

“And He Loved Her”

Meditations on Marriage
from the
“Christian Shepherd”

—2008—

January 2008

“*But think on me ... and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me ...*” (Gen. 40:14).

A variety of normal life circumstances cause times of separation between husband and wife—perfectly right and normal separations such as daily work, domestic errands and a host of other things common to happy marriage unions.

Our verse, though not recording a plea between a husband and wife, provides a precious and important principle for maintaining a happy, vibrant, joy-filled marriage. There are, we may say, three moral principles which might be applied gleaned in this verse for the blessing of marriages.

(1) “*think on me*”—though the cares and responsibilities of life require that our minds often are involved and thinking about other things, what a sweet request when heard, we may say, from the lips of a husband to his beloved. “Think on me” seems such an obvious thing for two who are happily married, in love with each other, and longing for each other’s companionship. Yet we do well to realize the subtlety of this world can quickly, if allowed, dull the heart longing for one’s marital companion.

Though many of these things are necessary, the world morally is flooded with gross immorality that pervades every fabric of daily life. No doubt the enemy of our souls seeks to use such ‘subtle’ immorality to deaden the heart affection for one’s spouse. May it be the constant occupation of the heart of each spouse to be found ‘thinking’ with joy about their beloved. What a happy guard against anything that might deaden necessary between husband and wife.

(2) “*Shew kindness*”—There are a myriad of ways in which husbands and wives may daily show kindness to their spouse. Love will always think of ways to create acts of ‘kindnesses’ for each spouse—those ‘little things’ which ‘knit’ hearts closer together.

(3) “*make mention of me*”—The world in which we live thrives on constantly prying into the intimacy that marks marriages or romantic unions of well known people. Such occupation is terribly defiling, and if allowed, may affect Christian marriages. Husbands and wives need to guard against getting caught up in such abominable corruption. When a spouse spends time thinking of the sweetness and preciousness of their loved one, affections are warmed and strengthened.

February 2008

“*Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:.*” (Gen. 41:9).

The ‘door’ to happiness and blessing in every area of life is linked to admitting at times, ‘I’m wrong’. The butler had been kindly treated by Joseph when in prison and Joseph implored him not to forget him when the butler was back in Pharaoh’s favor. Sadly the butler forgot

Joseph. Happily, circumstances arose that reminded him of Joseph and the butler did not cover his failure. Owing his mistake resulted in blessing and preservation from famine for all Egypt.

Such willingness to admit when one is wrong cannot fail to bring increased, happy confidence in each marriage partner. Furthermore, when a spouse is wrong, willing admission strengthens love and marriage union as well.

This is not to suggest that a happy marriage is one where husband and wife are constantly occupied in recounting their personal failures to each other. Rather it’s *the spirit* of willingness to say ‘I was wrong’ (instead of hiding mistakes from the marriage partner) that strengthens the marriage unions by building vitally important confidence.

Honest admission of failure leading to joy and blessing is continually found recorded in Scripture. The prodigal son in Luke 15 admitted that he was wrong, turned around to go back to the father’s house only to find the father right there with love, shoes, ring and the best robe all for the repentant son.

The publican of Luke 18, so overcome with a sense of his sinfulness and failure would not lift up his eyes to heaven confessing his sin and failure. The Lord said he went down to his house “*justified*” (this is not recorded of the Pharisee who rested in his goodness).

‘I was wrong’—some of the vitally important words that build strong, lasting marriages.

March 2008

“*And they came into the land of Canaan, to Jacob their father, and told him all that had befallen them, saying*” (Gen. 42:29).

Joseph’s brethren were not aware at that time of the heart and ways of Joseph who was working to bring the full, happy restoration of his brethren to himself. All they could see was that circumstances seemed against them and they were afraid. Yet in our verse we see a wonderful work beginning in their hearts—one which would eventually lead to full repentance for their wickedness, full restoration to Joseph, and full satisfaction as the recipients of his gracious care. The *work* displays its sweet beginnings in these few words: “*and told him [Jacob, their father] all that had befallen them*”. No longer were they hiding things from Jacob as they had when selling Joseph into slavery. Now all was out in the open, even though Jacob expressed unhappiness that they had even told the ‘ruler’ of their brother Benjamin.

This simple phrase contains a vitally important principle for building and maintaining stable, joyful and lasting marriages—*the importance of husband and wife hiding nothing* (bad or good) *from their spouse*. Where an atmosphere of loving confidence exists between husband and wife, each can without fear openly share all that has

befallen them (even though their actions may have been the cause of the problem).

A wise spouse will (like wise parents) never make it difficult for their loved one to open their hearts about every circumstance. This requires confidence in both that there will not result angry outbursts, heated accusations, or dire threats from the other partner (or, in the case of children, from parents). The spirit required in order that such not take place is frequently found at the conclusion of several New Testament epistles.

Two examples are: “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen*” (Rom. 16:24).

“*Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen*” (Gal. 6:18).

This precious phrase is found some 10 times in the epistles and the spirit of them is vital in every relationship of Christian life if it is to be open and happy. May husbands and wives also remember this admonition: “*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” (Eph. 4:32).

April 2008

“*And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: ...*” (Gen. 43:23)

Peace, no fear, treasure. Marriages marked by these wonderful characteristics remain strong, stable and thriving even during times of severe trials.

Peace

The Lord Jesus promised His disciples: “*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ...*” (Jn. 14:27) while the apostle tells us that “*...the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*” (Phpp. 4:7).

If our blessed God has assured His dear children of such divine peace, surely the bond of marriage ought to be a sphere of peace and joy on earth. Each partner is responsible for bringing attitudes and actions to the marriage union which will *make for peace* for we are to “*...follow after the things which make for peace, and things where-with one may edify another*” (Rom. 14:19). There is no room in happy marriages for actions which only serve to *steal* peace from this blessed union.

No Fear

Joseph’s brothers, though guilty of terrible sin against him hear words that must have sounded sweet beyond description—“*fear not*”. Dear husband, have you felt a lack of understanding of the pressures you face each day at work from your wife? What is your response to the one you promised to love and cherish all your life?—angry words or a loving, tender “*fear not*”? Dear wife, when your husband’s actions or words seem to just take you for granted do you find ways to ‘strike back’? Or does a

thoughtless action of your husband elicit a loving ‘fear not’ from you? No doubt, in all marriages such times will occur. May we never forget that any marriage which is based on *fear* rather than *love* just will not survive.

Treasures

What a wonderful thing for husbands and wives to ask themselves *each day*, ‘what *treasure* of love, joy and satisfaction can I give my beloved today’? A marriage union where this is the ‘normal’ daily desire of each partner to give to the other, will be the happiest and most satisfying of unions—one which the enemy of our souls will not be able to destroy. It is the essence of strong, stable and joyful marriages that increase in delight and love as the years go by.

May 2008

“*It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die.*” (Gen. 44:31).

Judah was well aware that if the brothers returned from Egypt to Jacob their father and his beloved youngest son Benjamin was not with them, their father would die of sorrow. The deep repentance and love of Judah’s heart caused him to plead with Joseph (whom he had not as yet recognized) to let him take the place of Benjamin as Joseph’s slave in Egypt, that his little brother might be set at liberty to go back to his father.

This very same principle is seen in divine perfection with our blessed Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane. When the Lord Jesus asked the band of Jews who they had come to take, the answer was “*Jesus of Nazareth*”. Our precious Saviour answered; “*I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.*”. The truly guilty were set free by the Spotless Victim who took their place and ours! No greater example of love and burden bearing can be found in Scripture. What a precious and vital principal for stable, happy marriages is presented here!

As in all spheres of life, the fabric of marriage is woven with an almost infinite number of threads—some perhaps not so important while others so vital and essential that if lacking, marriage will not be able to survive the trials and problems that commonly face all marriage unions.

Perhaps one of the most important ‘key’ threads in the fabric of happy, stable marriages is found in Gal. 6:2: “*Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*” It may be as simple as saying, “I’ll do that for you honey”. Or it may be as difficult as *silently thinking*, “I’ll take the blame and bear the consequence of what my beloved so thoughtlessly did”.

The bearing of others’ burdens in love was seen in our Lord Jesus in continual perfection in every step of His blessed pathway. We see it here with dear Judah also who, for the sake of his father’s grief, was willing to remain a slave in Egypt that his younger brother Benjamin, who appeared to

be guilty, might be set at liberty to go home to his father.

How strong, how happy, how blessed the marriage where both husband and wife are marked by such a sweet attitude! May spouses truly from the heart repeat the words of the dear apostle Paul: “*I will very gladly spend and be spent for you!*”!

June 2008

“*And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you...Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.*” (Gen. 45:4,15).

Words and actions—essential and indispensable for every relationship of life! One cannot think of a more precious, beautiful life relationship than marriage. At the same time one can not think of a relationship more easily and permanently affected (marred or strengthened) by words and actions. The words and actions of Joseph towards his guilty brethren recorded in Gen. 45 provide very precious and vitally important principles for maintaining strong, vibrant and happy marriages.

No one, seeing Joseph’s tears and yearning, could have entertained a moment’s doubt as to the reality and depth of his heart love for his brethren who had treated him so wrongly. How he longed that they might draw near to him, that they might know his love for them. His heart could never be satisfied if the slightest distance or breach remained between them.

Dear husband/wife is your spouse daily assured of your deep longing that always and in all circumstances, he or she ever ‘draw near’ you? Be on constant guard against anything that might cause the slightest breach, distance or discontent between you and your spouse. A thoughtless word, an inconsiderate action, a lack of interest shown in even the smallest detail of the other’s life—oh! how many deeming small things might signal the beginning of a tragic breach!

How precious to think of our blessed Lord Jesus who is *Saviour of the body* (Eph. 5:23). Not one thing that affects His blood bought bride ever escapes His loving interest and His perfect care.

There is something yet more in Joseph’s actions. Surely Joseph’s words—“*Come near to me, I pray you*”—ought to have sounded comforting in his fearful brothers’ ears. Their guilty consciences, however, hindered them from enjoying the sweet nearness for which Joseph so yearned. But love has *long patience* and love *never fails* (1 Cor. 13, JND trans). Joseph’s heart opens more as he speaks. Then all his loving, comforting words are sealed with action—he kissed them all, weeping on them in love for them. Now all their doubt was now erased. They knew they were loved—there could be no doubt.

Husbands and wives, words are not enough. Beauti-

ful, strong, joyful marriages need *words and actions!*

July 2008

“*And Jacob rose up from Beersheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.*” (Gen. 46:5).

The trip from Jacob’s dwelling in Canaan (Beersheba) to the land of Goshen in Egypt is approximately 200 miles—an arduous, wearisome distance specially for those who had to walk. Pharaoh, anxious that Joseph’s family be protected from famine and safely settled near Joseph in Egypt displayed great courtesy and care for the family of Jacob by sending *wagons* to *carry* their wives and little ones over those difficult miles to Goshen.

How important that husbands morally show this same kind of loving courtesy and care in every facet of the marriage union. In 1 Pet. 3:7 the Word of God instructs husbands in this way: “*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered*”.

It is not only in the physical sphere that such loving care and courtesy be shown to the wife. Husbands ought to show this care to their beloved wives in *spirit and soul and body* (1 Thess. 5:23). The Lord Jesus is spoken of as *Saviour of the body* (Eph. 5:23). While this reminds us of the eternal redemption He accomplished through His shed blood at Calvary, we too know that He is daily caring for and directing every detail of the church He loved and gave Himself for.

How wonderful when a dear husband’s heart is engaged in doing all possible to provide for the comfort of his beloved spouse. One *wagon* he may use might be simply fixing a leaking water faucet. Another *wagon* may be taking time after a busy, tiring day at his work to sit with his beloved, attentively listening to how her day went—to the concerns she has. Another very important, precious kind of *wagon* is that a husband would eagerly and joyfully share what he has gleaned from Scripture—that which has brought joy to his heart, settled a question, or brought a sweet meditation of Jesus to him. Such moral *wagons* are of the utmost importance in caring for and providing for the comfort of his beloved wife.

Marriages where such *wagons* are commonly used for the comfort of a spouse are strong, joyful marriages, thriving in an atmosphere of delight.

August 2008

“*And Joseph maintained his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to the number of the little ones.*” (Gen. 47:12, JND Trans).

What a tender, loving, care Joseph displayed for his father Jacob, his brethren and their families—the *little ones!*

This sweet account, however, is but a little picture of the infinite love and care the precious Saviour has for His beloved church—the church that *He loved and gave Himself for*. The sweetly familiar passage in Ephesians 5; “*He is the saviour of the body*” (v. 23), continually reminds us that our blessed Lord not only died and shed His blood to redeem the church, but that He perfectly *maintains* (‘cares for’) her, *His body*. Not one thing needed in her wilderness journey is kept back—our Lord’s perfect love, wisdom and power supplies all and thus, daily, is *the Saviour of the body* as well.

A truly happy Christian marriage cannot be *nourished* or *maintained* without God’s wisdom being the guide. A husband’s love for his wife may cause him to give her many, many things she *wants*. Perhaps, however, some of those things, though truly given in love, are not in her best interests. We are told “... *my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*” (Phpp. 4:19). The Lord perfectly knows what we *need* but in perfect love does not always give us what we may *want*.

One very reliable translation of the Bible uses the words “*And Joseph nourished*” while another excellent translation (quoted above) uses “*maintained*”. In either case the word used suggests the necessity of wisdom in the *kind*, the *amount* and the *timing* of Joseph’s *nourishing*. We may be certainly sure that not one thing his beloved family needed was kept back from them. We may also be sure that Joseph, in wisdom, fully provided for their *needs*, not their *wants*.

Such wisdom (see 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:9; Jas. 1:5) used by a husband or wife in providing for (‘nourishing’/ ‘maintaining’) their spouse is an absolutely vital key to enjoying a strong, happy marriage.

The Apostle Paul declares; “*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). The *all things* are the *nourishing* our Father, in perfect love and wisdom, gives. May husbands and wives likewise *nourish* each other.

September 2008

“*And Joseph said to his father, They are my sons, whom God has given me here. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, to me, that I may bless them.*” (Gen. 48:9, JND Translation).

Dear Jacob, sick and about to die, desired to bestow blessing on the two sons of his beloved Joseph. Jacob knowingly selected Ephraim, the younger of Joseph’s sons, for the first and greatest blessing that normally would belong to the firstborn son (Mannaseh). When Joseph saw what his father was doing, he was ‘*displeased*’ and tried to change his father’s action to suit what he thought right.

Jacob graciously explained to his son Joseph, that

he was well aware of what he was doing—that both sons would be blessed and would be a blessing to others in a coming day, but still, Ephraim was to receive the blessing of the firstborn son. How good to read that dear Joseph displayed no further unhappiness or argument regarding his father Jacob’s actions—accepting from the Lord what took place.

It is vital that this same spirit be cultivated and displayed between husband and wife if a marriage is to thrive and increase in love, joy, and stability. Often circumstances confront a marriage that do not work out as one spouse may have expected or desired.

At times a spouse will think that their partner might have done things differently with better or more pleasing results (this may often be the case!). When such circumstances are experienced in marriage, two things which Jacob and Joseph did provide wisdom and wonderful healing and strengthening principles for the marriage union.

(1) When Joseph displayed unhappiness at the actions of his father, Jacob did not ‘retaliate’ in anger or frustration at Joseph’s attitude. He displayed a *meek and lowly* spirit though not changing his action. (see Matt. 11:29). He was meek and gentle, but firm.

(2) In honoring his father, Joseph did not continue to fuss, argue or debate about the mistake he felt his father had made. “*It is an honour for a man to cease from strife; but every fool rusheth into it*” (Prov. 20:3, JND. Trans.). “*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered*” (1 Pet. 3:7). What a healthy, happy thing when husband and wife lovingly ‘listen’ to each other’s concerns.

October 2008

“*All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them*” (Gen. 49:28).

Though about to die, Jacob briefly and carefully rehearsed the various actions that had characterized his twelve sons lives. While there are many important prophetic aspects found in this chapter, what specially stands out morally is the complete openness of Jacob with each of his sons. He hides nothing of his sons’ actions, yet as guided by the Lord, Jacob still pronounced a future blessing for each one of the twelve.

We learn from this account the importance of openness between husbands and wives. Each partner will do things that hurt or perplex their spouse. These are not times for harsh criticism. Instead the wronged spouse can bring great blessing to the marriage by dealing openly with the problem, but in a loving spirit of *grace and truth*. Then

when settled it is time to ‘forgive and forget’.

November 2008

“And when Joseph’s brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him...now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him...his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: ... I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them” (Gen. 50:15–21).

Joseph’s brethren badly misjudged his affection for them; so much so that he wept, his heart broken by their unbelief in his love. Yet in beautiful condescending grace he twice reassures them that they have nothing to fear. Joseph did several things that provide important principles for misunderstandings that happen at times between husbands and wives.

(1) **He wept.** There could be no doubt of his love for them, nor could there be any doubt that their lack of confidence in him hurt deeply. Make sure that marital love need never be called in question.

(2) **He told them to ‘fear not’.** Though already forgiven for their treatment of Joseph, his brothers once again hear him speak those wonderful reassuring words. Husbands and wives should constantly reassure one another.

(3) **“I will nourish you, and your little ones”.** He reassures his brethren of his care and interest in them and all that is important to them. They can trust Joseph’s loving promise to provide for all their needs. It is vital too that a happy marriage be supported by words and deeds which display constant care and interest between husband and wife—in every detail of married life.

(4) **“He comforted them”.** Though wrong to think that Joseph would be angry and full of vengeance towards them, his brethren were really afraid. Joseph’s love for them brings them *comfort* rather than *rebuke*. In a happy, thriving marriage, husband or wife will need to comfort rather than rebuke their spouse—even though their spouse may have been wrong.

(5) He spoke **“kindly to them”.** Who can tell the value of a *kind* tone of voice, a *kind spirit*, and a *kind word* towards one who has erred? Very little is as important in building a strong marriage as a *kind* (rather than a *demanding*) spirit. “Be ye kind...”.

December 2008

“The song of songs, which is Solomon’s. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.” (Song of Songs 1:1,2).

These words contain a clear, simple message that is

very difficult to mistake and of the utmost importance to maintain in marriage. Strong, joyful marriages are based on truly being able to say—“*thy love is better than wine*”. In Scripture ‘wine’ often is used to picture natural joy. Marriages where the partners’ *love* for each other eclipses all other joys of life are unions that grow in delight and stability as the years pass.

In John 2 the Lord Jesus performed a miracle at a wedding—the first He did in Cana of Galilee. Normally the best wine was served first at these joyous feasts. Later however, as the ruler of the feast told the bridegroom; “...when men have well drunk, then the inferior; thou hast kept the good wine till now” (Jn. 2:10, JND Trans.).

At the very beginning, marriage is a time of great joy, delight, and excitement. Yet in our society today we all too often see that early love between husband and wife begin to wane—to *wax cold*. Then, tragically, the marriage ends in sorrow and separation.

Yet, where both spouses seek to honor the Lord, walking in obedience to His precious Word, they indeed find that as the years go by the joy of marital love gets better and better—indeed their love becomes morally the *best wine*.

How important then that the bride displays to her husband, not only on her wedding day, but throughout each day of married life—*thy love is better than wine*.

The husband, however, also has a very important *responsibility* towards his wife if he is to have the joy of hearing these precious words from her. The bride yearns for him, saying *Let him kiss me*. These are the some of the *first* words of this beautiful book. They are an expression of the bride’s desire that her husband’s actions show his deep love for her. It is the husband’s *actions* towards his wife that call forth those joyous words from her—*thy love is better than wine*.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25).

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

“...teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children” (Titus 2:4).