



Marriage's Meaning for Believers

God desires that we develop and nurture a personal, interactive relationship with Him.

by Dr. David Kyle Foster

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When you marry someone, you don't go live in separate houses and never talk to each other from that day forward, do you? That's not the way it's supposed to happen!

It's the same with the Church. A lot of people think that they're just suppose to say the marriage vows, ("I accept Jesus as my Savior"), get born again and then go about their merry way. They've got their ticket to heaven, but have every intention of continuing to live their life the way they want to, (albeit cleaned up a bit more), without any serious effort at having intimacy with the one to whom they've just given their life.

Perhaps that's the problem. Perhaps most Christians don't realize that getting born again is just the starting point of a rich and deeply intimate life in union with God. And so they miss out on the very heart of what they've been given. They remain focused on themselves and the things of this world and lose the very purpose of their life!

God has set His affection and love on us for all eternity. He wants us to gleefully pursue Him with the ardor and fervor of a new bride, embrace Him, and share intimate moments of deep unity with Him.

I'll never forget the day – it was the first time that the Lord had told me to give my full testimony in public. It was excruciatingly difficult because I was convinced that if people knew what I had been in my past, they would reject me. But I did it because I knew God was asking me to. And at the end, as I awaited the final verdict of the crowd, (which turned out to be very positive and supportive), I felt God inside of me jumping up and down and clapping His hands as a child would, going, "Yeah! You did it! You did it!" I felt the pleasure of God responding to my sacrificial act of love for Him—and I will never forget that moment as long as I live. We had an altar call and they flooded to the front to be cleansed from their sin. New life was born!

The mystery of Christ and the Church is the mystery of God bearing new life through intimate communion with man. You have the husband, Christ, becoming one with His wife in an act of covenant making, and we become born again. The marriage is then consummated and in the act of sowing spiritual seeds within us, new life is born around us. People see our passion for God and turn to Him. They hear the word of our testimony and learn how to overcome the enemy. They experience the life of God in us being expressed through unconditional love and sacrificial action, which kindles a flame for God within them.

There's personal growth happening, as well. We are transformed into His image, with ever increasing glory. In fact, there's so much spiritual fruit being born from our intimacy with God that half the time we don't even know it's happening.

It is so very important that we not stop with the initial moment of salvation, but that we go on to the exchange of selfless love and service, to the giving of ourselves to God. We, the Bride, must bear and nurture that new life into fullness. If we don't nurture it by taking a daily swim in the Scriptures, by singing love songs to the Lover of our souls, if we don't pursue Him with all our heart, mind and soul, the great harvest of spiritual fruit that God wants to produce with us will never come to life. There's mutual responsibility involved in our marriage with God just as there is with any marriage.

Consider this. The image of both husband and wife is passed on to the life that they create together. When a man and a woman come together and a baby is formed, the image of that man and woman is in that baby. It looks like one of them and acts like the other! The same thing happens spiritually. When Christ plants His spiritual seeds in us and we give birth to new life, the spiritual children that we have are going to look like us. This is why it is so important for us to remain faithful in our walk with the Lord and to be conformed to His image through our own intimate relationship with Him.

The people that are born to new life from our love relationship with Christ are in many ways going to look like us. Why? Because we are the enfleshed model that they will see, day in and day out. They may never attain to a greater image of God than the one you and I reflect to them. Thus, the image of both husband and wife gets passed on to the new life.

We have been designed to reflect the image of another. If God isn't the love of our life, we will reflect what is.

Some ten years ago now, I had a vision while in worship. Suddenly, in the midst of my singing, I found myself in heaven in the presence of God. An instant later, I realized that I was in the middle of a wedding ceremony and that I was the one getting married—to God! A jolt of joy and wonder shot through my heart.

Several years later, I asked Leanne Payne what she thought the vision had meant. She told me that it was important for everyone to marry God, even those who marry someone here on earth. In fact, she said, they should enter into a marital union with God first, so that their earthly marriage doesn't become an attempt to get something from a person that they can only get from God. Only then will they be adequately prepared to be the spouse of another.

Christopher West has written a wonderful book called *The Good News About Sex & Marriage*. In it, he describes how earthly marital unions were established by God to be a type and shadow of the greater marriage between God and man.

But first, we must marry God – not just legally and judicially, but in truth. This is the sacred mystery of the ages! As Leanne Payne says – all of us should marry God, for it is from that foundational relationship that the power and inspiration for all other relationships is to flow.

Let's not waste or in any way disregard this precious inheritance.

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