

# “And He Loved Her”

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Meditations on Marriage  
from the  
“Christian Shepherd”

—2007—

## January 2007

“And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep: for she kept them” (Gen. 29:9).

What a precious, valuable moral principle for a happy marriage union is found in this little verse! We are introduced to a young person who was occupied with the daily care and keeping of her father’s sheep.

Sheep are not characterized by strength, wisdom or courage. They require constant, watchful care and protection if the flock is to thrive and grow in health. Let us, for a moment, consider ‘sheep’ as a picture of the innumerable ‘flock’ of words, habits, and actions which comprise the wonderful fabric of marriage unions.

Both husband and wife need to be ‘shepherds’, diligently and lovingly guarding their habits, words, and actions towards each other. Such vitally important care is not the work of one day, nor of just the early exciting days of marriage. It is the work of a lifetime, one which grows, strengthens and develops in its action and consequently brings growing joy and stability to marriages.

One of the great obstacles to increasing joy and stability in marriage happens when one spouse (or both) becoming so preoccupied with personal interests, that the needs and interests of the other are overlooked.

Perhaps a wife needs a shopping trip or help clearing the table and washing the dishes—or—perhaps she just needs to know that her husband always has an interested and sympathetic ear to listen to her concerns, whether insignificant or not.

Maybe a husband needs to be reassured that his wife is concerned for what he faces at work each day; that though she does not enter into the work itself, he knows with assurance that she is with him, heart and soul, in his work. In short, both husband and wife, daily need to be diligent ‘shepherds’ of their ‘flock’—all the things that comprise their marriage. “Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds” (Prov. 27:23).

## February 2007

“And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. And Jacob’s anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God’s stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?” (Gen. 30:1,2).

Jealously, selfish demands, threats, anger, and self-justification. These are ingredients which, if allowed in marriages, will most surely work ruin, unhappiness and destruction to the sacred bond that exists between husband and wife. The following five unhappy characteristics are strikingly found in our verse.

(1) **Jealousy.** “Rachel envied her sister”. We can understand dear Rachel’s longing to bear children. But that

right, natural longing was allowed to go too far—becoming an occasion of jealousy where love ought to have prevailed. How careful husbands and wives must be of allowing personal desires, no matter how right and normal, to foster a jealous spirit towards others. Such is the mark of the first step down a slippery slope to marital dissension and disaster.

(2) **Selfish Demands.** “Give me children ...”. What a sad spirit. Happy marriages are never formed on the principle of *give me*. Strong, loving marriage unions can only be enjoyed on the principle of *what can I give you?*—unions where both spouses willingly display service, patience and forgiveness with each other.

(3) **Threats.** “...or else”. How can a marriage union remain stable and happy when the spirit of threatening in order to get one’s way, marks the spirit of husband and/or wife? No loving relationship can thrive when watered by threatening, demanding spirits.

(4) **Anger.** “Jacob’s anger was kindled *against Rachel*”. How sad! How strange! In view of his own failures in trusting God, what right did Jacob have to become angry at his wife? When he first met Rachel he had *kissed her*, then lifted up his voice in tears of joy (Gen. 29:11). Now he lifts up his voice in angry indignation *against the wife of his youth*.

(5) **Self Justification.** Can there really be any room in a truly happy marriage for an “I told you so” attitude. Do harsh, arrogant retorts of “If you would have listened to me, this wouldn’t have happened”, or “Don’t blame me, it’s not my fault” produce the fruit of delight, joy and deepening love in marriages? Have they ever produced that precious fruit in any relationship? “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit*” (Phm. v. 21).

## March 2007

“And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.” (Gen. 31:24).

Husbands and wives who desire to have joyful, thriving, lasting marriages do well to consider this verse. Most of Genesis 31 is a sad account of years of unloving deceit, ill treatment, lying, and stealing. Now one (who bore guilt in this sad state of affairs) seeks to exact revenge. Though still unhappy and vexed with what Jacob had done to him, Laban submits to God’s explicit command and refrains from raising his hand against an also guilty Jacob.

In all marriages there are times when each partner wrongs their spouse. While not excusing failure, grace would always overcome real or imagined ills. Further, in James 4:6 we have God’s promise that no matter how difficult the situation, He gives more to overcome: “*But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*”

Laban was commanded to *speak neither good nor bad* to Jacob. Though God would not condone Jacob's deceitful ways, neither would He would allow His failing saint to be chastised by an equally guilty foe. Laban was neither to *encourage* nor *threaten* when speaking with Jacob. Divinely important counsel for marriages!

Dear husbands and wives, we do not in any way encourage a lack of communication between marriage partners. Such is deadly and destructive to a strong, joyful, marriage. But there are times when it is best to *overlook* a spouse's failure; a time when it is best to say nothing *good or bad* regarding such things. Speak to your loving Father **first**. He will surely give wisdom for *what* to say and *when* to speak.

"let your forbearance be known to all men; the Lord is near" (Phpp. 4:5, YLT).

#### April 2007

"thy brother Esau ... cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him...Jacob was greatly afraid... and he divided the people that was with him ... into two bands" (Gen. 31:24).

Christians are familiar with the following verses from God's Word: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mk. 10:9); "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). Too often, however, husbands and wives allow a divisive spirit or circumstances, whose roots lie in pressures from 'family ties', to cause division of heart and loss of joy in their marriage.

Fear of meeting Esau his brother brought **division** into Jacob's family (*he divided the people*). Doubtless, his deceit and lack of faith were the *root* of his distress, and earlier in his marriage, he himself was the cause of family division—one which reaped continual sorrow. Given two sisters (Leah and Rachel) as wives (such marriage unions were allowed of God in Old Testament times), we read that "...he [Jacob] went in also to Rachel; and he loved also Rachel more than Leah" (Gen. 29:30)—sadly divided affections.

Now Esau, his brother whom he had wronged some 21 years previously, is coming to meet him with *four hundred men*. Jacob, fearful of consequences, allows that fear and pressure to cause *division* within his family. 'Family ties' and 'family pressures' in marriage unions, have, we may say, *four hundred* ways of causing marital dissension and strife—**if allowed to do so**. Divided spirits, however, need never characterize a marriage though husband and wife may be unable to change or remove *family pressures*.

Maintaining a happy, peaceful unified marriage while feeling the pull and pressure of 'family ties' requires love, grace and firmness; all freely and abundantly avail-

able from our loving God and Father.

"Husbands, **love your wives**, and be not bitter against them" (Col. 3:19).

"...teach the young women to be sober, to **love their husbands**..." (Titus 2:4).

"Love has long patience ... bears all things ... endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:4, 7; JND Trans.).

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (Phm. 1:25).

"...stand fast in one spirit..." (Phpp. 1:27).

"...be of one mind, live in peace..." (2 Cor. 13:11).

#### May 2007

(**Ed. Note:** The reference used in April—Gen. 31:24—was incorrect. That reference should be *Genesis 32:6,7*.)

"Jacob lifted up his eyes...and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men...And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost. And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother (Gen. 33:1-3).

The account of Jacob in God's precious Word describes one who, like many of us, though possessing true faith, often failed miserably to live in the good of that faith. Jacob often connived, deceived and schemed in order to get the best for himself.

This account, however, is a glowing 'high point' in our dear saint's life. It contains a valuable, instructive principle for maintaining a vibrant and joyful marriage union. That principle is summed up in *one word* found in the above verses—"before".

With all his obvious and many failings in the path of faith, Jacob here shines brightly as a beautiful example of self-sacrificing love. Having placed his wives, concubines and children in groups so that if Esau were bent on revenge, at least some would have a chance to escape, does not *follow them* to meet the expected sword of Esau's vengeance. Dear Jacob goes **first**—he goes in *front* of his beloved family, placing himself in suspected harm's way **before** them.

This is true love that *does not seek its own*; love that *bears* and *endures* all things (1 Cor. 13); love that makes each marriage partner willing to *lay down their life* for their spouse—not just in physical circumstances, but in every sphere of marriage.

Dear Jacob's actions certainly speak louder than words. If danger were to face his loved ones, it will have to meet him first. In this precious example we have a special word to husbands. "...the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church, and he is the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23).

Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ laid down His life to 'save' His body. He did not, however, die only that we might be saved from eternal judgment. He is risen, living

today, moment by moment seeing to every care, burden or trial that His beloved body faces—He is *saving* His body. Dear husbands (and wives too), are you daily ‘saving’ your beloved partner, though it means laying down your life?

### June 2007

“*And Hamor communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter: I pray you give her him to wife. And make ye marriages with us, and give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you*” (Gen. 34:8, 9).

**Give and take.** These words are used so often in our culture that we often fail to see the harm involved in such thinking. When applied to marriage, *give and take*, though seeming to be an obvious, fundamental basis for a happy, enduring union, often leads to serious problems. Let us who are believers remember that our God is a *giving* God.

“*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matt. 11:28).

“*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (Jn. 3:16).

“*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*” (Rom. 8:32).

“*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*” (Jas. 1:17).

Though Scripture refers to Shechem as being “*more honourable than all the house of his father*” (Gen. 34:19), yet this son of Hamor was a **taker**. Hamor *took* Dinah’s purity before he became willing to *give* himself to her in marriage. What sorrowful fruit instance of *give and take* reaped: deceit, death, dismay and disdain.

Marriages based on the concept of partners *giving* and *taking* often reap the sad and needless fruit of unhappy unions. Marriages in which both partners are fully committed to *giving* to their spouse without expecting or demanding to *take* anything in return for what is giving, are happy and enduring.

Not only was Jacob’s daughter Dinah defiled by the world (Shechem, son of the Hivite Hamor), but she lost a priceless treasure while receiving nothing in return. The promise of Hamor to her father, Jacob, to *give and take* and make marriages with them, thus forming a union with the idolatrous Hivites, could never provide a lasting source of joy, stability and blessing for her or any of God’s dear people.

Husbands and wives who are constant *givers* to one another soon become *receivers*, not *takers*.

### July 2007

This is an ‘**adapted excerpt**’ from a letter written by a beloved older brother to a newly engaged young couple

(entire letter is posted on the Christian Shepherd website: [www.christianshepherd.org](http://www.christianshepherd.org)).

“I would like to give you my thought of true married life in the Lord (1 Cor. 7:39). It surpasses everything human in grace as it did in nature before the fall in Eden. Though the trials are peculiar, they are trials of humanity. A married couple has this advantage if they really are mutual in their feelings before the Lord; that as they are together in the trial, so they are together in His deliverance and help. A trial becomes secondary if you have such sympathy in it as will feed the heart with affection, while the Lord’s deliverance from the trial will also be enjoyed together.

“When marriage is in the Lord—if you meet trials as children of God united together in communion with Himself—the trials will afford fresh occasion for binding you both together. You will also be established together in His mercy, love and discipline.

“What can be so precious as to know the depth and power of a heart that loves you? It is better known and proved when passing through trials together.

“Love does not like to see a loved husband or wife in sorrow. It summons all its resources, and proves its strength, until the loved one is relieved. This can only be realized and enjoyed in married life when both partners seek the Lord together, having fellowship with each other in spiritual exercises.

“Seek communion with each other for then, your very failures will be yielding sweetness and you will find what is of Christ in one another in spite of the failure. Nothing gives such a sense that another is having to do with God as the simple confession of faults. This sense will invigorate and give deep reality to your mutual affection. The one who knows me best, and who seeks out of true affection to correct my nature, gains a place in my heart—in my divine nature—that no mere ‘flatterer’ could produce. Be as two souls unreserved before God as to all that His Spirit is doing with you. All praise and confession to Him, shrink not from communicating it with each other.

“Cultivate spiritual intimacy. Do not be satisfied with only as much Christianity as will ease your consciences. Respect and wait for one another’s judgment and feelings as to things before the Lord. If you cannot tell one another of your humblings, you will not be able to celebrate your thanksgivings.”

### August 2007

“*And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour*” (Gen. 35:16).

The record of Benjamin’s birth and Rachel’s death, while presenting important ‘doctrinal’ principles concerning the place of Israel before Jehovah as pictured in dear

Rachel, also gives vitally important moral principles which, if applied in our marriages, will preserve rather than cause withering and death.

Jacob and his family were on a journey from Bethel (the house of God) to Ephrath (Bethlehem; “house of bread”). How happy when marriages begin, as it were, at the ‘house of God’. The journey of marriage begun in God’s presence will surely result in finding God’s ‘bread’ (satisfaction) freely available and fully able to sustain our marriages.

Rachel, however, was in a very precarious condition for the journey. Nearing Bethlehem, she went into labor. It is not for us to surmise if Jacob took the journey too rapidly and thus caused Rachel’s “hard labor”, but we do know that before she reached the place of ‘sustainment’ and ‘life’ (which morally ‘bread’ pictures), dear Rachel died delivering Benjamin.

Husbands, be aware when your wives are experiencing difficult times—whether spiritually, emotionally, or physically. If your marriage is to survive and bear the ‘fruit’ of joy and satisfaction, you must prayerfully and carefully bear responsibility for making sure your beloved wife is not ‘overburdened’. “*Husbands, dwell with them ... giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel*” (1 Pet. 3:7).

#### September 2007

“*Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan; Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite; ... And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz Esau’s son; and she bare to Eliphaz Amalek: these were the sons of Adah Esau’s wife*” (Gen. 36:2, 12).

What sorrow results from *divided affections*! Esau, having despised his birthright, displays contempt for his people (God’s chosen people) by marrying women from godless nations. His divided affections produced the sad fruit of the most implacable foe of God’s earthly people—Amalek—born of one of Esau’s sons.

We read of Amalek and his descendants: “*And the LORD ... will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven ... Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation*” (Exo. 17:14, 16).

Divided affections likewise wreak havoc in Christian marriages—specially in two vital areas: (1) the marriage union itself and (2), children produced from the marriage union. How necessary for each spouse to *daily* seek the Lord’s grace and help to maintain purity, love and unity in their marriage!

God’s Word is plain as to husband and wife maintaining faithfulness and love for each other. “*Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. As a lovely hind and a graceful roe, let her breasts satisfy thee at all times: be thou ravished continually with her*

*love*” (Prov. 5: 18, 19). Sadly, the world in which we live is so morally corrupted that even Christians may become dissatisfied with the affections of their spouse. As marital love wanes, emotions may easily become attached to another. No marriage can sustain such divided affections on the part of either spouse. “*Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them*” (Col. 3:19). “*teach the young women ... to love their husbands*” (Titus 2:4).

We also would caution parents to not allow ‘favoritism’ in their feelings towards their children. Such feelings are subtle and destructive. A child quickly learns that ‘Dad’ appreciates older brother more than himself, or, ‘Mom’ is always complimenting younger sister, while criticizing an older daughter. Kids notice!

Each child is a unique, special, very precious treasure entrusted to Christian parents from the Lord. Parents must express equal love to each child. There is no room for *divided affections* in happy marriages.

#### October 2007

“*And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him*” (Gen. 37:4).

Jealousy is terrible in whatever sphere of life it is allowed, working havoc and ruin. Medical studies show that a jealous spirit, allowed to continue, eventually produce serious medical problems.

Jealously is especially tragic when allowed to fester and grow in marriage for this precious union simply cannot survive spousal jealousy any more than Joseph was able to fend off the wicked actions of his brothers caused by their jealous hatred of him.

Marital jealousy may not always relate to physical unfaithfulness (adultery) though, sadly, that is a prime cause (see Numbers 5:14-30). It may also, however, have to do with ‘perceptions’—one spouse is perceived as demanding and receiving more in the marriage union than the other receives or can give. It may have to do with finances or things—envying others who have more and thus becoming dissatisfied with a husband who cannot give what his wife perceives other wives have.

How solemn to remember that Jehovah was stirred in jealousy against His beloved people and brought solemn judgments on them. Why? Because they turned from loving worship of Him who choose them to the worship of idols (see Ezk. 8:3 as one example).

Perhaps the greatest antidote for marital jealousy is something each can give as much of to their partner as they wish—time and attention! We perhaps see this in application when the apostle writes to the Corinthians. They had plenty of ‘heart’ and ‘time’ for the things of this world. Thus, becoming unfaithful to the Lord, they fell into grievous sins. Paul writes: “*For I am jealous over you with godly*

*jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*” (2 Cor. 11:2). Husbands and wives, give yourselves, your time, your heart fully to your spouse!

### November 2007

“... *Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite...*” (Gen. 38:1,2).

There are three phrases found in this passage which contain moral warnings that if not heeded in Christian courtships and marriages will surely produce confusion and heartache as Judah experienced. Take heed that the precious institution of marriage, and courtship which leads to it, not be damaged and great dishonor done to our Lord Jesus Christ.

(1) “*Judah went down from his brethren*”.

The world in which we live is on a steep, slippery downward moral decline. Open sin, moral abomination, unspeakable lust and depravity now characterize the once Christianized Western world. Further, such corruption and lust leading to moral disaster in peoples’ lives as well as divorce in over 50% of marriages is now considered a perfectly normal, acceptable life-style.

Judah followed a morally downward path. In doing so he had to leave *his brethren*—those who might picture to us spiritual principles. The Children of Israel were God’s chosen people and it was only through them that the true God was known. Abraham, their great grand father, had walked by faith as ‘*friend of God*’. All this precious heritage Judah morally left when he *went down* to the world.

Today the world still allures Christians away from the tenets of *the faith*, leading unwary believers in its corrupt downward path—one that rejects obedience to Christ and loses His blessings in life.

(2) “*Turned in to a certain Adullamite*”

Judah’s downward path brought him into a fellowship that opened a door to forming a union with the world. In this he reminds us of the young man in Proverbs who is characterized as ‘*void of understanding*’ (see Prov. 7:7,8). How often Christians take up with the ways of the world only to find that they become entangled in fellowship and associations with the world and its corrupt habits.

(3) “*Saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite*”

Having become a friend of the world it was not long before Judah saw a woman of the world and formed a marriage union with her—one that was to bring him heartache and shame. May Christians soberly and prayerfully heed these warnings!

### December 2007

“*And it came to pass after these things, that his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me ... Joseph went into the house to do his business;*

*and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment ... he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out*” (Gen. 39:7-12).

What tragic disasters multitudes of marriage unions have experienced because of moral infidelity! Adultery, so rampant today, brings an added danger for Christian couples—the ‘danger of complacency’. Western culture has cast aside Biblical principles. ‘Family’, marriage’ and ‘parental’ responsibilities as taught in the Bible are no longer used as primary moral guides for society. One terrible result is that marital infidelity is now ‘expected’ and ‘accepted’ in Western culture, just as it is in many other godless cultures. It is considered just one of many ‘common’ problems all married couples face. Using the ‘slang’ language of North American society, we are plainly being told that ‘adultery is no big deal’.

Joseph knew better.

His God-fearing, tender heart knew that marital infidelity was a ‘very big deal’—a most solemn sin against God; “*how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*” (Gen. 39:9).

Adultery breaks a sacred promise to be true to one another, destroys a God ordained union by an act which casts ‘*asunder*’ what ‘*God hath joined together*’.

Virtually every segment of society is poisoned with immorality in turn dulling Christian senses. Employment puts men and women in constant close contact, a potential breeding ground for disaster. Fashion industry’s clothing styles for women are designed to be revealing. The entertainment field constantly creates an atmosphere of lust, whether verbal, visual or by written word. Sports has become grossly immoral and violent. Advertising, based on lust and covetousness, broadcasts its hedonistic messages from billboards, store windows, magazines and multitudes of other sources. Even the US military has been criticized for allowing ‘pornography’. In such a corrupt, poisoned culture, what can Christian couples do to keep their marriage union pure, secure, and thriving?

Do what Joseph did.

“*...he hearkened not to her, to lie with her and to be with her...*” (Gen. 39:10, JND Trans.). “*flee these things ... follow ... righteousness*” (1 Tim. 6:11)