

Why I Wanted My Wife to Be My Wife

by Samuel Logan Brengle

Samuel Logan Brengle shares his journey of finding a wife who embodies love, virtue, and divine guidance.

Scripture: Genesis 2:18, Proverbs 18:22, Proverbs 31:10, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, Song of Solomon 8:6-7, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Ephesians 5:25, Colossians 3:14, 1 Peter 4:8, 1 John 4:19

Topics: "Sacrificial Love", "Marriage"

Description

Samuel Logan Brengle shares a heartfelt reflection on the qualities he sought in a wife, inspired by the loving example of his mother and the sacrificial love he witnessed in a Swedish family's marriage. He emphasizes the importance of character, spiritual devotion, and the willingness to nurture and support one another in a marriage. Brengle recounts his journey of seeking a partner who embodies sweet womanly virtues, education, and a deep love for God, ultimately leading him to the woman who became his wife. He highlights that true love is selfless and sacrificial, and that a divine connection is essential for a lasting marriage. Through prayer and faith, he found the woman who fulfilled his vision of a loving and devoted partner.

Transcript

It was my pleasant privilege once to be entertained for several days in the home of some Swedish friends. The family consisted of husband and wife and three exceptionally bright and lovely children. He was a strong, manly fellow who had made his way to the front rank in his chosen work by sheer force of character, industry and ability. She was a happy little wife who did her own housework, rejoiced in her husband's success, and mothered the children with wise and loving care.

One morning at breakfast, in the most charming broken English, she told me the one test by which she decided the fate of several suitors, and by which she was assured that in her husband she had at last met her heart's mate with whom she could gladly and unfalteringly link her life for better or for worse till death.

During her childhood in her old-fashioned, economical Swedish home she had to darn stockings and socks, something she disliked very much to do, but which unwittingly was developing in her a selective instinct which was finally to bring her great joy.

When she had grown into the radiant beauty of young womanhood, and young men began to pay her attention, each appeared as a prospective husband, and to each she applied this test: 'Would I be willing to darn his socks?' and in each instance there was a revulsion of feeling that settled the fate of the young

man, until she met him who was to be her husband.

When she applied the test to him, her heart leaped with joy at the prospect. She felt she would gladly spend her life darning his socks, and she longed to begin at once on whole bureau drawers full of them.

She did not tell, and possibly she could not tell, what it was in him that made him to differ from all others. But something in his presence or person unlocked a treasure-store of love and sacrificial devotion in her heart that made her sure that of all men he was the one to whom she could commit herself without doubt or fear. It was what she discovered in herself quite as much as what she found in him that made her certain.

When Lincoln made his call for volunteers my youthful father heard and responded to the call, left his girl -- wife and baby boy and went off to the war, and at the Siege of Vicksburg paid the last full tribute of devotion to his country, while the young widowed mother wept and the little boy looked on with wide-eyed and uncomprehending wonder.

He had been an ideal husband, and for three years had made mother supremely happy. Never once did he speak a cross word or show to her other than the most tender and chivalrous devotion. The memory of his love was ever with her, and as I grew she would hug me to her heart and tell me how happy my father had made her, and then she would add, as she looked me straight in the eyes: 'And some day my boy will make some little woman unspeakably happy.'

So naturally I came to feel that that was part of the mission of my life, one of the objects of my being, to make some one little woman happy; while to injure a woman, to mar her life and blast her happiness seemed to me, and still seems, the supremest cursedness and treason against the most sacred rights and claims of humanity.

From mother I unconsciously got a high ideal of gentle sweetness and purity, and all womanly virtues which adorn a home and make it a haven of rest and a center of inspiration and courage and noble ambition. Then one day at school word came to me, Quick! Come home; mother is dying!

When I got home mother was dead. The lovelight had fled from her beautiful eyes, but a smile was on her sweet face. They buried her, but her spirit was with me and the memory of her sweet, womanly character was enshrined deep in my heart, and in all my boyish loves and dreams it was sweetness and purity rather than flashing beauty and wit that kindled tender emotions within me. My wife must be gentle and sweet and pure of heart. This I gathered unconsciously from my mother.

Following mother's death I prepared for college, and spent four years in a co-educational university in the Middle West. What a bevy of lovely girls surrounded me there! We frolicked and flirted and picnicked, and were as frank and open and wholesome in our relations with each other as brothers and sisters, but my heart was lost to none of them. Two of them were as beautiful as any picture Sargent ever painted, but they were frivolous. One had the most wondrous eyes and the most perfect complexion I ever saw, with masses of lovely hair, and a form that would have graced a ducal palace; she was intellectual, also, but it was Lady Clare Vere de Vere transplanted to the Ohio Valley:

Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null, Dead perfection, no more.

Another was very charming, but she lacked depth of character, I thought, and was too petite.

Yet another was rich in character, one of the best students I ever knew, and one of the finest of women, but stiff in manner, and there was an irregularity about her features that I regretted. (In the callow years of young manhood very small defects, which may not be defects at all, and would probably be unnoticed by older and wiser men, may cause 'Cupid's darts to miss the mark.')

My intellectual awakening was slow, and I do not think these four years quite completed the process, but I was sufficiently awakened to see and feel that my wife must have a range of vision and thought beyond the neighborhood in which we might live, else I could not be happy with her. She must be educated, must know books, have some knowledge of the world's best thought, and the culture that only this can give.

I was not myself deeply religious, though I was a member of the Church, taught in the Sunday school, sang in the choir, and worked in the College Y.M.C.A., but I missed in all those lovely girls a religious conviction and influence which I now see I needed and craved, and should have heartily welcomed from any one of them.

Young men may appear careless concerning matters religious, but I am persuaded from a rather wide acquaintance and experience that they do not resent but respond promptly, though it may at first be jauntily, or for a time silently, to the gentle spiritual touch of the young woman who has vital spiritual knowledge, and who is frank and natural and modestly courageous in the expression of her convictions, who appeals to everything that is best in them, who shames everything that is false and morally wrong.

In these things young men are often more willing to be led than to take the lead, and here, if they would, young women could often gain a commanding and gracious and life-long influence over young men, an influence which would be welcomed as guiding, restraining, and inspiring, and greatly longed for and needed in the midst of fierce temptations to which young men are ever subject.

It was while continuing my professional studies in an Eastern university that the conviction possessed me that my wife must not only have sweet womanly virtues, be adorned with refinement and the culture of the schools, but that she must be genuinely religious, must love God and His law supremely, for without this I realized we should fail in the highest fellowship. With this love and loyalty to God abounding, I knew then that her love and loyalty to me could not fail.

Indeed, I came not through any experience, but through awakened spiritual insight, to distrust the permanency of a human love that is not replenished and enriched by the overflow of a Divine love, and a loyalty that is not purified and reinforced by the reverential fear and love of God.

Where this fear and love abide there can be no failure. 'Many waters cannot quench love' kindled and fed from this central and exhaustless fire.

But where could I find such a woman? Solomon was a very wise man and had a very wide marital experience, and he said, 'A prudent wife is from the Lord.'

If she is from the Lord, why not ask Him for her? Why not pray to Him to find her? And this I did.

Marriage is a Divine institution, is surrounded by Divine sanctions, and should be entered into with a sense of its Divine character and responsibilities and blessings, which, abused, can turn into the most fateful curses; therefore God's blessing and guidance should be sought in every step that leads to it.

The year I went East to study, three girls from one of the leading Women's Colleges of America went abroad to see Europe, and in London, to their utter surprise and joy, they found the Lord in The Salvation Army.

One of them He had chosen for me.

To her heart of sweet womanly graces, and to her culture, He added His grace and spirit. Two years later we met, and I fell in love -- I lost my heart. Here she was, the sweet, gracious, cultured woman, filled with God's love, one my head and my heart approved, and for whose dear sake I had denied myself in lonely hours of fierce temptation, though I had not seen her face, and for whom I had prayed and watched and waited.

At an appropriate time, not then being able to see her, I wrote and told her all, and she sent me the sweetest letter -- and the bitterest -- that I ever had. She said she wept at the pain it must give me, and she felt that my love and union with me would put the crown upon her womanhood, but there were obstacles in the way obstacles which she feared were insuperable. She then generously mentioned two others, with either of whom she thought I might be happier than with her. At her invitation I met them, and they were lovely women, but to my mind they were 'as water unto wine,' and I pressed my suit in spite of obstacles.

One day she gave me an anonymous little book. I read it with the deepest interest and emotion, not once suspecting who had written it, and when I learned it was her book I loved her none the less.

On another day we were driving among the beautiful hills around her home, and some occasion arose that led her to tell me of a nameless baby, a little child of lawless passions and the night, whose tender life was wasting away through the ignorance and lack of care on the part of its girl-mother. She coaxed the girl to let her have the baby for awhile, and took it home and kept it for months, nursing it back to rosy health and dimpled sweetness; and as she talked about that baby I felt that in her heart were the germs of the richest and tenderest mother-love, and for this I loved her all the more, for I felt that if I ever had a wife I wanted one who would not shun but welcome motherhood with great and solemn joy.

On yet another day we stood by the piano in her father's home, when suddenly she turned, slipped out into the hall, and left me. My eyes followed her and my whole heart went out after her.

I did not want to die for her, but to live for her. I wanted to put my arms about her, to comfort her, provide for her, protect her, bear her burdens, be her shield, and receive every blow of adversity or sorrow or misfortune that might befall her. I no longer thought of what she might bring or give to me, but only of what I might give to and suffer for her.

And then and there, at last, I had found and entered the pure world of sacrificial love and utter devotion reached by the little wife of my Swedish friend -- the world in which alone I could fulfill my mother's prophecy.

The key that will open a Yale lock was made for the lock, and the woman who can open the inmost treasure-store of a man's heart, and can bring forth the refined gold of unselfish love, was made for that man, and by this I knew that she, who for twenty-eight wonderful and blessed years was my wife, and became the happy mother of my children, was God's woman for me. And that is why I wanted my wife to be my wife!

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