



'I Do'

What does it mean when couples say, “I do”? - Dr Anthony van Tonder

Does that mean they are really saying 'I do, as long as it works out?' or merely 'I'll try?' You can choose to get married – no-one holds a gun to your head. Yet, it is the truth that at the time of exchanging vows, people merely mouth off: 'I do.' Society today has no clue as to the depth of uttering those two little words.

Specialist Marriage Counsellor, Dr Anthony van Tonder is the author of several excellent books on family relationships and is the Founder and CEO of Family Life Change Centre SA t/a Happy Families.

Imagine yourself in front of the Marriage Officer, a smile on your face, looking into the eyes of the person to whom you pledge loyalty, for long as you both shall live. Now quietly say the words 'I do.' What exactly does that mean?

Saying 'I do' is an action. It does not merely mean 'I'll try.'

When the honeymoon is over, the reality of two different people coming together calls for the proverbial 'when the rubber meets the tar.' This is a definite reality check.

When we look at the destruction of marriage, the demise of the home, the many children torn apart between two parent groups, we have to take a hard look at ourselves. Do we really, firstly, understand what we meant



with 'I do' and secondly understand the depth of the marriage commitment? Actually, it is more than a commitment, it is supposed to be a covenant. That is where marriage originally comes from. It comes from a God who covenanted with His people by moving through the blood of sacrificed animals. The parallel and symbolism which that holds for modern day marriage is amazing.

A covenant marriage says: I sacrifice myself, by choice, to you, forever.
If we put an acronym to the word commitment within the ambit of marriage, it will look something like this:

- C – Choose to love unconditionally
- O – Only you and me
- M – Marriage was God's idea
- M – Many trials and tribulations
- I – I hold the key to my own happiness
- T – Together we can work out anything (resolve conflict)
- M – Make time to communicate effectively
- E – Encourage each other daily (speak in his/her love language)
- N – Never mention divorce
- T – Trust each other implicitly

Saying 'I do' on that big day should also stimulate us to think investment. If couples are serious about their 'I do' commitment, then sporadic marriage enrichment should become a planned entity. Someone once said "Life becomes what you plan." So put away R100 per month which you use once a year to invest into growing in your relationship with each other. This could take various forms such as investing in a marriage DVD series or going on a marriage retreat.

Just imagine if the vows to which we so easily respond 'I do', sounded more like:
Do you take me in a time when I get so sick that I cannot eat without being helped?
Will you love me enough to help me even if I fall into the trap of developing a gambling habit?
Will you love me when sometimes for days I might not feel like showing love to you?

If your answer is still 'I do' you are really saying: 'I choose to love you, even when you do not deserve it.'

What a blessing such a marriage will be. No longer does 'I do' mean 'I will try', nor 'I will stick with you as long as it works out.' It means "I choose to love you no matter what".



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