.

Once they became the senior leaders of a local church in south central Pennsylvania, they were faced with an endless list of matters that needed to be addressed. However, marriage was the one topic that they did not tackle head on because it was a very sensitive issue in that region.

The city, in which their ministry was planted, had a long history of marriage covenant breaking. It was devastated by broken marriages, relationships and homes. Carol had firsthand experience with this reality because she was returning to her hometown, where her mom and dad

separated when she was 12 years old. They never got back together and eventually divorced. It was no surprise that the majority of the first attendees to their church were either divorced or the product of divorce. For some, their parents had never married.

There was so much more that needed to be dealt with beyond the topic of marriage, that it wasn't until the fourth year of their church ministry that they could begin to address relationship topics in any consistent teaching series. Even then, the approach was to initiate discussions with young adults in the context of pre-marital preparation.

After their 30th anniversary celebration, they felt it was time to focus on families for the first time in the ministry. It was time to launch a strategic set of teachings that would begin to rebuild, restore and renew hearts and homes in their small community of Believers.

When the New Year of 2011 rolled in, the first time their church family gathered was on the second Sunday in the month of January. That was the day they began to strategically teach about the PACT they made when they were six-month newlyweds.

Through the years, and throughout all of the many public sessions and personal advice, they almost always referred to this one decision in their marriage, as the single most important one that they ever made. It was when they made a special promise. So they named their teaching series accordingly, The PACT.

In previous years they also held back on writing a relationship book because there are so many others, in their opinion, who are better qualified to teach about marriage and family; others who have the expertise and credentials to do so.

It has never been their intent to minimize or belittle the benefits of educational training and preparation to enhance one's ability to guide individuals and couples through the challenges of the marriage relationship.

That's why this book makes no attempt to deceive the reader in to thinking these words are only coming from Chris and Carol Green. In fact, throughout this book they will refer to specialists who have the training and qualifications, some of whom are the same professionals who helped them in critical seasons of their marriage.

This book is not a marriage 'how to' instructional. It is a 'life-principles' manual in which wisdom and understanding can be gleaned from the pages as you relive the journey of two lowly inner city kids that dropped out of college, made lots of mistakes and came together in holy matrimony. They also wanted to set the record straight regarding their premarital failures. They wanted to tell their story and give God the Glory.

When they reached that first moment of marital impasse, they made a simple promise to one another. Now after more than thirty years, they are sharing the results of that promise and the priceless treasure that they have acquired.

Our Story

We were married at a Justice of the Peace office in downtown Tulsa, Oklahoma on December 29, 1980. However, an official wedding ceremony still awaited us, five days later, on January 3, 1981. Our original plan was to only go to the JP, but my family (especially my brother Mark Green) insisted on providing a wedding and reception for us in St. Louis, Missouri, so we reluctantly agreed. When we look at our wedding photos today, we're very thankful that we agreed.

The laws state that you must get married within the same state in which you obtain your marriage license. We couldn't get a license in Oklahoma and then get married in Missouri. So, we had to get married in Oklahoma, before our ceremony. That's how we came to be standing before a Justice of the Peace.

Right from the beginning, we found ourselves getting married twice to start our journey as husband and wife. And to answer that one question that most will ask; yes, we still waited until after the church wedding ceremony.

We first met in August of 1977 on the campus of Oral Roberts University. I was sitting in Mabee Center, where they play the basketball games. It was a huge place and students were dispersed throughout the arena according to whatever major in which they were enrolling. I was completing my paperwork when I noticed a nice looking Black girl sitting about three rows behind me and on the far end of the section. She had a reddish complexion, reddish hair, was very slender and wore a white dress. My first thought was "O, another Black person." I didn't give her a second look because I didn't want to start that awkward –oops I got caught staring routine.

Carol recalls: *I was sitting in Mabee Center, looking around and listening to the orientation speech. I was very nervous and looking for a friend whom I knew should be in the same meeting. In the sea of White faces I began looking for Black faces to help me not to feel so out of place.*

Then I saw a Black young man sitting in the same section in the rows below me. It helped me not to feel so alien and he had a little smirk on his face. It made me wonder what he was thinking. A wayward thought drifted across my mind, "I wonder if he's my husband". I immediately canceled it, particularly since that was a "fad" at the time and one I didn't want to emulate.

After the orientation session, the students were dismissed and we were allowed to continue walking around the campus to get familiar with our new environment.

As hundreds of students walked across the campus, I saw a childhood friend that I had not seen since our eighth grade graduation. It was quite a surprise to see her, now four years later. Her name was Wilma Calvert. She was walking with that same girl I'd seen earlier in the Mabee Center. I greeted Wilma with warmth and delight. Then she turned and introduced me to that girl.

At that time in my life, I was extremely melancholy. I was born into a grief stricken family because my mother was seven months pregnant with me when her youngest child died in a horrible food choking accident. Many professionals believe that an unborn baby is directly impacted by the emotional state of its mother. Paralyzing grief, deep depression and pervasive pessimism was embedded in my soul. As I grew up, most of the time, I was the saddest toddler, adolescent and teenager you could have possibly encountered.

Also, while growing up in inner city St. Louis, Missouri, I had a few experiences that led me to become very cold when meeting a young lady. It was a self-taught response, but there was a lot of pain behind it.

One day I passed by two girls as I was leaving the high school building. I overheard one girl say to the other as she looked at me, "This school sho' aint got no nice lookin' niggas."

So, of course my self-esteem was crushed in the moment. I didn't think I was all that great looking anyway, but a comment like that sure didn't help much. Even before those

words were spoken, I was already a critical mass of self-loathing and self-hatred.

Basically, I trained myself to be polite, but show no interest, one way or the other. So, as I looked at this new girl who was being introduced to me, I nodded my head and almost whispered, "Hi."

This girl didn't like my response and she blurted,

"Well, aren't you going to speak?"

I thought I had just done that. I mustered up a little more effort and said it a little louder, "Hi."

Carol recalls: *A dorm friend I just met from St. Louis suggested we go to lunch together at the cafeteria. As we were on the way she met a friend from her hometown, and to my surprise it was that young man. They greeted each other and talked a little bit when Wilma introduced us to one another. I said hi and he just sorta, kinda nodded his head. For some reason this irritated me.*

"Well," I said, "Aren't you going to speak?"

I was just as surprised as he was, by the expression on his face. He said hi. Wilma, watching this interchange, decided to play matchmaker. She suggested that we all go to lunch together.

It was not the kind of start that would lead anyone to believe we were destined to get married someday.

A couple of days later, we were in the same lecture hall. Unknown to one another, we were enrolled in three courses together. This was one of them. After the class, as students poured out of the room, several other Black students and I were floating in the area. One of my new friends (Mark Lawrence) introduced me to that same girl I had met during orientation. This time my response was friendlier and this time I remembered her name, Carol Dennis.

Yes, it took being introduced twice to get us to talk to one another. Maybe that's why it took getting married twice to get that to stick, too.

Our relationship was very slow to develop. However, Wilma was very good at helping us to move things along. She would invite us to lunch, and then slip away, leaving the two of us to talk.

We found that we had a lot in common, especially writing. We agreed to swap our personal notebooks that were filled with poems. Then we agreed to meet in the Prayer Gardens to talk about our writings. Carol took the opportunity to slip in a poem about me.

After reading that poem, I knew that I needed to nip this obvious attraction, in the bud. I had a girlfriend back home in St. Louis. I needed to tell Carol the truth up front.

We met one balmy summer evening in the beautiful gardens that were situated directly beneath ORU's prayer tower. It was a beautiful summer evening. The stars were bright. The breeze was perfect. The setting was complete with the golden glow of the garden lanterns.

First we talked about the notebooks. I asked her about that certain poem as I pretended that I didn't know whom she was talking about. I inquired if it was about an old boyfriend back in Pennsylvania. She never answered me directly.

During the conversation, Carol expressed how she was tired of boys who play around with your feelings. In one of her poems she had written her ultimatum of people accepting her as she was or leaving her alone. I used that poem to set up what I needed to say. I told her that I didn't want to lead her on because I had a girlfriend back home. I told her we could just be friends.

Carol recalls: *I enjoyed the conversations I had with Chris because he is very intelligent and quick witted. I was pleasantly surprised that I could have an intelligent conversation with someone my own age.*

Most young men seemed to either feel intimidated or weren't interested in talking, so to find a young man who was attractive, intelligent, taller than me and loved God; it was too much!

We were to meet in the Prayer Garden to talk about our writings, so I thought I would slip in a poem about Chris that just seemed to write itself. I wanted to see his response. We were friends, but I wanted to see if he would give more. At the very least I wanted to know where he was concerning our growing relationship.

When we met, that perfect summer evening, he told me about his girlfriend, that he didn't want to lead me on, and that we could continue to be friends. I decided to be the best friend he ever had; especially since he confided that his relationship with his girlfriend was what we call a 'church' relationship, meaning most of the time they spent together was at church and conversation on the telephone.

Throughout the remainder of the semester, we tried to just be friends, but we had three classes together, twice a week. We ate together. We studied together. It was obvious that we had something special.

When I walked her to her dormitory, I gave her the brotherly hug, no lingering and no extra squeeze. I just didn't want to be messing with her feelings. I was also trying to honor my commitment back home.

During Thanksgiving, a defining moment came. The school was closed due to the holiday and during that weekend college students are left to fend for themselves. This was our first Thanksgiving away from home and a friend of a friend invited us to their home for Thanksgiving dinner.

As soon as we walked up to the door of the friend's house, I rang the doorbell, turned around to Carol and said, "I love you." Then I gasped in total shock that those words had come out of my mouth. I said it without thinking and they flowed out as easily as a breath.

However, at that moment I was trying to suck the words back into my mouth. Carol's eyebrows raised as her eyes brightened. I could almost hear her say, "I knew it!"

I tried to play it off and say that I love this time of the year or something like that, but it was too late. My true feelings had spilled out. Afterwards, I continued to play down that incident. I never spoke of it and acted like it never happened.

Carol recalls: *That momentous Thanksgiving Day! I was just glad to have somewhere to eat real food, not cafeteria food. I was hoping we would have a good time.*

We were standing at the front of our friend's home and Chris rang the doorbell. When he turned to me and said, "I love you" and sucked in a breath as if he couldn't believe what he said, I smiled and screamed in my head, "I can't believe he said it".

I felt completely victorious. I knew that I couldn't over react or he would bolt, so I just looked at him and smiled. Then our friend opened the door to let us in.

When our first Christmas break came, I learned that things were dramatically different when I got back home to St. Louis. My friends and I were going through the normal process that occurs in this time of life. You go away and friends start growing away from one another. We were still just teenagers and we didn't understand what was happening to us.

My girlfriend and I didn't have much in common anymore and neither did my buddies. All the conversations were forced and awkward. We had changed a lot in just four short months. I didn't know how to handle it. I felt like some resentment started building to divide us, but that was only because none of us knew how to deal with this transition into adulthood. I couldn't wait to get back to school with all my new friends and my special relationship with Carol.

Carol recalls her Christmas break:

I was home and missing Chris. We didn't have long distance phone service on our home phone so he would call me at a

neighbor's (Mom's best friend) house two doors down from where I lived. When he called I would tear out of the house to go talk to him.

I couldn't wait to go back to school. I not only missed Chris, but I missed the friends I had made who loved God like I did, and really wanted to live for God.

When we got back to school after Christmas break, my roommate received some Red Lobster coupons that included some free dinners. He shared some of them with me, so I asked Carol out to dinner. It was to be our first official date.

We were so nervous it was unbelievable. After all the time we had spent together, talking freely and easily, the minute we called it a date, all the dynamics changed immediately.

I tried to be a gentleman and recall every lesson on manners that I had ever been taught. I held the car door. I pulled out her chair at the table. We even prayed over the food in public. The dinner was good and the time together was nice. We survived our first date. As usual, I walked her back to her dormitory and still kept it friendly with a brotherly hug.

Carol recalls the first date: *Chris' roommate, Steve, was given coupons for Red Lobster and invited Chris and I to go out with him and his girlfriend, Becky. Chris asked if I would like to go and of course I said yes, but I was nervous about eating in front of him. I wore a favorite black three-piece pinstriped pants suit that I had made. When he opened the doors for me and pulled out my chair to seat me, it was the first time any young man had shown me such courtesy. We really enjoyed our time together. He walked me to my dorm, gave me the sister hug, opened the door for me and said good night.*

Well, our fairy tale started falling apart a couple months after that. Carol didn't have enough funds to complete the school year and was unable to attend classes.

A few of our friends tried to make an appeal directly to President Oral Roberts, but he steered them back to the financial aid office and all of the protocols that were already in place.

I noticed that Carol was completely apprehensive about the whole matter and was ready to give up without a fight. I didn't understand, at that time, why she was responding to the situation this way. It was one of those things that you observe about a person that has no meaning until after you are married to them.

Finally, the school arranged for a one-way plane ticket to send her home and we were just crushed. Everyone who knew her and knew the situation just felt so badly for her, but there was nothing that any of us could do.

The night before her morning flight, we went out to eat. I borrowed my brother's car. Once we got back to the campus, we sat in the parking lot a long, long time.

After all the time we had spent together and all that we shared in common, I just could not see a future without her in it. So I opened up and told her my true feelings. I confessed that I loved her and vowed that someday, some way, we were going to be together.

Then I kissed her. Yeah, the kiss like in the movies, with the orchestra dramatically drowning out every other sound to capture the moment. It was a kiss with tears streaming and deep sobbing that stained our hearts and permanently imprinted our vow.

Of, course when you're 18 years old and as broke as a ghetto screen door, you have no idea how you're going to make anything happen, but even in my youthful state of untapped prophetic potential, I just knew what I knew.

I moped through the rest of the school year. For the first time in my life, I was totally emotionally invested in a relationship. I was faced with the responsibility of ending my connection with the girl back home and I didn't know how to do it. I

About the Authors

Christopher and Carol Green lead the Urban Life Church of Harrisburg, PA, an urban family and inner healing ministry that was launched in March of 2005. With their sons they also founded the Fruitful Life Network of Ministries, the team that provides the technical and multimedia support for all of their productions and publications.

As itinerant speakers they engage small groups or larger audiences in settings ranging from training meetings to national and international conferences, addressing issues involving marriage and family, church supportive leadership, and church prophetic exhortation. Their travels have taken them from coast to coast in the United States, to Hawaii, the Bahamas, Trinidad, the United Kingdom, and to Monrovia, Liberia, West Africa.

They completed five years of formal ministry training in their home church (Metro Christian Worship Center in St. Louis, Missouri) and to further enhance his education Chris completed certificate programs from the University of Missouri-St. Louis' Continuing Education Division. They both completed a certificate program from the American Association of Christian Counselors.

For nearly 17 years, Chris and Carol served in the leadership (14 as associate pastors) of Metro Christian Worship Center. They helped to establish this church and were officially licensed and ordained as ministers in May of 1992.

Chris also served as the executive vice president of Metro Associates, Inc, a community outreach organization based in St. Louis, Missouri. As program director of media, from 1989 until 2004, he helped coordinate annual community outreach events, produced an award winning cable TV broadcast, established two music publishing companies, and produced several music and sermon CDs.

Chris and Carol have been married since December 29, 1980 (wedding ceremony on January 3, 1981) and are the proud parents of three sons: Christopher, Jonathan and David as well as a host of people throughout the world who call them 'mom and dad'.

**Access more insight and inspiration from
Chris and Carol Green through their internet outreach.**

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