

“And He Loved Her”

Meditations on Marriage
from the
“Christian Shepherd”

—2010—

January 2010

“A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones” (Prov.12:4).

“The wisdom of women buildeth their house; but folly plucketh it down with her hands” (Prov.14:1, JND Trans.).

Virtue and wisdom!—what blessed, delightful and strong marriages result from the daily and diligent using these two vital elements presented in Scripture. Not only are they to be used by the husband, but the wife in her domestic sphere as well. In Proverbs 31, the worth of a *virtuous* woman is reckoned more valuable than many precious rubies. A virtuous woman is a treasure to her husband and a joy to all!

We find several Biblical meanings attached to *virtue* or *virtuous*. Depending on the context of the passage of Scripture, virtue may suggest ‘worth’, ‘power’, ‘fearlessness’, ‘industriousness’, ‘wealth’, or ‘moral goodness and purity’. All of these wonderful qualities, if diligently used by the wife (and husband as well!), produce immeasurable blessing and joy—principles that will maintain strong marriages.

The book of Ruth presents the young Moabitess widow as a *virtuous* woman—a striking attribution since her people were the despised, outcast race of Moab; a race forbidden by Mosaic law to enter into the congregation of Israel even to the tenth generation—meaning ‘never’ (Deut. 23:3). Ruth’s good commendation is all the more sublime because it was her future husband, the *honorable* Boaz, who told her; “...all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman” (Ruth 3:11).

God has provided special wisdom for the woman, a kind of wisdom not given the man. Her wisdom is to be used within the domestic sphere. This thought is also found in the New Testament where the Apostle Paul expresses his desire for young women: “I will therefore that the younger marry, bear children, rule the house, give no occasion to the adversary in respect of reproach” (J.N.D. Trans.). To *rule the house well* requires the use of special God-given wisdom.

A wise woman does not build a spiritually blessed marriage by natural intelligence. Prov. 14:1 is referring to one who diligently uses the special *wisdom of women* God has given. A foolish woman, though possessing great natural intelligence, is one who refuses to use this wisdom. Such folly will destroy her house and often, her marriage.

February 2010

“He that is slow to anger is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly” (Prov. 14:29 JND Trans.).

“A soft answer turneth away fury; but a grievous word stirreth up anger” (Prov 15:1, JND Trans.).

“Gentleness of tongue is a tree of life; but crookedness therein is a breaking of the spirit” (Prov. 15:4, JND Trans.).

We often read of Elijah in the mount and God’s tender dealings with his failing servant. “And He said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before Jehovah...Jehovah passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces

the rocks before Jehovah: Jehovah was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake: Jehovah was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire: Jehovah was not in the fire. And after the fire, a *soft gentle voice*” (1 Kngs 19:11,12, JND Trans.).

There are times in most all marriages when husband and wife may react to each other with a hasty spirit—with unkind, angry words. In circumstances where a *soft answer* and a *gentle tongue* would produce peace, healing and joy, a hasty, angry spirit is sure to bring sadness and breach between spouses.

How wonderfully this is illustrated with Elijah in the mount with God. God’s infinite power exhibited in the mighty wind, earthquake and fire might be deserved by His people’s disobedience (Elijah thought so!), but in divine grace the Lord shows Elijah the only spirit acceptable to Him in dealing with His beloved yet erring people—a *soft, gentle voice*. It is this character of communication and spirit between husband and wife that results in drawing them back together when some thoughtless, mistaken, or wrong act or word has caused a sad breach.

We see a similar thing with dear Jacob and Rachel. “Rachel...bare Jacob no children...and said unto Jacob, *Give me children, or else I die...Jacob’s anger was kindled against Rachel...*” (Gen. 30:1,2). How demanding and selfish are the words “*give me...or else*”. Worse yet the response of *anger*. What happiness and comfort would have resulted in their marriage had a *soft answer* been given to a demanding spirit. What joy and confidence would have resulted if Jacob had returned a gentle, loving and soft response to Rachel’s chaffed, inconsiderate spirit and demand. Marriages characterized by a *soft gentle voice* and *spirit* are lasting, joyful marriages.

March 2010

“Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife” (Prov.17:1).

“He that covereth transgression seeketh love; but he that bringeth a matter up again separateth very friends” (Prov.17:9, JND Trans.).

“He that hath knowledge spareth his words; and a man of understanding is of a cool spirit” (Prov.17:27, JND Trans.).

Undoubtedly those of us who are husbands (and those who are wives, as well!) have proven many times in our marriages, the truth and value of the principles set forth in the above verses.

With overall divorce rates in North America exceeding 50% of all marriages, something is obviously very wrong. A key principle of God’s Word both explains why this is so and grants wisdom to both marriage partners in their actions, interactions, and reactions to the vast multitude of threads which are daily woven into the fabric of *marriage*.

Newly married couples might feel it necessary to start life together possessing *very much* in material goods—financial wealth, a new home (the larger and fancier, the better), perhaps a new car or two, furniture, and etc. *This, in turn* leads to

the necessity of both marriage partners working full time jobs in order to pay off their debts. *This, in turn* leads to hectic lives with far too little time left to enjoy each other in peaceful quietness. *This, in turn* leads to unkind words, tensions, ill-temperers, chaffed spirits, and eventually, to constant strife. *This in turn* may lead to divorce.

We emphasize here that the material things mentioned are not, in themselves, bad or wrong. There may also be times when both husband and wife must work. If however, accumulating wealth and material *stuff* robs a marriage of love, joy, peace, and contentment, certainly it would be better to do without.

Our blessed God gives us simple principles which, if followed, will guide and support strong, happy marriages. Here are a few. Let's put them to use!

(1) *Be content with such things as ye have* (Heb. 13:5; 1 Tim. 6:8).

(2) *And above all things have fervent [love]...for [love] shall cover the multitude of sins* (1Pet. 4:8). *Love...is not easily provoked* (1 Cor. 13:5).

(3) *seek peace, and pursue it* (1 Pet. 3:11).

(4) *refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile* (1Pet. 3:10).

April 2010

"A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones" (Prov.12:4).

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies" (Prov.31:10).

"...for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman" (Ruth 3:11).

Three words seem to be specially emphasized in these verses: *virtuous*, *rottenness*, and *rubies*. *Virtue* has sometimes been described as *moral integrity* or *moral courage*. How very blessed the husband whose wife is known by her public testimony as a *virtuous woman*.

We find this moral integrity characterizing a variety of dear sisters mentioned in the Bible. *"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant [minister] of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her...and...that ye assist her...for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also"* (Rom. 16:1,2).

"Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did" (Acts 9:36).

"...[Apollos] began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26).

These are some of the vast multitude of dear sisters who excelled [and are excelling] in *virtue* as supporting, aiding, giving, serving; not only in practical ways, but in expounding the Word of God in a seemly way.

A wife whose *moral courage* translates into such actions each day in her marriage and her home is indeed the crowning

glory of her husband. She is a joy, blessing and delight to all those who know her. Such a dear sister, abounding in the work of the Lord, (a work which begins with her husband and home), is like a rare, valuable jewel—a ruby of great price.

One of the most beautiful examples of a Godly, virtuous woman is contained in the account of Ruth the Moabitess. She was obedient, diligent, morally upright, generous and above all had come to a true faith in the God of Israel—indeed she was a virtuous woman who won the heart of Boaz. That we find her in the lineage of our blessed Lord Jesus is, we may say, the ultimate blessing for this virtuous woman. Dear husbands! if your wife is a virtuous woman, thank God, and show appreciation for her.

May 2010

"Gentleness of tongue is a tree of life; but crookedness therein is a breaking of the spirit" (Prov. 15:4).

"A joyful heart maketh a cheerful countenance; but by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken" (v 13).

"Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health for the bones" (Prov. 16:24).

"A joyful heart promoteth healing; but a broken spirit drieth up the bones" (Prov.17:22).

"The spirit of a man sustaineth his infirmity; but a broken spirit who can bear?" (Prov. 18:14).

(All above Scriptures from J.N.D. Translation)

Among Christians, regarding the marriage union, the husband's *headship* and the wife's *subjection* to her husband is frequently stressed. This indeed is an important Scriptural truth which is clearly presented throughout God's Word (see especially Eph. 5).

Yet, as we are prone to do in so many things, we tend to become unbalanced in emphasizing the husband's *authority* and *headship*. At the same time the importance of *caring for*, *cherishing*, *comforting* and not holding a *bitter spirit* towards our wives seems to be stressed less and possibly, forgotten.

How absolutely vitally important dear husbands that we understand *and act upon* the truth that God holds us (husbands) responsible, not only in *headship* but in, as we may say, *heartship*.

The verses quoted above are very clear as to the sorrow, danger, and results of a husband acting *only* in the roll of an *authoritarian head* over his wife while giving little expression of tender loving kindness. It is altogether possible for a husband's unbalanced conduct as his wife's head to be the very thing that leads to her *spirit being broken*.

Notice the words used in the above verses to describe what protects from a *broken spirit*—*gentleness of tongue*, *a cheerful countenance*, *pleasant words*, and *a joyful heart*. These beautiful characteristics *will never hinder* true godly headship. Rather, where a husband in heart-love for his wife makes sure that his actions, ways and words as *head* are characterized by these happy qualities, the marriage union will grow in joy and

strength. In such a joyful marriage, both partners will be happy, secure and contented as their love for each other deepens and grows.

A broken spirit in marriage leads to a broken heart and finally to the tragedy of a broken marriage.

“A broken spirit, who can bear?” (Prov.18:14).

June 2010

“Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than a house full of feasting with strife.” (Prov. 17:1).

“He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth [very] friends” (17:9).

“The beginning of contention is [as] when one letteth out water; therefore leave off strife before it become vehement” (17:14).

Our verse seems so clear that there is little need to explain its beautiful and vitally important principles. When applied to marriage, the principles are equally clear and equally important.

A joyful, peaceful marriage (that is, a marriage without aggravation and argument), though it may have very little of this world’s goods (“*a dry morsel*”), is much to be preferred rather than a couple beginning life together in the wealthiest of circumstances, yet lacking the love and grace to walk together in tranquility, overlooking each other’s faults.

This same wonderful chapter contains two very important principles for a happy marriage—two principles that will guard against a marriage filled with strife. What blessings and joy will be enjoyed in marriage to the couple that heed them!

Often in marriage, a husband or wife may do or say something which offends or hurts their loved one. Is it always necessary to point out such ‘transgressions’ to the ‘guilty’ offender? Often, things that have been done or said which caused offense are best left “*covered*”. Quietly covering and bearing a wrong rather than making an issue of it surely will result in the joy of growing love and a peaceful marriage.

There is one *very destructive action* which ought to be very carefully guarded against ever being allowed in marriage. Practicing this ruinous behavior is almost sure to completely destroy a happy marriage union. Dear husbands and wives, don’t *publicize* the faults and shortcomings of your beloved.

If there are issues that must be confronted, in grace lovingly and prayerfully talk to each other and above all be in much prayer before the Lord. Perhaps the Lord will provide godly Christians who can give wise, Scriptural counsel. But *the failures of your spouse should never be the subject of general public chitchat.*

A small drip of leaking water may indicate a torrent about to break loose. When something which might lead to strife in marriage occurs, initially it might be best to *leave it alone!*

July 2010

“It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house—It is better to dwell

in a desert land. than with a contentious and irritable woman” (Prov.21:9,19).

“Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches” (Prov. 23:3,4).

Contention, irritation, and outright anger between husband and wife should not mark a Christian marriage. At times, however, Husbands’ and wives’ actions or spirits, accumulating ‘stuff’ including beautiful homes, wealth, and other displays of prosperity are valueless if they are the background of martial strife.

Gentleness, graciousness, forgiving spirits; how important that these are the foundation of marriage! There are many references to acting and speaking with gentle, gracious spirits recorded in the Bible. Married couples do well to prayerfully consider them.

“The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious...” (Ecc.10:12). “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man [every one]” (Col. 4:6).

Our Lord is the supreme example of this spirit: *“And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth...” (Luke 4:22).*

When situations arise in marriages which might lead to contention, arouse irritability, or open the door to a burst of angry frustration, it is important that *both* husband and wife use the **3 precious principles** found in Prov. 23:3,4. The result will be joy, satisfaction and a strong, happy, vibrant marriage.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...” (Prov. 9:10). It is through a sober, reverent respect and desire to please the Lord that His wisdom to guide in *building* a strong marriage, is found (“*house*”).

“...understanding of the times, to know...ought to do...” (1 Chr.12:32). When two are building their marriage, circumstances that older generations never faced, arise. God’s unchanging, living, Word provides *understanding* that serves to *establish* happy marriages in these times (as it always does in *any* time).

Knowledge comes from prayer and communion with the Lord. *Knowledge* is *understanding* how to apply God’s *wisdom* in every trial or circumstance of marriage. What wonderful marriages, every moment of which is filled with *precious riches*. Such a marriage is a truly *wealthy house!*

August 2010

“The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him” (Prov. 31).

It is important that Christian men who are husbands ask themselves this question in view of this wonderful last chapter of Proverbs. ‘**Am I a Proverbs 31 husband?**’

A Godly wife sometimes is referred to as a ‘*Proverbs 31 wife*. Many Christian husbands have much to thank our God for in providing a wife who displays in her daily life the won-

derful qualities mentioned. Surely we husbands who are blessed with such a precious companion can say ‘amen’ to God’s Word which tells us; “*whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing*”.

Often in Proverbs we find a *father’s instruction* to his son. Here, however we have the instructions of a mother to her son. King Lemuel whose name means ‘*for God*’ and possibly refers to King Solomon, passes on some of these precious and wise lessons taught by his mother. Notice that her instructions begin, not with the priceless qualities of a Godly wife, but rather with the wisdom needed by a godly king. Surely these instructions characterize a “*virtuous man*”.

1) Being fully self-occupied with the natural joys of this world (wine); being characterized by the moral actions and ways of the world (ways that destroy kings); making decisions or judging according to its unloving and uncaring attitudes towards the poor and helpless—such things do not characterize a *man of worth* and *virtue*, nor a *Godly, virtuous husband*.

2) Compassion and care for those who are ‘hurting’ ought to mark a Godly husband. A Godly husband not only will feel compassion, but he will seek ways to provide rejoicing for those ready to *die*—morally that is bringing joy to those whose faith has waned. “*Strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die*” (Rev.3:2).

3). Willingness to stand with those who have been falsely accused (specially the *household of faith*). Understand the the sufferings and difficulties of the poor and needy. The *virtuous husband* not only *feels sorry for such*, but by his actions, takes their side in providing the needed help whenever he is able to do so, directed by the Spirit of God. Earnest prayer is very important to receiving needed wisdom.

May it be so with each one of us who are husbands that we are found living and acting in such a way that each beloved wife can refer to their spouse as a “*Proverbs 31 husband*”!

September 2010

“*She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple...Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come*”. (Prov. 31:22,25).

This chapter of the precious Word of God presents, we may say, a wonderful checklist for dear sisters who desire to be God-honoring wives whose marriages and families are richly blessed by God.

While each virtue listed here is of profit in forming and enjoying a truly happy, satisfied marriage union, our verses are specially important in view of the corruption and immorality which has flooded all segments of Western culture in the 21st century.

It is vitally important that a virtuous wife have an understanding of the times in which we live. Today many more women employees occupy the work place than in the past. And as a general rule, those women who work in the corporate environment are expected to dress and look their best. But women’s fashions today have become immodest—even seduc-

tive. Because of this, women’s workplace garments often are the catalyst which sparks an adulterous, immoral relationship between male and female workers.

In spite of all this, a faithful Christian husband (or wife, where she finds it necessary to work outside the home), walking in dependence on the Lord, showing by the way he works and by the manner of his life which honors the Lord, will be spared from the open invitations to engage in immoral actions with female workers. Joseph became the target of Potiphar’s unfaithful wife. We are not told in God’s Word that Joseph cast his eyes on her, but rather, she cast her eyes upon him and sought to seduce him into an illicit relationship with herself. Joseph held fast in the fear of God and refused her advances even though her lies were believed, and he was cast into prison though completely innocent of wronging his master.

Dear wives, please understand (as those having an *understanding of the times*) the importance of not allowing yourself to become unkempt and untidy looking when your beloved husband returns home after a spending a long day of work in the midst of similar circumstances to those which Joseph faced. Be sure dear Christian wives, no matter how busy you are with necessary homemaking and family duties, that your appearance and apparel, like the virtuous wife of Prov.31, displays Christian dignity, purity and strength.

October 2010

“*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).

“*Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*” (Matt.19:6).

“*Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created*” (Gen.5:2).

A horrible scourge has overtaken once Christian North America. As God, the Bible, the Deity of Jesus Christ has been systematically pushed out of every aspect of North American culture, so the destruction of God’s institutions has flooded these lands.

Satan is increasingly active in destroying any union or sphere of blessing God has ordained. He has instituted marriage, declaring that one man and one woman, when they are married, become *one flesh*. The enemy of our souls hates every vestige of marriage that God has given for the joy and pleasure of mankind. Far more solemn is the marriage union as a most beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and His beloved blood bought bride, the church. How Satan hates this!

The mad rush of men and women to experience some fleeting pleasure at any cost, has been one of Satan’s most effective tools in his all too successful attempt to destroy the beauty and significance of this sacred institution.

Christians must admit that the wide variety of entertain-

ment, sports, literature, even the political and business realms have all been twisted to often focus on some aspect of sexual depravity. Those who are put forward as ‘role models’ and ‘heroes’ in these various spheres are vile examples of sensuality and immorality.

The marriage union is often no longer seen as a lifetime commitment in 21st century culture. Many married couples stay together only until some more alluring person is found by one of the spouses.

Sadly, it is the children who are made to pay the most terrible emotional price for such uncontrolled parental passions. A couple who decided to get divorced told their two sons that they would buy an “X-Box®” to make up to them for their sadness.

Such parental infidelity which injures children reminds us of Christ’s solemn words: “*It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones*” (Luke 17:2).

November 2010

“I therefore...beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Eph 1:4,5).

Doubtless, most every day of our lives some various circumstances happen that cause frustration and show how quickly we can lose our patience. All the morning ‘rush hour’ traffic in lanes on either side are rapidly passing you. The driver of the very slow moving car just in front is deep in conversation on a cell phone, oblivious to the long line of traffic they are holding up. The long traffic light at the busy intersection changes from green to orange just as you finally get there. But then it turns red while the car in front speeds up to get through. You get to wait.

Impatient?

How about the dear wife who has labored and toiled most of the day cleaning the kitchen, the bathrooms, dusting, vacuuming, mopping and polishing the tile and wood floors, picking up the pile of clothing her husband left lying in the floor in various piles. She just finishes as her husband who has been mowing the yard and working in the garden, comes walking into the sparkling clean home without stopping to remove his dusty shoes or brush the grass and weed clippings off his clothing.

Frustrated?

How about the dear husband who has spent his ‘day off’ from work faithfully toiling to complete what is sometimes referred to as a ‘honey do’ list. His fishing poles, bicycle, running shoes, and assorted other ‘pastime’ equipment, all remain untouched as, one by one, he diligently finishes each of the projects his loved spouse wants completed. Finally, in the evening, having completed all tasks, a weary husband comes inside to be greeted by his irritated wife: “Why did you take so long to get those things done? I wanted to go out to eat this evening, but now its too late!”

Offended?

It’s these things that not only ‘test’ a marriage, but where

the sweet spirit spoken of in our verse is allowed to rule the heart, and where love for one another is the motivating factor in marriage, it becomes stronger and increasingly joyful.

“...With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love”

December 2010

“And it came to pass after these things, that his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me” (Gen:39:7).

The account of Joseph’s experience with Potiphar’s wife who repeatedly tried to seduce him into committing wickedness, contains vitally important and sobering principles that both partners in a marriage union need to prayerfully consider.

In 21st century culture it is common for men and women to work together. A Christian finding themselves working in such circumstances must be much before the Lord to be preserved from moral traps and pitfalls which exist. It is especially important that dear wives who do not work understand the constant moral pressure and seductive atmosphere which her husband may daily face in his work.

We find in Proverbs the characteristics of the “strange woman” who seeks to seduce men she may work with. She “*flattereth with her words*”, her “*lips*” are inviting, covered with feigned sweetness, and her “*bosom*” is willingly used to attract and entice a man to commit immorality with her.

Dear wives, when your husband comes home from work does he hear soft, gentle words of love and appreciation? Are your lips covered with a sweetness just for him, a kind of sweetness impossible for him to find with anyone else? Does he find that you, the one he loves, have taken time to prepare yourself for his return, watching for his coming with eager delight?

Sometimes a dear wife assumes that it is her husband’s responsibility to keep himself from the moral temptations of the work place—that she has no part in that. It is true that each spouse is responsible to keep themselves pure, preserving themselves in every way for their loved one. How wise however, the wife (and husband as well) who by her actions, words and physical care of herself, maintains the joy and excitement that marked her wedding day!

Another principle that is of absolutely vital importance is that husband and wife must not allow themselves to be ‘regularly’ be apart for long periods of time. Even seemingly ‘good’ activities that are regularly allowed to separate husband and wife can be very damaging to a happy marriage. When was it that Potiphar’s wife was most forceful in seeking to seduce Joseph into committing immorality with her? It was when Potiphar was away, evidently for an extended period of time.

