

Do You Want Your Wife to Know Your Mind?

By Anand Peter

My home church's notice sheet, for this coming Sunday, gives the theme for meditation as "the family — husband and wife." It is, admittedly, an involved subject, with many facets to it. As I reflected upon it, what came to mind was an apt saying of Martin Luther's: "Let the wife make the husband glad to come home, and let him make her sorry to see him leave." That single sentence sums up the very institution of marriage — a circumstance not easily established, and an attitude not easily practised, especially in an age of constant, round-the-clock engagement. Married life is rather like living upon a rock jutting out of a turbulent sea. Those who champion a more contemporary lifestyle might question the very estate of marriage, and its validity, in a fast-changing world. The answer, in full measure, is to be found in the Bible.

Marriage — the estate of husband and wife — is no late invention, adopted merely for convenience. It is a design, carefully planned and beautifully executed by Jesus the Creator. In Genesis 1:27 we read, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." He and she were conceived by God, and He found it good. The likeness of God demands that we maintain a body and mind without blemish throughout our lives. No man has any right to deride a woman, or her body, and no woman has any right to do the same to a man.

In Genesis 1:28, husband and wife together received a blessing: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." This is not merely a blessing given to husbands and wives; it is a divine ordinance, within the mystery of God's economy for humanity. As it is not within a man's power to cease being a man, so it is not his prerogative to be without a woman; and as it is not within a woman's power to cease being a woman, so it is not her prerogative to be without a man. The union of man and woman, as husband and wife, is therefore no matter of free choice, but a natural and necessary thing — a blessing the Creator has passed on to humanity, that they might be His instruments in further creation. Jesus said, as Matthew reports, "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matthew 19:12). Apart from these three exempted classes, men and women are ordained to live their lives as husbands and wives.

On how husbands and wives ought to live, so as to please Jesus, the Bible offers many lessons. Paul, in most of his Epistles, took care to sanctify the relationship of husband and wife. I have heard many preachers gloss over these passages, treating them as relevant only to the times and customs in which Paul lived. This view is, to say the least, short-sighted; we have already seen how God ordained this relationship from the very moment of creation.

Anyone inclined to suggest that a woman is a necessary evil, and that no household can do without such an evil, is guilty of blasphemy — questioning, as he does, both God's wisdom and God's work. The same is true of anyone who discourages another from entering into wedlock. Paul, well aware of this, wrote at length of the consequences of defying the law of God in this respect (see Romans 1:24-28).

Here is what Martin Luther himself wrote on the subject: "The world says of marriage, 'Brief is the joy, lasting the bitterness.' Let them say what they please; what God wills and creates is bound to be a laughingstock to them. The kind of joy and pleasure they have outside of wedlock they will be most acutely aware of, I suspect, in their consciences. To recognize the estate of marriage is something quite different from merely being married. He who is married but does not recognize the estate of marriage cannot continue in wedlock without bitterness, drudgery, and anguish; he will inevitably complain and blaspheme like the pagans and blind, irrational men. But he who recognizes the estate of marriage will find therein delight, love, and joy without end; as Solomon says, 'He who finds a wife finds a good thing.'"

Husband and wife should be rooted together in the teaching of Jesus Christ — in love, respect, forgiveness, tolerance, and perseverance in the faith — and should pass these values on to their children. At the same time, they should stand apart from "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21). In everything they do, Jesus should be accepted as their all-knowing, merciful, and ever-loving Shepherd. As they grow in faith and trust in Him, their relationship, too, will strengthen, uniting them in body and mind so completely that they come to know one another's thoughts almost without a word spoken — the wife knowing her husband's mind, and the husband his wife's. When a marriage reaches such a state, it becomes pleasing to the Lord.

Amen.