**Reflecting on vows of love in the new year**

Published: January 1, 2013

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By BRUCE CONN - Telegraph columnist

Maybe when your anniversary rolls around you remember and celebrate the day. You may go out for dinner, flowers or chocolates may be included. Cards and jewelry are always nice.

How often do you think of your vows? New Year’s Day may be a great day to reflect on your wedding vows when you find a quiet moment together. You also may do this just by yourself as you gratefully consider the blessings in your life.

Weddings have many beautiful moments -- the bride walking down the aisle, the kiss at the end. Maybe you can remember a favorite moment of that day for you and your spouse.

Somewhere in the middle, there comes a moment where the two exchange vows. That is fancy language for promising each other that no matter what happens, we are in it together and we are hanging in here together.

I guess it is easy to forget the vows in the hard times. In the hard times, we can get selfish and go into survival mode. We defend ourselves instead of defending the relationship.

Fidelity always gets referenced in vows. Maybe you answered “yes” to the question, “And do you promise to forsake all others and be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?” Faithfulness to the other is pretty much the opposite of being selfish about your own needs.

Maybe in your vows the pairing of opposites was used. “In sickness or in health, for richer for poorer” ... what does that stuff mean?

Let’s get real about the vows. Maybe we should promise things such as:

• “I will tolerate you when you are tired and irritable.”

• “I will appreciate and repay in full when you have to deal with my family.”

• “I will go along with your harebrained schemes and will be there when they fail.”

• “I will always try to see things from your perspective.”

Here is a common question used in wedding vows: “Do you promise to love, cherish, honor and protect her through all the changing scenes of life?”

We can break down some of those promises you made. We’ve talked before about love primarily being a verb. Love is what Olympians feel as they spend every moment eating and breathing the sport and the goal they have before them.

Think of cherish as that feeling you have when you hold a happy 1-year-old child, when you mirror and dote on their beauty and innocence. Can you dote on your loved one’s beauty and awesomeness? That would be cherishing.

When I think of honor, honoring God and country come to mind. Honor means we bring our best behavior, our best selves, to bear on the work at hand. One serves a sovereign with honor and is proud to do it. The king or queen of your castle will appreciate your deference and devotion.

Protecting means “I’ve got your back.” It means your loved one comes before anyone else. It may mean defending your spouse’s opinion or position in public but also doing the same in the home.

Through service or honoring their sovereignty, we protect their personhood, their right to be exactly and whoever they want to be. Wouldn’t you want that? You have it to give.

You can give all of these things to your loved one: love, cherish, honor and protection. Reflect on cultivating those qualities and have a happy new year.

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