

“And He Loved Her”

Meditations on Marriage
from the
“Christian Shepherd”

—2011—

January 2011

Ed. Note: The following letter was written by a young sister, one of several who responded to a young brother's request to write their thoughts about Christian men and Christian marriage. Quite sobering and heart stirring, we believe its message has value for *all* to read. May beloved young Christian men and women be specially stirred when reading this young sister's anonymous communication and plea to young Christian men. (All participants have been kept anonymous. The following response has been slightly adapted).

"My Dear Brother (who may one day be my husband),

"I am praying for you, and I am looking for you. It is not easy, and if I have found you I do not yet know it. I will not lie. I am frustrated in my search. I look for you in the Church among my blood-bought redeemed brothers. I do not know why you are so hard to find. I have yet to meet more than just a handful of truly spiritual men from amongst you that seem fit to lead me, to love me—a reflection of how Christ loves the Church.

"Are you out there? Are you resisting His call to be a man? Step up! Rid yourself of your childishness and idolatry. I cannot be led by such a boy, and I definitely won't take a second glance at you no matter how tall, dark, handsome, strong, and rich you may be. I strive to be a woman of God. My heart is with Him! I would rather not marry you, and live alone, than to follow after you with your foolish lusts and idols.

"If I am to be a *married woman* of God; *devoted and submissive* with my whole being to my dear husband, is it too much to ask that you lead me in righteousness, your gaze humbly fixed on Christ? If it is too much for you, I am going to venture to say that you do not worship the same Jesus that I do. He is worthy of all our worship! He is worthy to be followed; by me *and* by you! Only then can you lead me. If you say that you love me, but you do not follow Christ, then I am your idol. My dear [whoever you are], I beg you; please don't make me your idol. You cannot lead an idol. "*Keep yourself from idols*".

"I look for you mostly during the week. Sunday I try not to search much, because on Sunday I can be deceived by boys who, once a week, put on a 'spiritual man' mask, actually looking like they may be fit to lead. When I watch them leave however, I don't see you, my husband, among them. So many seem to go home and put their Bible on the shelf leaving it there until it is 'socially acceptable' to pick it up again. With their Bible they also leave Jesus, to collect dust there.

"If I were to ask them, they will smile and enthusiastically reply, "Oh yes! I am a Christian! I put God first!" but their actions reflect something entirely different. They give praise to God with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him. Do they even know God?

"They don't all go out and actually have sex, but they serve the idol of sex with their eyes. They silently behold, consume, and worship the immoral image of women presented by the world. Then they proclaim the name of Christ, trying to draw Christian women to them who they also behold, consume, and worship in just the same way.

"This is NOT how I will be led. My husband if you are out there and among these boys, come out! Grow up! Repent and take responsibility as a son of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Put down your video game controller, your movies, your magazines, your computer, your fishing pole [whatever you put before Christ]—put on your armor! Take your Bible and Jesus off the shelf and consume Him! Become fit to lead as a man of God. Flee your *youthful passions*. Pursue God. Until then you are no different than any perverted, unsaved male in the world, consuming with eager lust and passion that which caused the death of my Jesus—SIN.

"I do not expect you to be perfect, because I know you cannot be. You are not God. You are a follower of Him being conformed into the image of Jesus. I want you to lead me in that, I want to submit to you. I am not perfect either, nor am I God, but by His grace I do seek to follow Him with all my heart, soul, and mind. I desire to always glorify God fully, and so I will try to be the best, most Godly wife I can be. I will not love you first. I will love my Lord first.

"I pray that you will not love me first either. I want to live for the glory of God together with you. If I am going to be a hindrance to your spiritual walk with, and savoring of God, please do not seek to marry me. If you will be a hindrance to my walk with, and savoring of God, I will not marry you. Marriage is a beautiful, holy, joyful thing when lived the way God has intended. I want that. A Godly marriage spiritually requires a man and a woman, NOT a boy and a girl! Please, if you are to be my husband, be a man! Then I can be your woman and together we can fall on our faces before Christ with joy unspeakable.

Lovingly, His"

February 2011

Expectation

The following account carries a vitally important lesson for happy and lasting Christian marriages.

"I dashed out an exit at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago and ran towards a waiting cab. I was greeted by a cab driver sporting a three-day-old beard, an old baseball cap on his bald head and huge, muscular arms. As he tossed my bags into the trunk, he spotted my luggage tags and asked, "What kinda' doctor are you?"

"A veterinarian," I answered.

Instantly, his rugged, grizzled face broke into a broad

smile. This happens to veterinarians all the time because people love to talk about their pets.

The doors slammed, he put the car into gear and immediately began talking to me.

“My wife claims I love my toy poodle ‘Missy’ more n’ I love her. Just once, she tells me, she wants me to be as excited to see her as I am Missy when I git home from work. But Doc, it ain’t gonna happen!”

Pausing for a moment to see if I had any reaction, (but at that point I felt it would be wiser to remain a ‘listener’) the cab driver continued; “Ya’ see, when I get home from a long day in the cab, I’m dead tired. I been yelled at all day long and I’m lookin’ fer just a little love n’ appreciation. Well, I open the door to my house and there they are, ‘Ma’ and ‘Missy’, both lookin’ at me.

“Ma’s got a scowl on her face, ready to tear into me ‘bout somthin’ I fergot ta’ do or something I din’t do right. Always has a complaint of some kind.

“Now Missy—well she’s shaking all over she’s so happy ta’ see me. She’s got a grin on her face so wide, she could eat a banana sideways! Now which of them two you think I’m gonna run to first?

“Fer’ the next 15 minutes I’m the most important person in the world to Missy. I get 15 minutes of fame n’ love with no complaints or unhappy grumblin’.”

“I nodded my head in agreement. I understood his point very well. He did love his wife, but he needed fifteen minutes of guiltless joy and appreciation from someone. ‘Missy’ gave that to him, ‘Ma’ did not.”

“*A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse...Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits*” (S of S 4:12,16). Dear Christian wife, what did your husband experience today when he opened the door after coming home to you from work?

March 2011

Ed Note: The Jan. 2011 issue contained a young sister’s rhetorical response to Christian young men who had asked young sisters what they looked for in a young man they might consider as a future husband.

This issue contains a condensed and adapted rhetorical answer from a young brother expressing his desires and frustrations in looking for a godly young woman who might be his future wife. (*Please note that these letters have been condensed and adapted for this publication. All names have been kept anonymous. They were very recently written as part of an ongoing and wonderfully important dialog between several young brothers and sisters in Christ. Thanks to the dear young brother who made these available!*)

“Dear sister (one in whom I am quite interested),

“Your letter was quite convicting and I’m thankful to God that He led you to speak up and challenge the lukewarm attitude toward God that I have held. Your call has led me to think of a great many things in my own life, not the least of

which is the question of just exactly what am I looking for in a godly helpmate. In the following I’ve shared some things which have come to mind.

You briefly mentioned sexuality in your letter...and I hope to expand on that a little (from a ‘guy’ perspective). First, please try and understand the power that you (women) exert over men in relation to sexuality. It only takes a pretty face and a well-formed body to make many sober Christian guys turn into blithering idiots.

Dear sister, you **must** understand and respect this power you have. Please don’t **abuse** it—specially by the way you dress. You see, for Christian guys its very difficult (maybe impossible) to think godly thoughts when we are looking at a very attractive young woman whose dress emphasizes her body.

I’m sorry if this make you uncomfortable, but do understand that sexuality is an incredibly strong part of a young man’s natural being. Unfortunately our sex-soaked culture targets young men and women in many different ways. It has strongly influenced Christian guys no matter how diligent their Christian parents or Christian influences have been in trying to protect them/us/me from this corrupt and immoral culture.

Please don’t misunderstand me; I’m not saying that you should be ashamed of your physically attractiveness. Be a “*good steward*” of the physical body God gave you. You are beautiful to me and I don’t want you to be ashamed of that at all! At the same time please recognize that the enjoyment of some of your physical attributes are for you and your future husband alone find delight and to enjoy.

I have no doubt that if you really want a godly husband and you honor God in your dress and appearance, you will be given the needed faith that He will give you a husband with whom you together can relish these natural joys for the rest of the days of your lives.

So please dear sister, point me to Christ by your ways. Don’t make His beautiful daughter my idol by the way you dress. It’s impossible for me to commune with my God if you, one of His beautiful creations, fill my sight and mind with clothing and actions that just cause me to lust after you.

Another thing is the importance of submission. Yes, I said it—the dreaded “s” word. Yet, personally I am not impressed with a timid type of girl who seems to have no spirit of energy and fun. How can such a timid, spiritless sister be a strong, courageous wife—a help in the spiritual battles and the trials of life in general we will face? I long for a wife who willingly stands on the ‘front lines’ with me, understanding and valuing the Word of God that together we can “*resist the devil*”, finding that he will “*flee from you*”.

I don’t need you to be my leader, but I do need you to be energetic in nature and strong in spirit for my sake. If you are, it will affect for good our children, your sisters, your brothers, even your unbelieving friends, workmates, and many others.

You should feel liberty to tell me when I’m not acting as a Christian ought to behave. You should correct or ‘exhort’ me

when I'm disobeying the Word of God. If I'm offended the Lord will in His faithfulness correct me, but the time will come when I will thank you for taking the stand you did.

It is however (and this is where *submission* comes in) important that if I have made up my mind, you recognize that I am willing to take responsibility for the consequences of my actions, good or bad. What I need is you—standing by my side and supporting me instead of fighting against me

Remember what another young brother mentioned?: “At the heart of mature femininity is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive, and nurture strength and leadership from...a husband in ways appropriate to a woman's differing relationships.” That, it seems to me, effectively captures the true heart of a woman of God. Your purpose is to strengthen me so that I, in turn, can strengthen and lead you. It's kind of a reciprocal relationship—a man's weakness being complemented by a woman's strength and a woman's weakness being complemented by a man's strength.

Please read and study the Word of God. I will need and will enjoy your thoughts on the infinite depths found in the Bible. I am not saying that this enables you with authority to “teach” me. However, enjoying what you have learned from the Word of God is not insubmission or usurping authority. Furthermore, if you truly desire a godly husband (which I pray I can be), then know that if I truly am godly, nothing will give me greater pleasure than to have a wife by my side who challenges me to greater depths of knowledge and enjoyment of my Saviour God and His precious Word. Please, don't wait for me to tell you all you need to know about God and His Word. I can't do that. I want to do it together with you, my wife.

Please challenge and encourage me to seek God more and more. There is little out there that is more effective in motivating me to embrace a challenge than the possibility that I may win a sister's heart—one in whom I am so very interested.

I've shared these thoughts with marriage in mind, but these Christian attributes will be a blessing to others—a blessing outside the realm of marriage. We need to challenge one another and be examples to the younger generations who look up to us. In all these things there is a responsibility on our part to honor the roles to which God has called us. May we embrace them with joy unspeakable.

In Christ, Your brother.”

April 2011

“*Let all things ye do be done in love*” (1Cor.16:14).

“*Let your speech be always with grace...*” (Col.4:6).

“*...speaking the truth in love*” (Eph.4:15).

The young husband, dressed in US Army military fatigues, head shaved and walking with fast, purposeful strides, made it quite difficult for his wife and two children to keep up with him. The result was a ‘line’ of four people rather than a ‘family group’. The wife/mother of the two excited children was behind, at the end of the line, some distance from her husband.

I watched briefly as they passed me in the mall. The two children seemed to be about 8-11 years of age and were exhibiting the normal excitement of those who haven't often been to a large, interesting place such as a huge shopping mall. As the father walked, he kept ‘barking’ at his children's conduct while giving what seemed to be ‘orders’ to his wife. He was unsmiling. Mother and kids—when he was not issuing what had the appearance of commands—were smiling, laughing and talking to each other. The moment husband/dad began commanding the smiles and laughter stopped, replaced by solemn, stoney faces.

I saw them one more time as they exited a large store in the mall. The husband, still unsmiling and exhibiting all the military like characteristics I had first noticed, was in the lead. He was talking to his wife, but looking straight ahead. She was several feet behind him at the back of the little group who followed.

As they passed by, I observed them a bit more closely. The husband was looking straight ahead as he talked to (or gave ‘orders’ to) his wife. The last thing I heard from the unsmiling leader of the group was, “I just want to make sure *this has been clarified*”. His tone, His manner—none of it seemed loving at all, but the orders were evidently very clear.

The now unsmiling wife said nothing in reply, maintaining her distance behind him. It really seemed to me that she was afraid of him. His two children, walking almost as buffers between the two parents, were also unsmiling and silent.

The man's military like actions and commands certainly had their intended effect. There would be no joy, no excitement, no fun, for his family...just strict obedience, perhaps born out of fear of their leader.

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

“*There is no fear in love...*” (1 Jn.4:18).

May 2011

Love is Patient

(4) “[Love] *suffereth long, and is kind; [Love] envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,* (5) *Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;* (6) *Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;* (7) *Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.* (8) [Love] *never faileth:*”

The above verses are very often quoted at Christian marriage ceremonies. This is certainly fitting and right, but perhaps the words, so well known to Christians, do not carry the impact with us that they should have in our daily, practical lives.

It is both wonderful and humbling to realize that in this ‘list’ characterizing the ways of “agape” love, we have a picture of the perfect love of our Lord Jesus Christ—“*God manifest in flesh*”. (“agape” is the original Greek word used quite often for divine love—God's love: “*God is love/agape*” 1 Jn.4:8,16).

It would be wonderfully helpful if each dear Christian husband *and* wife would carefully consider how these various characteristics of love should display themselves daily in their marriage union.

Love and Patience

In the KJV Bible, this reads “*Love suffereth long and is kind*”. Another translation has a more clear rendering—“*Love has long patience*”. It may seem that a marriage of two people who deeply love each other would never experience the need for *patience*. But perhaps in marriages, *patience* is virtually the most valuable of ‘commodities’ for insuring a joyful, peaceful and stable marriage.

The world has a saying; ‘The honeymoon is over’. There is some truth to this thought. In the early days, weeks and months of marriage, husband and wife are so enjoying the love and excitement of being together that most anything which might upset or trouble one or the other is easily overlooked, perhaps not even noticed in the joy of marital bliss.

Before too long, however, the wife may perhaps begin to notice that her husband hasn’t seemed to learn to pick up his things and put them where they belong, nor does he fix things the moment they break. Perhaps the husband begins to notice that his wife’s sense of ‘time’ is quite different than his or that she doesn’t prepare food quite like ‘mom’. In short, there are a multitude of things that need “*long patience*” in marriage which can only be changed by “agape” love.

June 2011

“Love is Kind” (1 Cor.13:4)

Queen Victoria, the beloved Christian Queen of England in the 1800s, was in the habit of walking among the cottages of her people, wearing common clothing so as to remain anonymous. One afternoon as she walked, a rain storm suddenly arose. Not having an umbrella, she stopped and knocked at the door of a small cottage. The woman who answered the door did not recognize the Queen, who politely asked the cottage owner if she might have an umbrella that she could use. Hesitant to give her best umbrella to a stranger, the woman brought an older one which leaked a bit and handed it to her unrecognized Queen.

Thanking her, Queen Victoria left with the old umbrella. The next day, a beautiful gilded carriage with the royal emblem on its door pulled up in front of the cottage. One of the Queen’s messengers went to the door and was met by the same lady who had given her umbrella to yesterday’s royal visitor.

Handing the old umbrella back to her, the Queen’s servant said; “Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, wishes to return this and thank you for its use yesterday”.

The dear woman was at a loss for words. Later, telling the event to a neighbor, the crestfallen lady said: “Just imagine, I had an opportunity to give my best umbrella to the Queen but instead I gave her my worst!”

The manner of love that maintains a strong, vibrant, joyful marriage *is a love that is kind*. It looks for ways to do, to be, to provide for, to speak to, to give in all things, its *very best* to its object.

Husbands, *kind love* is not always bringing home a bouquet of flowers, a box of candy or an expensive gift. *Kind love*

does simple things—picking up clothing, straightening the bookshelf or work table, setting the table for a meal, keeping the plumbing and other household fixtures in good working order—or an innumerable host of other *little* acts of kindness. Have you stopped opening doors for your wife—do you hold hands less than you used to?—*little kindnesses* prove your love for her; a wonderful cement for strong, joyful marriages!

Dear wife, when was the last time your husband heard from you just how much the little kindnesses he does mean to you—how much you love his smile and tender embrace? When he fell asleep in his favorite easy chair after work, did you take the garbage out, or did you wake him up because that’s his ‘job’ to do? The best, most lasting marital love, *is kind love*.

July 2011

“Love Envieth Not” (1 Cor.13:4)

The ‘JND’ Translation reads “*love is not emulous of others*”. There are quite sobering issues affecting husbands and wives contained in these few words.

‘Emulous’ is sometimes used in a positive way to describe one person ‘emulating’ the actions or life style of another. The meaning of the word ‘emulous’, however, strongly suggests the thought of ‘rivalry’—that is, to copy someone’s actions or possessions or abilities in order to ‘out do’ them. Such a spirit, if allowed in marriage is destructive. This negative spirit of ‘emulation’ may act in a variety of ways.

In today’s world where husband and wife, at least for a time, may both work, there is a danger of ‘rivalry’ between spouses as to which one has the better or more lucrative job. There is no room for such a spirit in a happy Christian marriage. Along with such ‘big things’ there are many ‘little’ things that may cause a spirit of rivalry. Rather than trying to make a list of such things, we earnestly beseech Christian husbands and wives to be much before the Lord as to ‘why’ if they sense a spirit of ‘irritation’ or ‘annoyance’ arising between them.

In the Song of Solomon we read: “*Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes*” (SS.2:15). Don’t let even one tiny spirit of rivalry develop between you, dear husband and wife.

There is another very dangerous and destructive aspect to Christian spouses becoming ‘emulous’ of each other. This aspect has to do with husband and/or wife *looking at other* married couples (or one partner in another marriage), and becoming dissatisfied with their own mate. Often such a spirit, if not immediately judged before the Lord, develops into situations in which the husband or the wife constantly criticizes their spouse’s perceived shortcomings when compared with another couple. If such a spirit is allowed, a widening separation begins to divide the affections between husband and wife, and if left unchecked can end in complete marital destruction.

We read in 1 Jn.3:3 that everyone belongs to Christ “*purifieth himself, even as He is pure*”. This is a wonderful “emulation”—seeking to be more like Christ, not in a spirit of

rivalry, but rather in a spirit of love. Christian marriages that lovingly seek to follow (emulate) the “good” in each other, are strong, joyful and lasting marriages.

August 2011

“Love Vaunteth Not Itself” (1 Cor.13:4)

We might think of this as *love not being boastful*—an unhappy characteristic which if found in one or both spouses, does absolutely nothing to encourage and build a joyful, stable Christian marriage. There is no room in a happy marriage for one of the partners constantly pointing out to the other, “look how much I’ve done for you”. Divine love as presented in 1 Cor. 13 acts without any need to be noticed, applauded, or flaunted.

In John 15:12 our blessed Saviour commanded all His own to: “...love one another, as I have loved you.” We do not read of the Lord speaking much of the greatness, grandeur, and perfection of His love—but we read of example after example of His divine, perfect love *in action* towards all those around.

Thus it was, when the Lord Jesus was at the tomb of His friend Lazarus, not a word did He speak about how great was His love for His friend who had died. But others, watching our Lord’s sorrow and weeping did bear witness of His perfect love...“*Then said the Jews, behold how He loved him*” (Jn. 11:36).

When the blessed Saviour was about to go to the cross we read that “*Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end*” (John 13:1). Again, the Lord in His perfect, humble love, does no boasting—He *shows* His love by His beautiful *servant* actions of foot washing.

In John 15, when our Lord Jesus *did* speak of His love, there was no hint of boasting. He told His disciples of the depth of His love for them (and all who have believed in Him): “*As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you...*”. Why did our Lord tell His own how much He loved them? That they might receive a precious gift from Himself: “*These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*”

Finally, later in John 15 our blessed Lord tenderly assures each believer of the *reason* we are loved (individually): “...*but I have chosen you...*”. This goes infinitely beyond the ability of mere human intellect to understand—that the God of the universe, yea, the “*High and Lofty One that in habiteth eternity...*” (Isa. 57:15) has *chosen* each believer on whom He pours His love. This is not *vaunting* His love, but wonderfully assuring our joy in light of such love.

May it be so in the love we show our spouses!

September 2011

“Love...is not puffed up (1 Cor.13:4)

“Just look at all I do for you, but you don’t appreciate it at all!” No doubt most married couples have said similar things to each other at times during their marriage. Sometimes a husband or wife may feel they are being taken for granted by their spouse. Then comes frustration. Any normal husband or wife

naturally desires—and not wrongly—to feel loved and appreciated by their spouse. Marriages where such emotions are lacking in one or both partners quickly end in shipwreck. Yet, love is not *puffed up*—real love is not interested in pointing out its own fine qualities, but rather, seeks every opportunity *to* quietly serve its object.

“Me”

There is absolutely no room in happy, stable marriages for either partner to be constantly thinking of “*me*”; worse yet, to become frustrated because they consider that the quality of “*my wonderful love*” is unappreciated by “*my*” husband/wife. Nor should either spouse use “*my great love for you*” as an excuse to gain personal gratification or personal desires or demands. In happy, stable marriages—marriages that are solid and lasting—the thought of “*me*” or “*my love*” is replaced by “*you*” and “*how can I best show my love to you*”. Dear husbands and wives! don’t spend time expecting your partner to acknowledge how wonderful your love for them is—just love your spouse with all your heart. Don’t display “*puffed up*” love which puts “*me*” in the center of your marriage relationship. How happy the marriage where both partners keep the other in the center of their love!

“You”

Husbands and wives whose heart joy is found in serving and bestowing love on their spouse, forgetting self, will find little danger of their love becoming *puffed up*. “*You*” love is not self occupied nor does it flaunt itself. “*You*” love is Christ-like. His perfect love for others was never “*puffed up*” but always quietly serving, seeking others good. Though doubtless grieved when His love was/is rejected, our blessed Saviour never stops loving us with a perfect “*you*” love.

These precious verses are wonderful examples of His “*you*” love. “*Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it*” (Eph. 5:25). “*The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me*” (Gal. 2:20). This divine love is not “*puffed up*”. It is divine love that “*goes down*” and “*lifts up*” its object!

October 2011

“Love doth not behave...unseemly (1 Cor.13:5)

‘Undignified’, ‘unbecoming’, ‘improper’, ‘indiscreet’; all these (and more) are words which could be used to describe the meaning of *unseemly*. Today, perhaps as nowhere else in the world, the once Christianized Western World indulges in the open, brazen display of *unseemly love*—in doing so, corrupting and debasing the purity of true love that God desires would characterize the marriage union.

The natural physical joys and delights of marriage are a very right and wonderful part of God’s institution. The Holy Scriptures approve and encourage these delights between a man and a woman who are husband and wife.

“*Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled...*” (Heb.13:4).

“...*rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the*

loving hind and pleasant roe...be thou ravished always with her love" (Prov.5:18,19).

"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord" (Prov.18:22).

While our loving Father desires that the natural joys of the marriage He has granted to this union are to be fully enjoyed, the *manner* in which marital love is expressed is to be *seemly* (discreet, becoming). True love is not characterized by unseemly public exhibition of these joys. The principle of privacy and intimacy in marriage is found beautifully expressed in Proverbs 30:18, 19 where *four things* that are *too wonderful* for the writer to understand are listed. The fourth declares; "There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not...the way of a man with a maid."

The Song of Solomon also provides a beautiful expression of love between a bridegroom and bride. Yet no where is there any suggestion or thought that the wonderful love that exists between them is expressed in an unseemly manner. There is intense delight yet perfect propriety in the enjoyment of that delight.

We also find the a helpful warning concerning inappropriate displays of marital love in Gen. 26:8. "...when he [Isaac] had been there a long time... Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife." Nothing was wrong or inappropriate with Isaac and Rebekah's actions, but the *public display* of those actions was not *seemly*.

November 2011

"[Love]...seeketh not her own" (1 Cor.13:5)

One of the most blatant characteristics of our current culture and society, one which touches and affects every facet of life, is the concept/philosophy of humanism, or, we may say in brief, 'me first'.

'Me' has become the center of everything in today's world including marriage. My thoughts, my actions, my wants, my life-style—the individual is happy only as long as they are catering to themselves or being catered to by others. Such self-centeredness is a sure formula for an unhappy, strife filled marriage—each partner looking for what their spouse can or is doing for them, rather than seeking ways to "by love serve one another" (Gal.5:13).

Where this kind of love exists in marriages, all aspects of the marriage union are adversely affected. Little things can and will lead to bigger issues with increased strife and contention leading eventually to a tragic breakup.

We often read in Scripture of the life of Jacob (whose name means 'supplanter') and we may learn many lessons of one who might be characterized as being very 'self-seeking'. We must ask ourselves, however, how much Isaac and Rebekah's attitudes towards their sons (Esau and Jacob), may have added to his character. "And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob" (Gen.25:28). In the account of Jacob's life after fleeing his home to escape his brother's ha-

tred and threat, we find instance after instance where Jacob puts himself first—including his marriage.

There is however one lovely instance showing how God tenderly caused Jacob to return in faith to all he had left. As Jacob was on his way back home after many years absence, he learned that Esau and 400 men were coming to meet him. Fearing the worst, he divided his large family into groups, separating each group. Then we find something very lovely in Genesis 33:3: "And he [Jacob] passed over before them [his family], and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother". This is true love that does not think of itself first! Jacob was willing to put himself in the front in order that Esau's wrath would fall first on him. Instead Esau fell on Jacob's neck and kissed his brother.

What a wonderful spirit of love for a happy lasting marriage! Both husband and wife, in love putting their partner first in all things!

December 2011

"[Love]...is not easily provoked" (1 Cor.13:5)

Questions

There are an innumerable host of questions which *could* be asked of their mate by a wife or a husband—questions however, that don't usually contribute to peace and happiness in marriages.

"Honey, why is it when I go to all the work and time to fix a nice, hot supper, you always seem to work late yet *never bother* to call and tell me you'll be home late?"

"Sweetheart, I know there was a *great* sale at Pennys®, but you already have five purses. Do you really have any idea what a budget is?"

In each marriage there are (or there will be) what may be termed "pet peeves". Something—a particular habit or routine—which a spouse may do *without any intent* of causing their partner to become annoyed or irritated, yet which *might* easily open the door to arguing and unhappiness if Biblical love is not the *active ingredient* of that marriage union.

Love that binds a marriage, making it stronger and more joyous as time goes on is characterized by neither spouse becoming irritated when things don't go his or her way in their marriage. This kind of marriage has partners not easily provoked.

Poor, dear Jacob—so much like ourselves in our ways—truly did love his wife Rachel. But when her heart, understandably burdened and vexed in a manner that a Jewess would most deeply feel, bursts forth with an angry exclamation to her husband, Jacob's love was sadly, impetuously provoked (please read Genesis 30:1,2).

A beautiful example of love *not provoked* is found in the Song of Solomon 2:14,15. Something had hindered the bride's expression of love. The bridegroom felt it deeply, yet in such sweet tender love, draws out the heart of his beloved—her coldness is warmed and the time of joy and singing is restored by a love that is not easily provoked.

In our examples above perhaps a love not easily provoked might answer in this way: “Honey, I’m sorry you have to work such long hours. Why don’t you rest a bit. It won’t take long to heat up supper”.

“Sweetheart, that’s a neat purse. I’m glad you got it at such a good price. In order not to mess up our budget, I’ll wait to buy my fishing reel for a couple of months.”

These answers may or may not be good, ones but they surely come from *unprovoked love!*