

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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“Heirs Together of the Grace of Life”

A French philosopher once said, "Love is not two people looking at each other; it is two people looking together in the same direction." While this may not be a complete definition of love, it does serve to emphasize the absolute necessity of mutual interests outside the persons of the individuals in love. Recent studies have shown that an alarming number of marriages today are being formed simply because two young people are unhappy in their home environment and want to get away from it all. Others are formed merely to satisfy physical or financial needs. Such marriages, formed on nothing more than a mutual self-interest, have little or no hope of success. And they are breaking up at a tragic rate.

It is important that partners in marriage share as many common interests as possible, even in matters that are seemingly insignificant. It is essential that they share a mutual esteem for their objects of greatest devotion and highest aspiration. This is why a marriage formed by two truly dedicated and consecrated Christians is almost certainly destined not only to continued union, but also to perennial happiness.

Mutual Love for the Lord

In his preface to that golden text of husband-wife relations, Ephesians 5:22-33, the apostle Paul wrote, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Observe that this submission to one another grows out of a mutual respect for God. This means respect for His authority, bowing to the code of conduct which He has given. If both fear God, it means that each knows exactly what to expect of the other - honesty, faithfulness, fairness, purity. It means that each can respect the other, not only as husband or wife but also as brother or sister in Christ, as fellow-citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, as members together of His body.

When partners in wedlock share such a fear of God, there is a dual bond cementing their marriage. The wife is submissive and faithful to her husband, not only because she loves him but because "it is fit in the Lord" (Colossians 3:18). The husband gives honor to the wife, not only because he loves her, but also that his "prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7). Unfaithfulness on the part of either would mean breaking vows to God as well as those made to one another. What wonderful insurance for a secure home!

How can a Christian who loves God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength afford to marry one who does not share that love?

Mutual Devotion to Duty

Paul wrote regarding one husband and wife, "Salute Prisca and Aquila my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus" (Romans 16:3). They had extended to him the hospitality of their home as he preached the gospel (Acts 18:2-4). When Apollos had come to Ephesus "knowing only the baptism of John, ... they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:25, 26). Their home was used as a meeting place for the church (Romans 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:19). For Paul's life they had "laid down their own necks" (Romans 16:4). These outstanding acts of service were possible only because they were "fellow-workers in Christ Jesus." It would have been otherwise had either of them been out of Christ.

There are many other opportunities which can be effectively accepted only by a husband and wife who are fellow-workers in Christ Jesus. How sad it is to see a Christian who truly wants to live a dedicated, sacrificial life, but is hindered by a companion who does not share that zeal. On the other hand, how beautiful it is to see a husband and wife serving together under the yoke of Christ. Together they bring up their children, each fulfilling the function God has ordained: the father nurturing "them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4) and the mother exhibiting the faith that will also dwell in their hearts and in those of their children (2 Timothy 1:5). In the home they pray together, each confident that God hears the prayer of the other as well as his own. They worship together, though it may mean driving many miles. They plan their giving together, agreeing to sacrifice for the Lord's cause. Their home is open to all who need hospitality; together they have dedicated all that is theirs to God. Neither is a hindrance to the other; rather, they "provoke one another to love and good works."

How can one who seeks "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" afford to marry one who has little interest in such matters?

Mutual Hope of Heaven

A husband and wife who are Christians share an exalted position "as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7). If there was something precious in the thought that

the conversion of Onesimus would make it possible for Philemon to have him forever (Philemon 15,16), how much more meaningful is such a promise for a devoted husband and wife. Though "in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage" (Matthew 22:30), it is still a fact that life together on earth is sadly incomplete if there is not the prospect of sharing together in eternity the fruits of life's labor.

How can one who is laying up treasure in heaven and whose fondest hope is eternal life, afford to marry one who is without prospect of either?

Conclusion

Life's problems at their easiest are hard enough to solve. At their lightest, the burdens are difficult enough to bear. To marry one who does not share your esteem for God, who cannot be a partner with you in the work of Christ, who does not share with you the hope of heaven - this is increasing those burdens and problems immeasurably. A degree of happiness may be attained in such a home, but it is certain that the ultimate in happiness is beyond the reach of those in such circumstances.

- Sewell Hall, via The Gospel Guardian, 03/18/1965

A Broken Glass

I was getting ready to go to service and I went into the bathroom one last time and then it happened! A blue drinking glass that I had set on the edge of my bathroom counter was hit by my coat as I turned to walk out of the room. Boom! Well at least that's what it sounded like to me! I turned around and couldn't believe how many pieces of glass were lying on my bathroom and bedroom floor. I guess they don't make them like they use too, because when it hit the floor pieces shattered and went everywhere. I didn't have time to clean it up then and when I got back from church I actually had forgotten about that shattered glass. That is until I started to walk into my bathroom. I got my trusty rainbow air purification system (or vacuum to non-rainbow owners) and tried to clean up all that glass.

You might be wondering what this little story has to do with spiritual matters? Well, as the days went by little pieces of glass began showing up in the strangest places. The first one showed up on one of my toes and stayed there for two days. The second one showed up Friday night in Carey's foot, at which point she removed hers, and since she did such a good job I let her remove mine as well! I began to think about how that shattered glass was like life. Everything can be going along just right and then our lives can become shattered by some trial or contrary wind that blows in our life. We have the choice at that point to let our life remain shattered or we can do something about it.

I thought about how sin often times is the culprit that shatters many lives. Paul said in (Rom.3:23) "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." I thought about how God fixes our shattered lives when we obey His holy word. (Heb.8:12) "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." I thought about how shattered lives can be cleaned up but often times there remains some consequence, some little thing that pops back up as a result of the trouble that caused the disaster. The psalmist said in (Ps.55:22) "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." I can't put back the pieces of that glass where they once were but I can put back the pieces of my life with God's help anytime. He can fix any broken life!

We sing the song "Bring Christ your broken life, so marred by sin, He will create anew make whole again" Has your life ever been shattered by some unforeseen event? If not, get ready for that's part of living on this earth. When it does happen, I hope you will remember this little story about my broken glass. I hope you will clean up the mess and go on with your life!

God loves us and sent Christ into the world so a life shattered by sin or some misfortune could be made whole again! I thought that glass was helpful before I broke it. But looking back, I see now, I've gotten more help from it since it shattered!

- Rufus Clifford

- > "Any time you think you have influence, try ordering someone else's dog around!"
 - > "Humility is a strange thing - you lose it the moment you think you have it!"
 - > "If God sends us on stony paths, He provides strong shoes!"
 - > "Every man must live with the man he makes of himself, and the better job he does in molding his character and improving his mind, the better company he will have!"
 - > "There is something finer than to do right against inclination; and that is to have the inclination to do right!" - Henry Van Dyke
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Heaven's Inhabitants!*" (Text: 1 Thess. 4:16-17); Sunday evening: "*Controversy With His Brethren!*" (John 7:1-9).