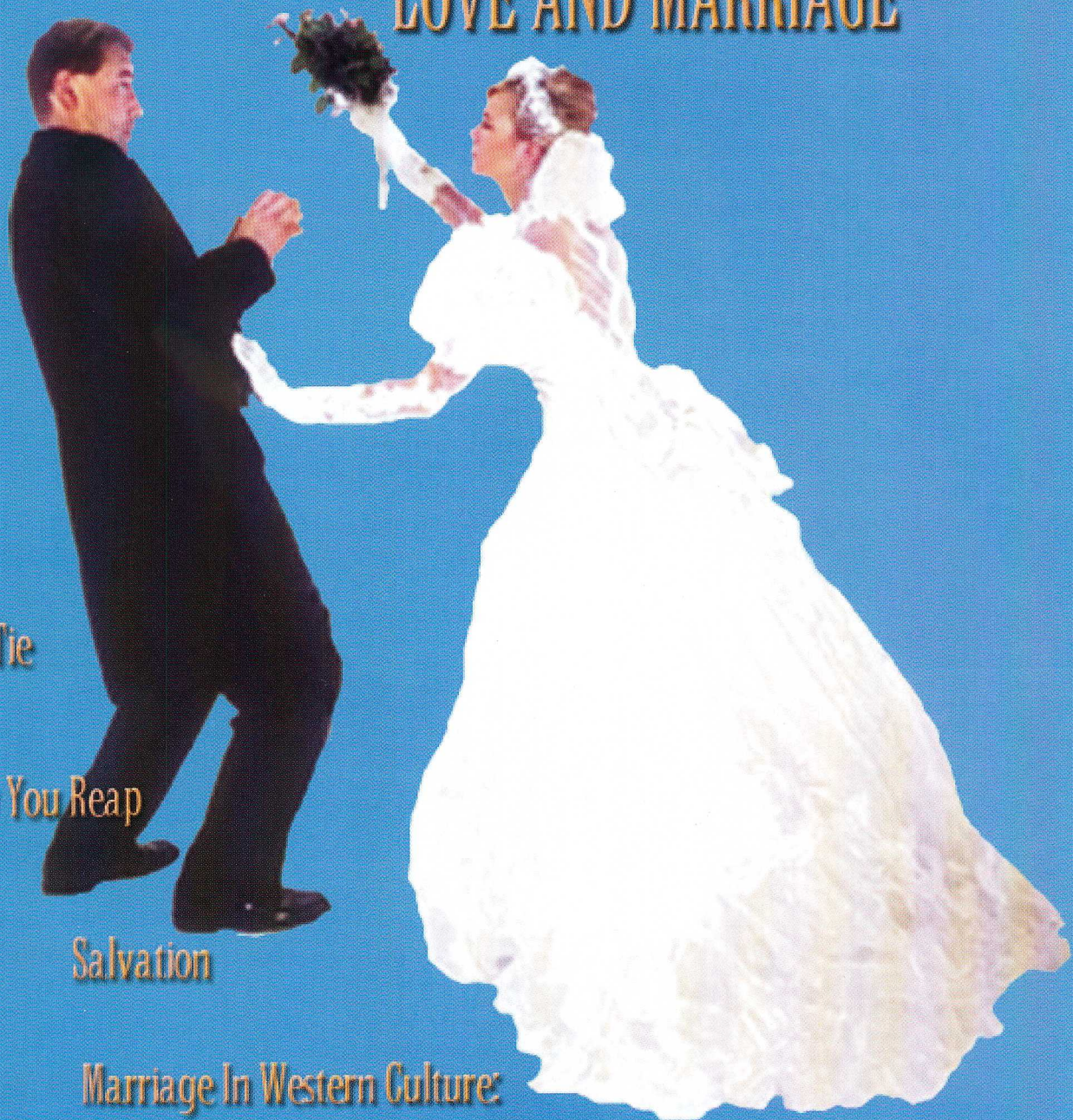


November 2009 Issue No. 11

# Good News Unlimited

## LOVE AND MARRIAGE



Love's Eternal Tie

What You Sow You Reap

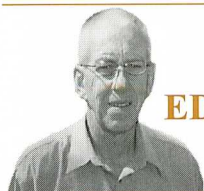
Salvation

Marriage In Western Culture:  
From Authority To Companionship

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## EDITORIAL

**The greater a good thing is, the greater is its potential for abuse. Nuclear energy, when rightly controlled, is a blessing for millions of people; yet one of the greatest curses is nuclear energy used in warfare.**

Likewise, one of the greatest blessings is love—the love of a man for a woman and the love of a woman for man. They were made for each other; to compliment each other. Yet one of the greatest curses is the acrimonious break-down of that love and the trail of devastation which follows through divorce proceedings; the division of property; the fight over the children and the devastating effects of the divorce on parents and children alike and the struggle to start again.

The breakdown of a loving marriage becomes so emotionally charged the couple fail to think rationally and proceed with actions and counter-actions that take many times more energy, finance and time, than would have been required

to heal the rift in their marriage. How is it possible that a couple, so deeply in love that they unite their lives in 'marriage,' get to the place where they can no longer stand the sight of each other?

Several years ago, in Papua New Guinea, a woman came to see me about problems in her marriage. After telling me all about her husband I could see, quite clearly, that the fault lay completely with him; there was no question that he was the guilty party. But when I talked with the husband I could see, quite clearly, that the fault lay completely with the wife; there was no question that she was the guilty party. I brought them both together and after some time I could see, quite clearly, that the fault lay equally with both of them; there was no question that they were both guilty.

It is the nature of estranged couples to emphasise the faults of the other and excuse their own. The religion of Jesus Christ is radical, in that it reverses this worldly attitude. For healing to take place, each party in the marriage should acknowledge their own faults and pardon the other's. Any refusal to do so is to exalt self and tread Christ underfoot. And I don't say that lightly.

There are situations in some marriages, such as on-going violence

and/or sexual abuse, that justify the abused party leaving the marriage, but most marriage breakdowns can be sorted without such radical surgery. Once a couple gets on the not-so merry-go-round of revulsion for the other, each revolution exaggerates the failures of their partner until the whole affair becomes so distorted, that it ends up being impossible for either of them to view their relationship rationally.

When that happens, they need to take a breather and seek counsel. It would be good to fold an A4 sheet down the middle and label one side PRO and the other side CON. With the help of a good friend, who refuses to take sides, they each should fill in the Pros and Cons of what would happen if they split. Having done that they should calmly talk through them together, hopefully acknowledging that the cost of a break-up is far greater than they would be prepared to meet.

The Bible teaches us that when we are tempted, God will 'provide a way out' (1 Cor. 10:13). If there is a problem in your marriage ask the Lord to show you that 'way out' of the problem. As your heavenly Father, he is there for you.

*Ritchie Way*

—Ritchie Way

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### Mission Statement

Christians united in offering to all, meaning and direction in their lives by a knowledge of God's reconciliation with humanity through his Son, Jesus Christ.



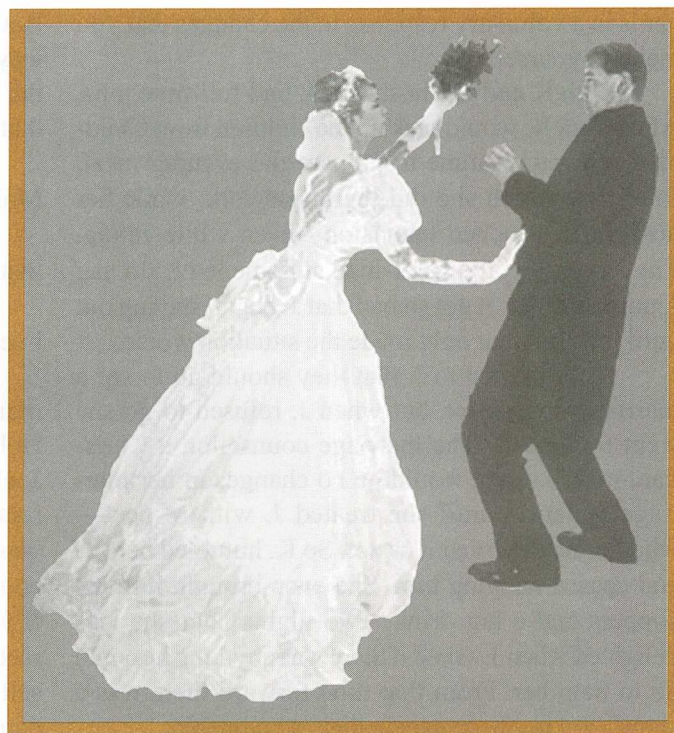
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# LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Ritchie Way



**I**n his book, *The Road Less Travelled*, Scott Peck has a chapter called The Myth of Romantic Love. He says there, 'Falling in love is a trick that our genes play on us to trap us into marriage.'

The myth of romantic love teaches us that for every young man in the world, there is a young woman who is meant just for him; when this couple meet, they fall in love. Since the heavens have obviously intended that they live happily together forever, they move in together or get married.

If the match doesn't work, it becomes obvious that they have made a dreadful mistake and have misread the signs. Never mind, they will separate and try again. They will wait for romance to reveal their next partner. The fact is, statistics reveal that the more they try, the less is their chance of success. Over fifty percent of first marriages end in divorce, sixty-five percent of second ones and more than seventy percent of third ones. With few exceptions there is a statistically better chance of making the first marriage work than any subsequent marriage.

Mrs. D. goes to her psychologist and says: 'I don't know what's wrong with my marriage. I've got a wonderful husband; he's a real handyman around the house; he takes care of all my needs; he's a wonderful father to our children; we've had thirty-five years of good life together, but I don't love him anymore.'

This woman has been tricked by romantic love,

which has nothing to do with reality and everything to do with feelings. Romantic love, like Jacob, goes to sleep with Rachel and wakes up with Leah. Romantic love is like a snort of cocaine, a swig of whisky, or a puff of cannabis. It makes you feel good, but distorts reality and has little practical use. We have been beguiled by Mills and Boon, and the 'Soaps' where every fairy-tale wedding is founded on romance.

Romantic love is wonderful, but like the morning mist it doesn't last. Romantic love is like the seed that is planted in shallow soil. It springs up with great joy, but has no root to withstand the heat of the day. Any person who believes romantic love is the foundation for a good marriage is not mature enough for marriage. A far better basis for marriage is friendship, trust, and enjoyment of each other's company.

## THE MYTH OF THE PERFECT MARRIAGE

Bob Gass believes 'A lot of us are myth-informed about love and marriage. The myth of a perfect marriage is widespread and dangerous among us. By setting up unrealistic expectations, impossible dreams and magic thinking, it misinforms, misleads and disillusion us, preparing us to walk away the moment our fantasy clashes with reality.'

While some marriages are better than others, all marriages are afflicted with the results of the Fall. Nobody is perfect and the imperfections soon become apparent after the honeymoon. But the only person you are authorised to change for the better is yourself. And the only legitimate way to change your part-



ner is in a voluntary response to the changes that you make in yourself.

Both K and her husband, J. had full-time jobs. After work K. would pick up the children from Child-care and return home to prepare the evening meal, following which she did the housework, while her husband J. watched television—even while eating. The inequity of the work-load at home led K. to nag J. unmercifully. It got so bad that J. began staying out until late, but that only made the situation worse.

K. suggested to J. that they should go to see a marriage counsellor, but when J. refused to go she went by herself. The marriage counsellor, a Christian, told K. there would be no changes in her marriage situation until she treated J. with respect—whether he deserved it or not. So K. humbled herself and ceased nagging him. She even brought him his slippers and a hot drink. Two nights later she was delighted when J. asked if there was anything he could do to help her. From that time forward there was a significant improvement in their relationship.

When seeking to improve upon a broken, or failing relationship, we cannot improve upon the model given us by the Lord himself. ‘God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us’ (Rom. 5:8). Note that Christ did not demand that we change for the better first. Instead, *he* made the first move by revealing his love for us through self-sacrifice.

Christ treated even guilty people, like the woman caught in adultery, with respect, because his motivation was not to condemn people but to save them (John 3:17). Likewise, if your motivation is to save your marriage, treat your partner with respect. If you are a Christian, the onus is upon you to initiate and maintain this atmosphere of respect.

If anyone could have justified himself for not putting up with sinners and separating himself from us, it was Jesus. But he didn’t. We should manifest the same tolerance toward our partners that Jesus does to us.

### HINTS FOR IMPROVING YOUR MARRIAGE

1. If something around the home hasn’t been done as you expect, don’t accuse your partner for not doing it; do it yourself. If you see the need, then the responsibility for fixing the problem is yours. Do it, and do it with a smile.

2. Don’t argue over inconsequential issues.

Both my mother and father were choleric—*not* always a good mix. One day, as we were driving through the countryside, Mum said, ‘Jock Hobbs lives down that road.’

‘No he doesn’t!’ replied Dad. ‘He lives in Mokoia.’

‘He does not, Dick! He definitely lives down that road!’ Mum retorted.

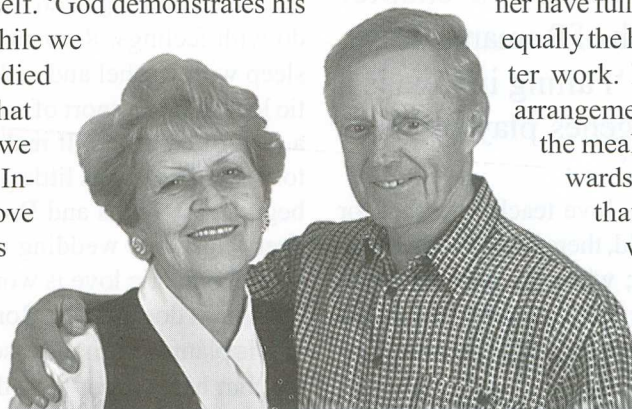
Dad replied testily, ‘I’m telling you, Grace, he lives in Mokoia!’

The argument kept up mile after mile, getting more heated the further we got from wherever Jock Hobbs lived. We kids, in the back seat, wondered if Jock Hobbs’ address was worth more than a good relationship between Mum and Dad. Of course it wasn’t! Like most arguments that arise between couples, the correct answer didn’t really matter a fig. If your partner says something that is incorrect, correct them nicely once, then let it go. Don’t allow yourself to get into a verbal joust; zip your lip or take a commercial break.

3. Make sure that you contribute to a balanced workload around the home. If both you and your partner have full-time jobs, see that you share equally the household responsibilities after work. In our home we have the arrangement that if my wife prepares the meal, I do the cleaning up afterwards. I pity the man who believes that house work is woman’s work only and won’t get off his seat to help out. Such a man is living in a past that was unjustly gender biased.

4. Don’t expect your partner to be perfect, because if the boot was on the other foot you wouldn’t pass that test yourself. The Bible says, ‘Love covers a multitude of sins.’ And if you love your partner you will cover his/her blemishes with love. If you expose your partner’s failings to others, then you are not motivated by love, but by hatred. Any hurt you inflict upon your partner will boomerang on you by hurting your marriage. Don’t do it. The apostle Paul wrote: ‘Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her ... In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself’ (Eph. 5:25-28).

5. Treat your partner with respect. Be gentle, kind and thoughtful. ‘Let your conversation be always full of grace ...’ (Col. 4:6). ‘Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them’ (Col. 3:19). ‘Each one of you ... must love his wife as he loves himself,





and the wife must respect her husband' (Eph. 5:33). Make it a practice to tell other people how much your partner means to you.

6. Marriage is a union of two lives, so you should work in harmony, never dominating your partner, but sharing in the decision-making. All major purchases for the home, your holidays and your investments, etc. should be by agreement. All your plans for the children should be by agreement.

7. Celebrate special occasions such as birthdays, wedding anniversaries, Christmas, Father's and Mother's Day. For each occasion choose a lovely card and make two or three drafts of the message you want to present before you write it in the card. Take your partner to a restaurant for a special meal; or buy flowers or a suitable gift. Plan for a weekend away together, without the kids. The way you celebrate these occasions says a lot about what you think of your mate.

8. Every day you should give each other a good hug, especially when it is not expected.

## CATHEXIS

A man has a heart attack in late autumn. He is taken to hospital and given a life-saving bypass. While recovering at home he begins to take an interest, for the first time, in his garden. He plants a box hedge along the border with the lawn, then builds some detachable compost bins. He buys a muncher to chop up all the garden and hedge prunings so that they will break down quicker. He plants winter vegetables such as cabbages, broccoli, cauliflower, parsnips, beetroot, winter lettuce and broad beans. He then terraces his lawn, builds some stone steps and invests in a couple of good gardening journals. He studies soil ph levels, fertilisers and sprays, how to plant for the right conditions, how to prune and spray his fruit trees and how to rid his lawn of moss.

In about a year this man has 'cathected' his garden. It has become a part of himself. He spends time with it every day. He finds it attractive and has learned to love it. He won't even go away from home in the heat of summer because he needs to be there to water his garden.

Despite the fact that the garden exists outside of him, it has become a part of him, a part of his history, a part of his identity. You can't think of him without thinking of his garden. He has invested a large proportion of his life in his garden and in return, his garden has enriched him.

So it is in marriage. When two people invest time, energy and money in each other, the result is a cathexis. The two become one. It may not start out as love, but with persistence and effort it develops

into inseparable love.

Cathexis does not just happen. It must be made to happen. It requires planning, time, effort and a financial commitment.

It is not what you say you are going to do that will make the difference. It is not what you plan to do that will make the difference. It is not your good intentions that will make the difference. What makes the difference, is what you do now and what you continue to do.

Cathexis means 'to hold thoroughly', 'to concentrate a great deal of psychological and emotional energy on one particular person, thing or idea.' If your marriage is shaky, you can cathect your spouse by focusing your energies on building your relationship. Many people have done so. There are many arranged marriages in the world where romance has had no part at all in bringing the couple together, or even in keeping them together. Yet they learn to love each other with a love that becomes a deep, abiding friendship that endures trouble, sickness and poverty, rejoicing in shared happiness and good times.

## WHEN A MARRIAGE BREAKS DOWN

From my experience, I have concluded that most marriages which are in trouble are like cars that break down. When a car breaks down it is usually caused by a single problem. Most cars that break down don't have a total systems failure all at the same time. For example, if you are driving from A to B and something goes 'clonk' and the car grinds to a halt, it's not because you have blown a big end, as well as the clutch, the gearbox, the brakes, the steering, the wheel bearings, the differential, the radiator, the wiring and the alternator all at the same time. It doesn't happen that way. A break down, which renders the car useless, is usually due to a single problem, such as a fuel blockage, or an electrical problem.

So it is with many a marriage in crisis. If just one problem was sorted out and fixed—and usually it is a mutual problem which requires attention by both parties—if this one problem could be fixed, the marriage could be got going again.

If your marriage is limping along like a car with a problem, and if you can't put your finger on the problem, suggest to your partner that you spend a little time together looking at how you could improve your marriage. (This is best done away from home, such as over a meal at a restaurant). Start the ball rolling by asking: 'If there is one thing which I could do to make our marriage better, what would you want me to do?' Then invite your partner to ask the same question of you. It could be life-changing.





# A MESSAGE FROM DR DESMOND FORD

As many of you know, Gill and I have spent many hours and a thousand times more dollars, preparing books to spread the gospel. We do not accept any money for these, they are given to *Good News Unlimited* and the proceeds further the gospel proclamation.

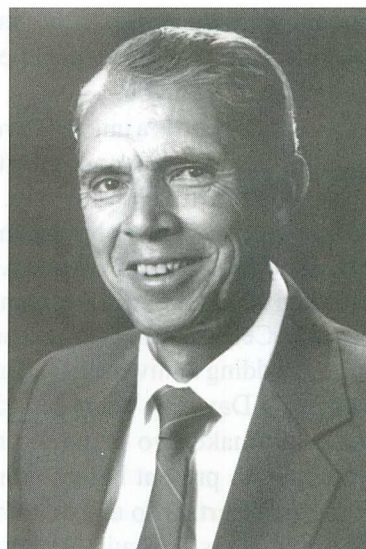
One of these books, just recently completed, is particularly written so as to stir dormant consciences, in order that the scores of ministerial families unjustly sacked during the decade or so after Glacier View, might have some atonement made to them by the church. I personally do not need such, as I am now very old and my days are numbered. But all around Australia and New Zealand are families where the breadwinner is only in his fifties or early sixties, who could benefit, if consciences respond to the moving of the Spirit.

The book I refer to is, *For The Sake Of The Gospel*. Would you secure a copy and read it prayerfully, and then, if you are so moved by the Lord, distribute copies to ministers and administrators? When you read it you will understand the reason for this appeal.

Our warmest love to you

Des

Des and Gill Ford. (Rom 8:28-39)



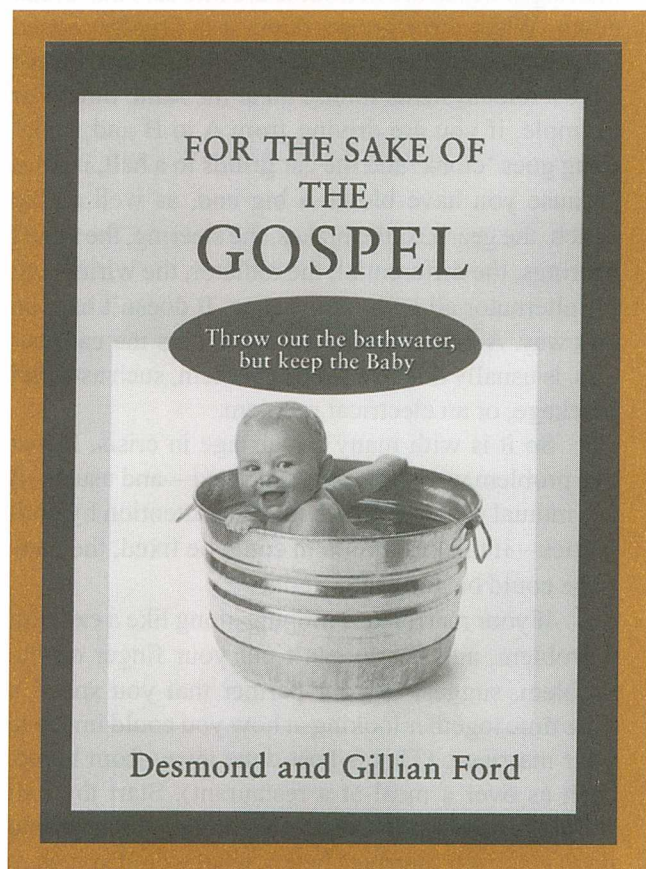
## FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL

**Throw Out the Bathwater,  
but Keep the Baby**

Desmond and Gillian Ford

*Nearly thirty years ago the Seventh-day Adventist church defrocked Dr Desmond Ford for publically challenging the denomination's prophetic views. At the same time and on the same basis, many other ministers also lost their positions.*

- ♦ What led him to speak out and is the debate still current today?
- ♦ What were the issues and who were the parties involved?
- ♦ Why was it important then and why does it matter now?



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# LOVE'S ETERNAL TIE

Desmond Ford



**W**hat an opening for a book! 'I have loved you,' says the Lord. These are the first words of the message of the last book of the Old Covenant (Testament). In the rest of his book Malachi mourns the lovelessness of that people to whom God had married himself in covenant relationship centuries before.

## ***THE BIBLE: A BOOK OF GOD'S LOVE***

The whole Bible is about the love of God. Though the Old Testament tells of an era of sin, yet it reminds us of the primeval glory.

See how creation first tells the story of God's love. God creates beauty and the senses to enjoy that beauty. God creates myriads of creatures which all in one way or another speak of him. Then God made man and woman and performed the first wedding. What choruses of ecstasy there must have been that day from angels and from nature—animate and inanimate.

There was nothing without meaning in that time of glorious beginnings. Adam and Eve's union was a reflection of the union of hearts between God and man—and both the shadow and the reality were forever. The beauty of Eve, the strength of Adam, the benediction of the sun's gentle warmth, the music of the whispering leaves, the joy of the animals, the ecstasy of physical union, and above all, fellowship with the great Father of all, each told of God's goodness.

## ***THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS UNITED***

In the first chapter of Genesis, humanity is made in the image of God. In the first chapter of the New

Testament, God is made in the image of a man. As the books of the Old Covenant begin with the story of the first wedded union, so the first book of the New Covenant describes the union of God with humanity—the marriage of divinity and humanity in the incarnation. The angels, in wonder and delight must have sung songs pervaded with reverential awe and sweeter than those of Eden.

John's Gospel begins like Genesis, 'In the beginning ...' Then, following his prologue (John 1:1-18), John numbers off days until on the sixth day (see the three days mentioned in John 1:29, 35 and 43; then add 'the third day' of 3:1). On this sixth day there is a marriage, just as there had been on the sixth day of creation in Genesis. But at the wedding at Cana, as at the Fall in Eden, the wine runs out. (John 2:3) In Genesis, sin caused all life, joy and love to deteriorate and fade. So, in the record of Cana, 'the wine of joy ceases to flow.'

The ultimate sadness of life is that nothing lasts. Neither beauty nor strength nor health nor personality itself. Because of sin, all things deteriorate and fade. The wine runs out. But the loving Christ, at Cana, teaches us that it takes three to get married. Jesus shows us that only God is sufficient to meet the needs of his fallen creatures. Christ's presence at Cana is a token, or sign, of the incarnation. God has not only pitched his tents by the tents of humanity but has become one of us in order to transform our lives.

## ***THE SYMBOLISM OF MARRIAGE***

The last book of the Old Testament speaks of God's love to man as typified in the marriage relation. The last book of the New Testament closes with the same message. There we read 'the wedding of



the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready' (Rev. 19:7). Lest we should misunderstand the reference to the bride making herself ready, it is made clear in the following verse. In actuality it is God who makes her ready.

The 'fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear' (v.8). The imputed righteousness of Christ becomes fully imparted in the last great day when all sin's taint is removed.

Paul, the chief writer of the New Testament, knew the meaning of the symbolism of marriage: 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband' (Eph. 5:31-33, see vv. 21-33).

Thus Paul tells us that every husband is a figure of Christ and every bride a figure of the Church. For that to be possible, God had to become human. Bethlehem and its incarnation tells of the marriage of divinity with humanity—the mysterious adoption of humanity into the Trinity by the closest of all unions. So God and redeemed humanity become one for all eternity. Every wedding we attend reminds us of Bethlehem and the miracle of a new creation which there transpired.

## DIVORCE

In the middle chapter of Malachi, God rebukes his people for their lovelessness. He says they 'have violated the covenant with Levi' (2:8). Levi means 'joined' and reminds us how Leah once longed, worked and prayed, to win the love of Jacob that he might be joined to her (see Gen. 29:34). Jacob's name became Israel. His partial, imperfect love portrayed the failures of Israel through all the centuries to follow.

In Malachi 2:11 God accuses his people of being faithless and profaning the covenant by 'marrying the daughter of a foreign god' (2:11). Because of their faithlessness to the covenant union with God, family units were suffering.

Divorce was becoming wide-spread in the days of Malachi. 'The Lord is acting as a witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant ... so guard yourself

in your spirit and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. "I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel ... so guard yourself in your spirit and do not break faith' (2:14-16).

Sinful man, unfaithful to God—how can he be faithful to his fellow creature? Some divorces may be preferable to a domestic chaos which is beyond repair and is killing both parties. Yet the modern rash of divorce testifies to the impiety of twenty-first century humanity. The prophet goes on to predict the coming of the messenger of the covenant. The messenger will purify the sons of Levi that they may be joined to God in purity once more and become as precious as resplendent jewels (see 3:1 ,3, 17).

## LOVING MARRIAGE RESTORED

The fulfilment of this climactic Old Testament prophecy is found when we turn the page and enter the New Testament. There, immediately, we are confronted by the story of Bethlehem. God marries humanity through the incarnation! Wonder of wonders! Theme for the most profound meditation! That the holy God should unite himself forever to a race of rebels. God comes down that man might one day go

up. God is begrimed by the filth of a cowshed, that defiled humanity might be cleansed.

Not only every Christmas, but every wedding should remind us of Bethlehem where Deity united with the

*Christian love recognises physical attraction as a genuine God-given ingredient, but only as the frosting on the cake—it's not the cake itself. It's not life, it's only a garnish to life. Who wants to live on just garnishes?*

fallen race forever. We repeat, 'forever'. John 3:16 says God gave his Son. Jesus was not lent for thirty-three years and then, flinging away manhood, resumed his former estate. Christ is still the Son of Man. Today, as during the days of his ministry on earth, he is still as much human as though not at all God (as well as still as much God as though not at all human). When Revelation pictures the Second Advent, it is the 'Son of Man' who is returning (see Rev. 14:14).

## TWO VIEWS OF MARRIAGE

Malachi and John (chapter 2) both tell of the unstable joy of human marriage. It's the same today. Let us consider that tragedy. Thus, we might better appreciate—by stark contrast—the reality to which marriage points.

At every wedding we attend there are roman-



tics and cynics. Some hear the nostalgic thrilling peals of a silver bell as they witness the ceremony. Others hear the croaking of a raven as it hovers over a wilderness, or cemetery. To some, the word 'marriage' is deliciously sweet. To others, it is repulsively bitter. To most, it is bittersweet. And then there are those who hear the word as a trumpet call to battle, fierce and prolonged.

Apart from the miraculous gift of redemption, marriage is God's greatest gift to mortals. All good things are intended to develop from true marriage: Companionship, family, character development and the foundations of a wholesome society.

But the better a thing is, the worse it can become. Lilies fester worse than weeds. There are a million divorces every year in the USA.

### LOVE AND PASSION

Many marriages fail because the love which originally united the partners is not the love which endures. Too often the love prompting the union of two people is love's counterfeit. It is but a biological twitching, a chemical reaction on the rods and cones of sight, rather than the reflection of the secret that lies at the heart of the universe.

Animals, too, have sex. Is true love only that? One thing we do know; many marry not because they are in love with a person, but in love with love. This is the worst form of egotism and is closely related to emotional and mental instability. Furthermore, this egotism paves the way for that death from which there is no return. Such love makes a particular man or woman unnecessary—anyone sufficiently physically attractive will do. Therefore, its nature is revealed to be lust, not love.

Marriages founded on passion alone last about two years (though the outward fabric may still stand). After getting married, it is not abnormal to feel the pull of physical attraction to others. But spiritual sanity detects the temptation as temporary madness. It is lust rather than Christian love. Only the latter endures despite life's inevitable storms of trial.

*'Love is not passion, love is not pride;  
Love is a journeying side by side.  
Not of the breezes, nor of the gale,  
Love is the steady set of the sail.  
Deeper than ecstasy, sweeter than light,  
Born in the sunshine, born in the night,  
Flaming in victory, strongest in loss,  
Love is a sacrament made for a cross.'*

—Anon.

### MARRIAGE AND SEX

Christian love recognises physical attraction as a genuine God-given ingredient, but only as the frost-

ing on the cake—it's not the cake itself. It's not life, it's only a garnish to life. Who wants to live on just garnishes?

We have been brainwashed about love by novels and movies. Remember, these are money-spinners for the most part and often lie. For example, nearly ninety percent of sex shown in the films is not between married partners! Yet it is unbelievably rare for any story ever to mention the possible aftermath of a sexually transmitted disease. The fact is one in every four people in the United States between the ages of fifteen and fifty-four contracts an STD!

To base a marriage on sex alone is similar to entering into a lifelong business partnership on the basis of both parties liking Ping-Pong. Now the fact is, no one wants to play Ping-Pong all the time. No one is able to play all the time. Sometimes, we want to play something else. Or, worst of all, want to play with someone else!

Such a marriage would be like a masked ball where everybody seemed sweet, fair and romantic, until the ball reached a crisis and the masks were removed.

*'Yes, I answered you last night  
No, I say to you today  
Colours seen by candlelight  
Do not look the same by day.'*<sup>1</sup>

### MARRIAGE PROBLEMS

The sad truth is most people marry a stranger. They do so in an attempted escape from life. But when Apollo loses his looks and strength, and Venus her beauty, the mask slips. The ugly reality remains and cannot be endured. The only person ready for marriage is the one who can live without it. Marriage is a school for character. The trouble is, you must be ready to graduate before you enrol.

In most marriages that were contracted for the wrong reason, possession brings indifference. Whoever gets thirsty at the borders of a well? Jewellers get used to handling even the most precious gems.

### THE ETERNAL TRIANGLE

Perhaps you have heard of the golfer who is supposed to have gone to hell after death. To his surprise he found himself at a well-appointed golf course. There was a beautiful clubhouse, long fairways, velvety greens and enticing rolling hills. The set of clubs given to the visitor were perfectly well balanced. The devil and the golfer moved to the first tee. 'What a course! Give me the ball,' said the golfer. The devil answered, "Sorry, there is no ball." If the love that leads to marriage lacks the one essential thing, then marriage can be hell. What is that essential?

We hunger for the answer. We are tragically



aware that any moron can get married, but it takes a near genius to remain married. We know that the mere signing of a contract to construct a great building is a long way from the building itself. So again we ask—what is the essential element for marriage?

The answer is, a third person. No, not the cursed triangle that preludes disaster. Rather, the third person is Christ, who, as the second member of the Godhead, is already married to humanity.

The wedding story of John 2 shows this truth beautifully. As A. B. Simpson wrote long ago: 'We see the failure of our natural life, joy and love, in the exhausting of Cana's wine. Beautiful, indeed, is the bridal scene with its fair and fragrant blossoms, the freshness and beauty of youth, the vigour and nobility of young manhood, the sympathy of innumerable friends and the bright and sunny hopes and prospects of future happiness. But oh, how soon the vision fails! How quickly the goblet of pleasure is drained, and how often the serpent is left in the dregs and all that remains is a memory more bitter, because of the joy that has turned to sadness!'<sup>2</sup>

But Christ was there. How he changed things! Soon all was not only joy, but much, much more joyous than before. Every project—and especially marriage—needs him. In him everything is renewed, strengthened and preserved.

At Bethlehem the greatest marriage of all time was consummated. This was the only marriage entirely prompted by perfect love, when divinity united with humanity.

All the wedding unions of every day (and their anniversaries) tell the same message as Bethlehem. Every human project, every human institution, depends for its success on the unselfish love only the child of Bethlehem can bring.

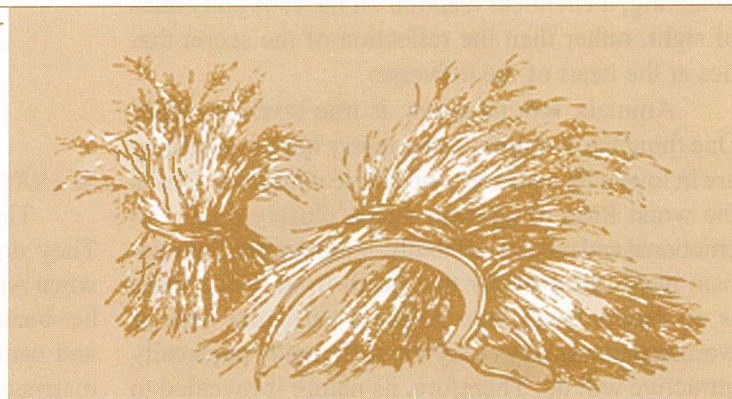
Blessed be God. He so loved the world that he gave ... So must we. Let us give and forgive in every human relationship till the Bethlehem choirs start all over again. □

#### Endnotes:

1. E.B. Browning
2. *Power from on High*, vol 2, pp 54-55. (From Good News Unlimited, Dec 1989).

## WHAT YOU SOW YOU REAP

Bob Gass



**T**he name Corrie ten Boom is widely recognised in Christian circles, but few people know about her nephew, Peter, who was also instrumental in saving Jews from Nazi persecution.

When Dutch patriots heard SS troops were sending Jewish orphans to concentration camps, they smuggled children out of orphanages and brought them to the ten Boom house until they could be placed for adoption. At sixteen, Peter, a committed Christian, defied the Germans by pulling out all the stops on the church organ and playing the Dutch national anthem while the congregation stood up and sang. He was imprisoned for his defiance.

After World War II he travelled the world with the same message as his aunt—that forgiveness is the only answer to hatred.

On tour in Israel Peter had a heart attack and

needed surgery. Talking with him the night before his operation the Cardiologist asked, 'Are you by any chance related to the ten Booms of Holland?'

Peter replied, 'Yes, that's my family.'

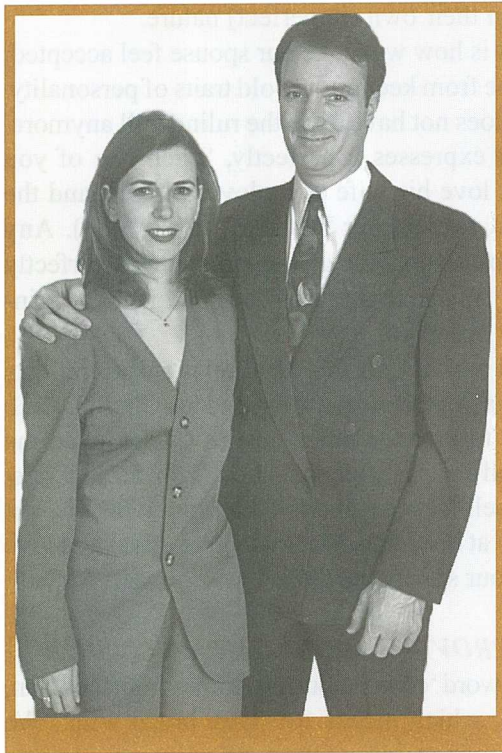
The doctor responded, 'I'm one of the babies your family saved!'

Next day the man whose life had been saved forty years earlier repaid the debt by saving Peter ten Boom's life.

The Bible says, when you 'Cast your bread upon the waters ... after many days you will find it again' (Eccl. 1:1 NIV). What you sow—good or bad—comes back to you. So, 'Let us not become weary in doing good ... at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up' (Gal. 6:9 NIV).

Remember, God is no man's debtor, and no matter how long it takes he will honour his Word. □





# MARRIAGE IN WESTERN CULTURE: FROM AUTHORITY TO COMPANIONSHIP

George Tichy

marriage has been moving away from this traditional model towards a model based on companionship. Working women, coming home from work with a significant paycheck, have obtained a new role and a new position of authority in the family.

## COMPANIONSHIP MARRIAGE

This change of roles has been good and bad at the same time. But the purpose of this article is not to examine those goods and bads. This article will focus on one significant change that occurred during this process of shifting equilibrium.

Some extreme feminists claim authority over men, but most women are able to find their place in a comfortable, stable, emotionally mature relationship with men. Such women understand that true balance in a relationship does not come from any power men or women might have. Balance comes from a wise understanding of what true companionship means.

Companionship is never based on power. Companionship is not defined as a perfect balance between man's power and woman's power. Companionship is not a competition where both of the spouses exert the same amount of power. It is rather, a relationship in which both of them invest all they can; every talent, all available time, all love possible and total fidelity. Both of them can, therefore, be as happy as they are capable.

## BIBLICAL MODEL

The biblical model of marriage is based on each partner complementing, or completing, the other. There is no statement in the Bible that recommends competition or dominance in marriage. We read, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him' (Gen. 2:18 NIV). God did not say 'servant,' or 'manager.' The woman is a helper.

It is often the case that men are physically stronger than the average woman (1 Pet. 3:7). This does not mean that men are to take advantage of their

**M**arriage as an institution has endured radical and dramatic changes in our century. More-over, each succeeding decade has brought accelerating changes to marriage. The changes are so intense that social scientists and family psychologists have had a hard time trying to understand and explain what has been happening. Tomorrow's reality will be far from what it is today.

## TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE

Male and female roles in marriage have changed greatly since World War II. Since that time, there has been an influx of women into the workplace. Women have not only been doing their jobs (and doing them well), but also competing face-to-face with men. Traditional roles became confused as more and more mothers went to work outside the home.

This situation interfered with the traditional spouses' roles and the balance of the family. Traditionally, the husband was the breadwinner and provider for wife and family. The wife stayed at home to keep house, raise the children and sexually fulfill her husband. Traditional marriage was an institution based on role performance.

However, in recent decades in western culture,



physically stronger condition by subjugating women. Women's 'weakness' gives men an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to love.

Unfortunately, subjugation has occurred down through the centuries. It is still alive in several cultures around the world. Its spirit, though suffocated in many cultures, is still alive in the hearts of most men. This is wrong. God did not intend this. God created a helper, not a slave or servant for man.

We can understand why there are women today trying to gain power over men. It is a reaction to what men have been doing for thousands of years.

### **BIBLICAL UNITY**

According to the biblical perspective, marriage is based on unity. Unity is neither egalitarian nor hierarchical. It is not egalitarian, because men and women—while equal before the law—are not the same in essence. Men and women differ physically and psychologically. It is not hierarchical, because this would invite abuse (as it has done and continues to do).

Unity has to be the perspective. Unity implies that the wife and husband complement, and complete, each other. Gender roles and sexuality are intended for complementing each other, so that each partner receives from the spouse the capabilities originally missing in himself/herself. Through unity we incomplete human beings get the support that we need.

### **CHRIST AND LOVE**

The Bible says, 'In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself' (Eph. 5:28). This is closely related in meaning to the statement that a 'man will be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh' (Eph. 5:31).

The 'one flesh' represents a higher quality of relationship between two (completely) different individuals. Once they choose to be committed to each other, they have to be open themselves to some

changes in their own (imperfect) nature.

This is how we make our spouse feel accepted. We decline from keeping our old traits of personality. Our will does not have to be the ruling will anymore.

Paul expresses it perfectly, 'Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself and the wife must respect her husband' (Eph. 5:33). Any marriage based on these golden principles is perfectly balanced. Any marriage can be saved if these principles are observed.

Paul admits that this ideal relationship reflects the relationship between Christ and his Church. Each partner is to love the other 'just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her' (Eph. 5:25). Christ gave himself for our salvation throughout his life, but especially at his death. We are to give, give, and give again, to our spouse, as Christ gave himself for us.


### **IMPROVING OUR COMPANIONSHIP**

The word 'companionship' comes from the Latin, *companis*, which means 'to share bread with.' We get an appropriate idea of the word when we celebrate the Lord's Supper. This meal brings to our minds thoughts of equality, humility and giving instead of receiving; suffering on another's behalf—even dying for others. These principles are fundamental to a successful marriage. They are great tools for mutual support.

Once we understand the above concepts, it is important to put them to work in our marriages. A good strategy is for husband and wife to read this article together. Then you can make notes, formulate questions and discuss the subject openly and sincerely.

It is helpful to make a list of the stressful topics, points and arguments that most frequently trouble you. Try to analyse why they occur. Seek to discover how your relationship could be improved when based on unity (complementing, or completing, each other).

Being well loved is the best return for loving well.

— This article is reprinted from the North American GNU magazine, Vol. 12, no. 12. 

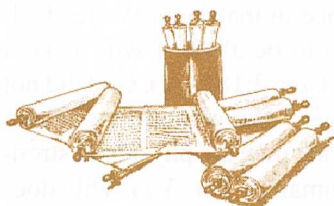
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# *2009 Christ In All The Scriptures*

Prahran Adventist Church

8 Wynnstay Road, Prahran, Melbourne

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**28th November**

**Dr Adrian Turner 11.00am & 2.00pm**

*Christ, Whose Kingdom is Come, Abides Forever*

Sacred Music Concert **5.00pm Celebration Singers**

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## DID YOU KNOW?

### GOD'S SEAL

Today we use a signature when we authenticate a letter, a mortgage document or a will. In Bible times a seal was used instead of a signature. These seals were usually engraved semi-precious stones that either had a hole drilled in them so they could be worn on a cord around the neck (Genesis 38:18), or were mounted on a ring to be worn on the finger (Genesis 41:42; Esther 3:12).

In the past, when writing was done on clay, a seal would be pressed into the tablet before it hardened, to authenticate the text. If the writing was done on a scroll, a blob of hot wax would be put on it, which would be stamped with a seal while it was still soft enough to take an impression.

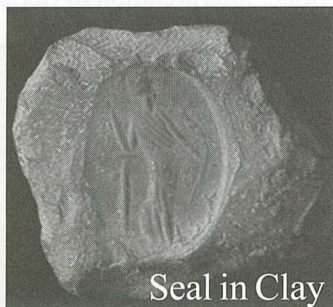
Many thousands of ancient seals have been dug up by archaeologists. Some very significant seals, such as the seal of Gedaliah, governor of Judah in Jeremiah's day (2 Kings 25:22), have been discovered.



Ring  
seals



Roman 2nd 3rd Century AD




Seal in Clay

Seals were also placed on documents to authenticate them (Esther 8:8). Jezebel was able to get action taken against Naboth because she wrote a letter in the King's name and sealed it with his seal (1 Kings 21:8). The King's seal gave the letter authority. At other times seals were fixed to things to make them secure (Daniel 6:17). Jesus' body, for example, was sealed in Joseph's tomb (Matthew 27:65-66). To break these security-seals would be to break the law and thus incur a severe penalty.

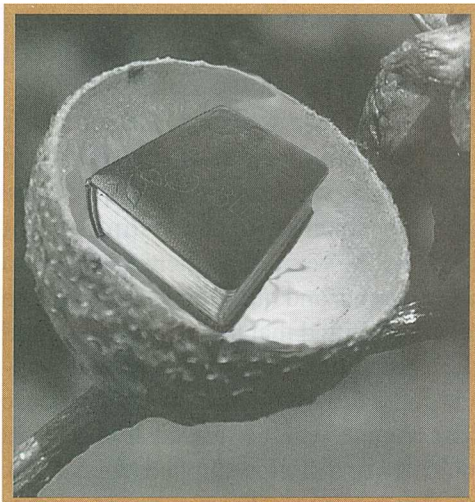
Seals were also used to indicate ownership. Many ancient storage jars have been dug up which had their owners' seal stamped on their handles.

The New Testament tells us that all true believers have God's seal on them. Just as the Hebrews put a mark of blood over their outside doors to protect the people in that house from the death angel during the plagues on Egypt (Exodus 12), so Christians have a mark, or seal on them to protect them from Satan's destroying angels during the plagues of the end-time (Revelation 9:4).

People receive God's seal the moment they receive Christ as their Saviour. What is this seal that believers receive? It is the Spirit of Jesus who comes into our hearts when we are born again (John 3:3-7). God *'set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come'* (2 Corinthians 1:22).

Note that this seal is a *'seal of ownership.'* Once we receive the Lord into our lives we no longer belong to Satan; we belong to God. And because we belong to God, we need have no fear for the future, for he cares for his own. Ephesians 1:13-14 says, *'Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance.'* 

## Good News Unlimited Seminars 2010



### Theology in a Nutshell: The Book of Romans

Desmond Ford,

Ritchie Way and Ron Allen

MELBOURNE - March 6

BRISBANE - April 17

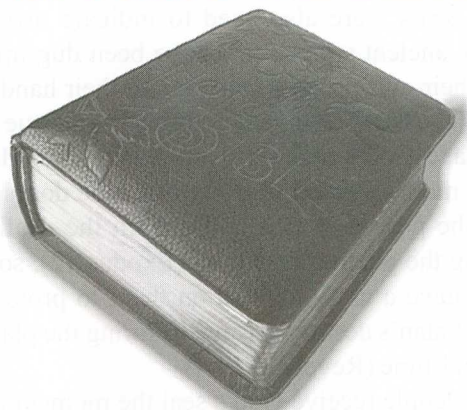
SYDNEY - May 1



# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## Part 11

### *The Man Born Blind*



Ritchie Way

#### JOHN 9:1-41

As Jesus and his disciples were walking through Jerusalem they came across a man who had been born blind, a man who had never had the light of day in his life. They stopped before him and Jesus told his followers that the time would come when all Israel would not be able to see because of the darkness that would fall upon it after he, its true light, had been rejected; but while he was in the world there would be light because he was 'the light of the world.'

What Jesus did for the blind man that day was an example of what he wanted to do for Israel. Where the light of Christ does not shine there is bad religion, corruption, oppression, depression and hopelessness. Darkness is always negative, never positive. And light is more powerful than darkness. When the blinds are opened at night darkness does not flood into a lighted home; rather, light floods out. When Christ lights up a person, a family, a group or a nation, the darkness is repelled and healing takes place; people are set free from their spiritual, mental and physical chains, trust is engendered and prosperity replaces poverty in every area of life.

Jesus knelt down before the blind man, 'spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva and plastered it on the blind man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the pool of Siloam"... So the man went and washed and came home seeing' (9:6-7).

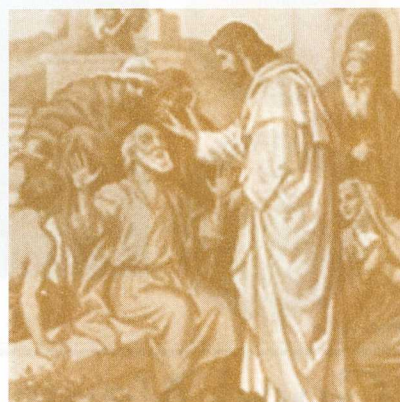
Now the process that Jesus used to give sight

to this man violated the Sabbath-keeping traditions of the Jews. Kneading was forbidden on the Sabbath—Jesus kneaded the mud. Plastering was forbidden on the Sabbath—Jesus plastered the mud on the blind man's eyelids. Healing was forbidden on the Sabbath—Jesus healed the blind man's eyes (Luke 13:14). In response, the Pharisees intoned, 'This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath' (9:16).

We have to ask, 'Jesus doesn't keep the Sabbath according to who?' He may not have kept the Sabbath according to some of the Pharisees, but he certainly didn't violate it according to God. The main purpose of the Sabbath is to provide a time when God and man can come together in a healing relationship, and that is exactly what happened when Jesus healed that blind man.

Jesus is not opposed to aspects of Sabbath observance that are part of the religious culture of churches, as long as they don't come between him and the salvation of people. The main purpose of the Sabbath is to bring man and God together in a life-giving relationship, and Jesus will challenge anything or any person that prevents that from happening. Such a confrontation forces people to make a decision as to what they worship more, their personal or denominational interpretation of Scripture, or Jesus.

When the blind man had his sight restored, the change in him was so dramatic that even some of his neighbours doubted that he was the same fellow (9:9). That is how it is with



people into whose dark lives Jesus shines the light of life; the change is so dramatic that others will find it hard to believe they are the same people.

But, because this man was healed in a manner contrary to the practices of the Jews, he was taken to the religious leaders who gave him a third degree examination. They listened to his testimony but couldn't believe that he was telling them the truth, so they sent for his parents and questioned them. While the parents freely admitted that he was their son, and that he had been born blind, they were very non-committal when it came to how he was healed, because they knew that anyone who confessed Jesus would be excommunicated or disfellowshipped (John 9:22).

William Barclay says, 'There were two kinds



of excommunication. There was the ban, the *cherem*, by which a man was banished from the synagogue for life. In such a case he was publicly anathematised. He was cursed in the presence of the people and he was cut off from God and from man. There was [also] the sentence of temporary excommunication that might last for a month or for some other fixed period. The terror of such a situation was that a Jew would regard it as shutting him out, not only from the synagogue, but from God. That is why the man's parents answered that their son was quite old enough to be a legal witness and to answer his own questions. The Pharisees were so venomously embittered against Jesus that they were prepared to do what ecclesiastics at their worst have sometimes done—to use ecclesiastical procedure to further their own ends.'

It is an utter shame that many good men and women have stunted their spiritual growth, even cutting themselves off from Christ and salvation, by choosing to stand with their finite church rather than with the infinite Christ. The apostle John wrote: 'Many even among the leaders believed in [Jesus]. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God' (12:42-43).

Is it possible to receive what Christ has for us while refusing to stand with him? I think not!


The Pharisees turned to the formerly blind man and asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to

hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple ..."' (9:26-28).

When the Pharisees were unable to deny the miracle that Jesus had performed, or get the young man to deny Jesus, they resorted to abuse, insults and threats. Finally, 'they threw him out' (9:34). Here were the religious leaders of Israel—men who had been waiting for God to come and walk among them (Lev. 26:12)—denying the plainly obvious, that God was right there in their midst healing people. They denied it because they had developed an institution with rules and beliefs that were anti-Christ; their institution and beliefs had become more important to them than the truth and the salvation of souls. Little has changed in the two millennia since.

Jesus' commentary on the different responses of both the man who had been blind and the Pharisees was, 'For judgement I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind' (9:39). That is as true today as it was then. There are two types of people—those who can't see, but want to, and those who can see, but choose not to. Concerning the latter type it is said, 'There are none so blind as those who will not see.'

## CONCLUSION

The Pharisees threw the newly-sighted man out of their sheepfold, but when Jesus heard they had thrown him out, he found him and took him into his flock (9:34-35). Jesus is always true to the people who are true to him. 

## SATURDAY SERVICE CANBERRA ACT

The Belconnen Baptist Church in Canberra now conducts a Saturday service at 5.00pm. You are invited to attend this great and friendly service each Saturday.

Refreshments are provided.

The address is: Belconnen Baptist Church, Corner of Dallachy and MacAdam Streets, Page 2614 Canberra ACT.

Phone: 02 6254 6565  
[www.belconnenbaptist.org.au](http://www.belconnenbaptist.org.au)

## Good News Unlimited Saturday Bible School 9.30am

Morning tea provided.

Please bring your Bible

Further information:

Phone 07: 5524 5040

email:

[carolyn@goodnewsunlimited.org.au](mailto:carolyn@goodnewsunlimited.org.au)

**Bible study at the  
GNU office  
2/54-60 Industry Dr.,  
South Tweed Heads NSW**

November: 21

December 5

No meetings for January

## Narellan Sydney

### Focus for Life Christian Fellowship

Those living in or near Narellan are warmly invited to meet for Bible study and fellowship in the Salvation Army Worship Centre on the corner of Exchange Parade and Narellan Road in Narellan, every Saturday at 1:30pm. For further information, contact Pastor Santo Calarco.

phone: 0404 029822



# Discussion Point

GNU is a meeting of minds from a wide range of church affiliations and therefore, opinions expressed in our articles may differ from that of many of our readers. Recognising that opinions can differ and we all have much to learn and unlearn, we encourage our readers to participate in this forum.

## THE RICH YOUNG MAN

**Dear Ritchie**

*I've been reading the story of the rich young man in Matthew 19:16-30, and, given the understanding of the gospel as proclaimed by Good News Unlimited, I find Jesus' answer to the young man's question: 'Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?' Rather disconcerting.*

*In reply to the rich man's question Jesus said, 'If you want to enter life, obey the commandments,' and then went on to define what commandments he meant by quoting some of the Ten Commandments.*

*While I must accept what Jesus said, this all sounds very legalistic to me. Are you able to set my mind at peace?*

**P. M.**

**Dear P**

First of all it is important to understand that Jesus is not teaching righteousness by works in Matthew 19:16-30. His very next teaching in Matthew 20:1-16—a teaching that arose out of his encounter with the rich young ruler—makes that abundantly clear.

In his answers to the young man's questions Jesus was gently leading him, step by step from his reliance upon obedience to the law for salvation, to reliance upon the Lawgiver himself. Jesus knew that the young man wasn't convinced that his commandment-keeping

was sufficient to save him, because he admitted that even though he strictly obeyed these commandments he still lacked something; in spite of all his attempts to live an impeccable life, he hungered for something more. There was an emptiness within him that only God himself could fill.

That's when Jesus said, in effect: 'You can't worship both God and Money. To show that you no longer worship money give it to a worthy cause and come and follow me. I will give you greater security than your money ever could.'

'When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth' (Matt. 19:22). This rich man's wealth was competing with God. Jesus demands radical discipleship; there can be no other gods before him.

**Ritchie.**

## RICH PEOPLE & SALVATION

**Dear Ritchie**

*Here is my second question:*

*Jesus said, 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God' (Matt. 19:24). Does this mean that rich people cannot enter God's kingdom? If it does, it seems to limit the power of God's grace to save wealthy people.*

**P.M.**

**Dear P**

If rich people could not enter the kingdom of heaven then that

would exclude Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Solomon, and Joseph of Arimathea.

The point of Jesus' teaching lay in why people believed they were wealthy. The Pharisees of Jesus' time preached a 'prosperity gospel'. They believed their wealth testified to the blessing of the Lord on their lives. The natural conclusion was, if they were wealthy they had God's favour and were therefore automatically citizens of his kingdom.

According to Jesus, however, people who maintained such a belief had as much chance of getting into heaven as they had of getting a camel through the eye of a sewing needle (There is no evidence that there ever was a small gate in the city wall called 'the eye of a needle').

Salvation cannot be had by trusting in uncertain riches, but only by trusting in Jesus.

**Ritchie.**

## THE SHACK

**Dear Ritchie**

*I wish to thank you for recommending the book, The Shack, in the May, 2009 Good News Unlimited magazine.*

*I read Dr. Ford's book in five nights because it was so riveting. The Shack took me three nights. Wow! What an emotional intriguing thriller it was, interwoven with teachings from our Heavenly Father in his Scriptures in a truly wonderful way. I will be lending this book to others as you do with yours.*

*I love the GNU magazines and can't wait for them to arrive!*

*I enjoy, and have learned much from your 'Discussion Point,' as well as all the other articles in the magazine.*

*I was at Dr. Ford's Auckland Seminar last November and hope he will come again soon. I was pleased to be given the opportunity to sign his birthday card. That was a lovely day.*



Yours sincerely

W. C.

Dear W

Thank you for your encouraging letter. It inspires us to do even better. Most people will benefit from reading *The Shack*.

Grace and peace to you

Ritchie.

## GOD OR LOVE

Ritchie

*In your articles you talk a lot about having the Lord in your life. You wrote that only those who have Christ, or Christ's Spirit, in their lives are citizens of Christ's kingdom. But in 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul says that the most important thing we can have in our life is love. If we don't have love, our words are as empty as a resounding gong. If we don't have love, all our mental prowess is nothing. If we don't have love, all our good works are nothing. One day everything will pass away, but love, which is eternal, will remain forever.*

*Love to me is the essence of what God is. I can't visualise God, but I know love.*

L. G

Dear L

You are right on the money; God is love (1 John 4:16), and that love was revealed in Jesus, especially on the cross.

Ritchie.

## MASTURBATION

Hi Ritchie

*I hope you don't mind but I really couldn't let your clanger on this topic of male masturbation go unanswered, whether or not you use my letter. There are important health benefits to be derived from this practice. The main advantage, according to scientific studies, is that there is a decrease in prostate cancer. Some Australian studies would appear to confirm this.*

*All the best*

B.S.

Hi B

According to my doctor, one of the best ways to reduce or eliminate the possibility of getting prostate cancer, is a good daily walk. To that I would add sunshine and a wholesome diet with minimal animal protein.

Blessings

Ritchie.

## NO OTHER GODS

Dear Sir

*The first of the Ten Commandments says, 'You shall have no other gods before me' (Exod. 20:3). If we are not permitted to have other god's before (or greater) than Jehovah, does this give us the freedom to have other gods after (or lesser) than Jehovah?*

O. G

Dear O

'Fraid not! The phrase, 'before me,' means 'in my presence.' And as God is omni-present, this means no other gods at all.

Most religions, at the time the Ten Commandments were given to Israel, had a pantheon of gods. Israel was forbidden to have any other god's beside Jehovah.

The Lord said: 'I am the LORD, there is no other; apart from me there is no God' (Isa. 45:5).

Ritchie.

## WHO CREATED GOD?

Dear Editor

*If God created everything, then who created God?*

D. P.

Dear D

Your question presupposes the existence of time before God—a time when he did not exist. But if God created everything, he also created time.

And that makes sense because the Bible tells us that Jesus created the physical universe (Heb. 1:2). If there were no physical universe there would be no time, for time can only exist where there is space and matter. Time is

measured, for example, by the rotation of the Earth (days), or the revolution of the Earth around the sun (years), or the speed of light (light-years).

God is not the I WAS, or the I WILL BE, but the I AM. Because he lives outside of time, with him there is neither beginning nor end.

Ritchie.

## BABIES IN HEAVEN

Dear Editor

*What happens to children who die before the age of accountability? Will they go to heaven or not?*

King David said of his baby that died, 'I will go to him, but he will not return to me' (2 Sam. 12:23).

C. R.

Dear C

No Israelite in Old Testament times believed that they would go to heaven above at death. They all believed that everyone, both the righteous and the unrighteous, went down to *Sheol* beneath the earth at death.

In 2 Samuel 12:23 David is talking about going to his son in *Sheol* when he died, just as Jacob believed that he would die of grief for Joseph and go to him in *Sheol* (Gen. 37:35).

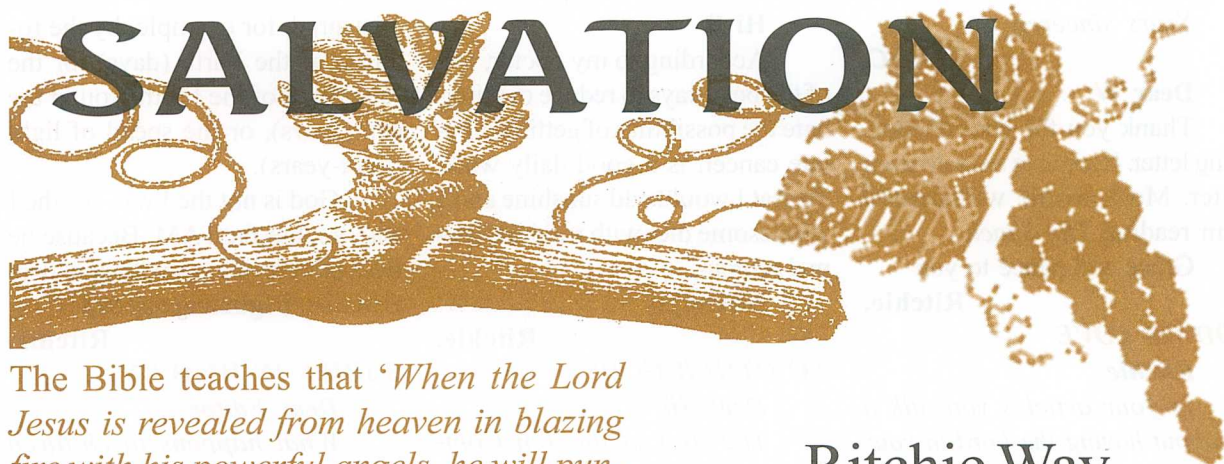
*The New International Version* of the Bible translates the Hebrew word *Sheol* as 'grave', which is not correct.

As to whether children who die before the age of accountability will be saved is not certain; there is nothing in Scripture to either confirm or deny this. Salvation depends upon a person being born of the Holy Spirit—made possible by the death of Jesus—so I would expect that a child's salvation would depend upon whether or not they have God's Spirit in them.

One day we will learn the answer to this question, though it may not be in this life.

Ritchie.





The Bible teaches that *'When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels, he will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power'* (2 Thes. 1:7-9).

Did you notice that the people whose destiny is 'everlasting destruction' are firstly, 'those who do not know God, and secondly, those who 'do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus'? These people have no future.

There is, however, a brighter side to 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9. This passage indicates that those who do know God, and who do obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus, will not be so punished.

What does it mean to 'know God'? And what does it mean to 'obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus'? Let us look at each of these questions in turn.

### KNOWING GOD

The Greek word 'know', as it is used in the Bible, refers to much more than a head knowledge of God. In the Bible, to 'know' someone is to have an intimate relationship with that person—to be one with them. In the original language the Bible tells us that 'Adam *knew* Eve his wife; and she conceived ...' (Gen. 4:1 KJV). Now Eve didn't conceive because Adam had a head knowledge of her; she conceived because Adam became one with her in a very intimate manner.

Jesus said, 'Now this is eternal life: that they might know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ ...' (John 17:3). Jesus here reveals the secret of eternal life. If we want to live forever in God's kingdom there must be a unity between God and us, that is at least as intimate and lasting as is experienced in a good marriage. The Lord wants that kind of unity and waits for us to ask him to become one with us. If we

## Ritchie Way


ask him, he will come to us, and when he comes he brings eternal life with him. The Bible says, 'He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life' (1 John 5:11-12).

Would you like to have eternal life in God's kingdom? If you would, all you have to do is tell God that you want to be one with him; that you want him in your life. If you do, that is one decision you will never regret.

### OBEYING THE GOSPEL

When we accept the truth that Jesus died for us, he comes into our life with his total forgiveness and the gift of eternal life. But when Jesus comes into our life with his free gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23), he sets about making changes, so that we might escape the pain that is the legacy of all sin and that we might experience the love, joy, peace and hope of eternal life.

The root of your salvation is Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary; the fruit of your salvation is the change that takes place in your life once Jesus comes to live in you. First the root, then the fruit. Jesus taught that he is the vine and we are the branches. 'If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit' (John 15:5). But the branch that doesn't bear fruit will be cut off the vine and burned (John 15:2).

So what Jesus teaches in John 15 is the importance of remaining in a relationship with him. In fact, in this short passage, the word 'remain' is used almost one dozen times. We must 'remain' connected to Jesus; and his life, like the life-giving sap, must 'remain' in us. When that happens we will bear much fruit—the evidence that we have been saved. This is what Paul means by obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we have the gospel in our hearts, it will also be on our lips and in our actions. Over such people 'the second death [everlasting destruction] has no power' (Rev. 20:6). 



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