

For Better or Worse

by J.R. Miller

A successful marriage requires husband and wife to share their pains and trials as well as their pleasures and comforts.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 4:9

Topics: "Communication", "Marriage"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the importance of open communication and sharing burdens in marriage, highlighting how many couples waste the blessings of love by failing to confide in one another. He illustrates that husbands often shield their wives from struggles, believing it to be a kindness, but this can lead to misunderstandings and a lack of support. Miller argues that true marital unity requires sharing both joys and sorrows, as this deepens the bond between partners. He encourages couples to rebuild their relationship if it has faltered, reminding them that with God's help, they can create a more beautiful union than before. Ultimately, he calls for a marriage that reflects the divine ideal of partnership and mutual support.

Transcript

One of the saddest things about life--is the waste of its blessings. Hearts go hungry--while close by, within easy reach, lies the bread which would satisfy their craving. The fainting fall in the struggle--while close at hand are strong arms which could easily support them. Even in the closest relationships, there is oftentimes a pitiful waste of joy and help. In many homes where hearts are really full of love--the individuals fail to relate themselves to each other in such a way as to receive one from another what each yearns to give by sweet ministry. There are many marriages that fail to bring the wedded lives into that perfect union and communion whereby one life shares all its best with the other.

There are husbands who do not get the help from their wives--that their wives would love to give. They do not take them at all into their deepest, most real life. A man shares with his wife the pleasant things--the encouragements, the successes, the triumphs, the joys and prosperities. He talks over with her the light, easy things that he is doing. But the burdens, the discouragements, the adversities and the failures--he does not tell her of; nor does he discuss with her the grave, serious questions that cause him perplexity and loss of rest.

It is not in an unkind or a selfish spirit that he withholds from her these trying and painful things; indeed, oftentimes it is the very tenderness of his regard for his wife--that leads him to keep from her things that

would cause her distress or anxiety of mind. He does not suppose that she could help him in the solving of the perplexing questions, or in the bearing of the heavy burdens--and he thinks it would be unkindness in him to vex her with the questions or oppress her with the burdens. So he keeps these troublous things to himself, and oftentimes while he is in deep anxiety and bowing under heavy loads, well-near crushed beneath them--she is moving along in a path of sunshine, in quiet enjoyment, with no shadow of care, wholly unconscious of her husband's need of strong sympathy and help.

Though the prompting of affection and of unselfishness in the husband, there is no doubt that in ordinary circumstances such a course is both wrong and unwise. It is robbing the wife of love's privilege of sharing the whole of her husband's life. It is treating her as if she were a child, unable to understand the husband's affairs or to help him carry his load. It is taking from her the deep and exquisite joy which every true wife finds in suffering with her husband in whatever causes him pain or loss.

It is easy to find illustrations. Quite recently, in the case of a heavy business failure, the wife knew nothing whatever of the coming misfortune, until it had actually fallen upon her home, sweeping all away. She then learned that for more than a year her husband had been struggling with his load, trying in every way to bring his affairs out of their complicated state and to escape the peril of bankruptcy. Meanwhile, his wife had been living in her sheltered home, wholly unaware of any stress or of any shadow impending. She had been spending money as freely as usual in her household management, making no effort to be economical, since she knew of no necessity for special economy. Her neighbors and her neighbors' wives, knowing of her husband's business straits and of his almost certain failure in the near future, thought it strange that she still maintained her costly scale of household expenditure, making no effort whatever to be economical, and thought that she had no sympathy with her husband in his financial distress. Had she known anything of the real condition of affairs, she would have instantly reduced her household outlay to the minimum, and possibly by doing this she might have saved him from failure. Besides, he would have had the inspiration of her loving, strengthening sympathy in all the struggle, and also the aid of her wifely counsel, enabling him to make a more heroic, if not a successful, struggle against adverse circumstances.

There is no doubt that in this case, the husband's motive was unselfish and kindly. He shrank from giving anxiety and distress to his wife, and hoped to weather the storm without acquainting her with the fact that he was in a storm. His motive was generous--but his kindness was mistaken. He failed to honor her with that full confidence which every husband owes to the woman whom he has taken to his side as his wife. He inflicted positive injury and sore wrong upon her, in allowing her to go on in her expensive style of living, ignorant of the stress of his circumstances, thus drawing upon herself the censure of her neighbors. This injustice to her was irreparable. Her name will never be altogether free from the reproach it gathered in those days of her husband's struggles, when she seemed to be coldly indifferent to his distress. Yet for this reproach, her husband alone was to blame.

When a man has taken a woman to be his wife, he has linked her life with his own in the closest of all earthly relations. Whatever concerns him--also concerns her. He has no interests which are not hers--as well as his. He should, therefore, make her the sharer of all his life. No remotest corner of it should be closed against her. She should know of his successes and triumphs and be permitted to rejoice with him in his gladness. If reverses come, she should know also of these, that she may sympathize with him, encourage and help him in his struggles and stand close beside him when the shadow rests upon him. They have linked their lives together "for better or worse," and they should share the pains and the trials--as well as the pleasures and the comforts, that come to either of them. A true wife is not a child; she is a woman, and should be treated as a woman. There is resistless eloquence in the wife's appeal

contained in the following lines:

A man does deep injustice to the woman he has chosen to be his wife, when he thinks that she is too frail and delicate to endure with him the storms that blow upon him, or that she is too inexperienced or too ignorant of life, to discuss with him the problems that cause him grave and earnest concern. She may not have all his practical wisdom with regard to the world's affairs, and yet she may be able to offer many a suggestion which shall prove of more value to him than the counsel of shrewd men of the world. Woman's quick intuition often sees at a glance--what man's slow logic is long in discovering. There is many a man whose success would have been greater far; or to whom failure would not have come--had he but sought or accepted his wife's counsel and help. Even if a wife can give no real practical aid, her husband will be made ten times stronger in his own heart by her strengthening sympathy and brave cheer while he is carrying his load or fighting his battle.

Whether, therefore, the day brings defeat or victory, failure or success--a man should confide all to his wife in the evening. If the day has been prosperous--she has a right to the gratification. If it has been adverse--she will want, as a true, heroic wife--to help her husband bear his burden, and to whisper in his ear her word of loving cheer and encouragement.

Not only does a man fail to give his wife due honor when he shuts her out from participation in the struggles, conflicts, anxieties and disappointments of his life--but he also robs himself of that inspiration and help which every true and worthy wife earnestly longs to minister to the husband she loves. True marriage should unite husband and wife in their entire life--whether in joy or sorrow, in victory or defeat, in gain or loss. Then grief and loss, shared by wedded hearts--draws them closer together; and renders their love richer, deeper, sweeter, stronger.

There are possibilities of wedded happiness and of home blessedness, which many husbands and wives fail to reach. It ought not to be so. Marriage is intended of God to be as nearly perfect as anything human can be in this world. It is a sad pity when the beautiful divine pattern is so marred in the weaving by clumsy hands; and when the wedded life so fails in the realizing of the ideal prophetically visioned in love's early dreams, that for love's blissful, joyous communion--there is only cold toleration within the walls which ought to be sweet home.

This book may happen to find its way into the hands of some wedded pair whose hearts are sad through disappointment. They began their life together with large hopes and with almost heavenly dreams of happiness. But at every point they have failed. Their lives have not blended. Indeed, they have seemed to be held apart as if by some strange mutually-repellent force, forbidding their real union of soul. It appears to them now--that they can never realize the sweet dreams which filled their hearts when they went to the marriage altar. Both are disheartened.

But surely there is no need for despair, even in such a case as this. Longfellow tells in one of his poems, of passing through the garden and seeing on the ground a bird-nest, fallen and ruined. But, looking up into the tree above his head, he saw there the uncomplaining birds building among the branches a new nest for themselves, in place of the one which had fallen to the ground. May not the poet's picture carry a fresh hope to husband and wife sitting in sad discouragement amid the shadows of a marriage that has failed? The nest has fallen out of the green branches and lies on the ground torn and desolated--but can they not yet build a new one--more beautiful than the one that is in ruin, and in it make blessed joy and peace for themselves? God will help them--if they will but come again to his feet to begin anew; and if they will but

learn, at whatever cost of self-forgetfulness, love's holy secret.

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