

My Best Christmas Present Ever!

Thirty-eight years ago Wednesday, Barbara Wright exchanged her name for mine. For every rose that blooms, it would but tell of the infinite love I have for her...each leaf a pulpit and each petal a preacher. I married the one great love of my life. I do not believe she was one of some or many that would have made a compatible companion -- I believe she was the predestined choice by God, with whom I most heartily agree and say Amen and Amen! She has been my Sarah that fulfils all my promises of destiny; my Rebekah who fills my heart with laughter. She has been my Deborah who has led the charge down my Mount Tabor of life's difficulties and captured my heart. She has been my Mary, the epitome of virtue, blessed and highly favored!

About four decades ago, my pastor, Dr. Jack Hyles, pastor of the largest Sunday School in the world looked me square in the eyes upon finding out that I was interested in Barbara and declared, "We don't have a better girl in our church; I don't believe you have a chance with her." He was so right. In my power and strength, I did not -- but God had other plans. During our courtship, she broke up with me. My heart was grieved beyond consolation. To use the words of an old song, "I lay on my back, on my bunk, with tears in my ears crying over you." I took my burden to the Lord. You see, with every other girl I dated, I could always look over their shoulder at some other whom I might be interested in if things did not work out. With Barbara, there was never another alternative and I did not want to have a marriage of convenience to some willing soul that was for companionship only and to follow the base instincts to fulfill innate human desire and satisfy social pressures placed especially on the clergy. The only consolation I had was to remain celibate and give all my all to God on a mission field that was not conducive to marriage. It would take too long to tell, but in a prolonged period of prayer and fasting on both our parts, God in His infinite pleasure allowed me to marry the only girl I truly believed I could love. Every night when I lay down and every morning when I rise, I am filled with praise for being able to spend my life with the girl of my dreams and the princess of this never ending fairy tale. We were married just before Christmas, 1973 and I have always considered our marriage as the best Christmas present ever; I am certain, it will never be topped. It is the best present ever because:

1. Our marriage is centered by a perfect Lord with His perfect love in His perfect will.

Barbara and I do not believe this great love could be attained by any other way than Christianity. God is love. To know God is to know love. To live bereft of God through Jesus Christ is to live bereft of true love. Christ is not only the Way and the Truth -- He is the Life (John 14:6). Life to the max, with centered love is only possible through Jesus! There are a lot of imitations. People seek love and life through Buddhistic enlightenment, Hindu atman within oneself, Judiaistic Kabbalah and Islamic Tafakkur. True love is never channeled through any form of yoga or the correct arrangement of yin and yang nor is it the discovery of our

western concept of “right chemistry.” *“The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand”* (John 3:35). *“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love”* (I John 4: 16-18). Our marriage is the best Christmas present ever because:

2. I have obtained the favor of our Lord.

“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing , and obtaineth favour of the LORD” (Proverbs 18:22). God formed three institutions in the earth: 1) civil government when He gave Moses the law. The law not only shows us our need of a Savior, but it gives man a template to civilize his society. 2) the church. This is the means to evangelize a fallen society. 3) the home, established while man was yet in his innocence. The law and church were given as an answer to man’s sinfulness, one to civilize him, the other to evangelize him. Only one institution was given while man was yet in his innocence. In a real sense, until Jesus comes, Christian marriage is the closest we will ever come to the Garden of Eden restored on earth.

There is no down side to a godly marriage. Psalm 128:3 and 4 says, *“Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.”* Then the Bible says in Proverbs 10:22, *“The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it”* (Proverbs 10:22).

Our marriage is the best Christmas present ever because:

3. It will last forever.

I look back to my childhood at some wonderful Christmases and some really great gifts. I remember an early Christmas on Gateway Boulevard in Washington D.C. when my brother and I got an electric train. Oh, how cool it was to lie on our stomachs and pretend we were riding on it. I remember on Landsdale Street in District Heights when I got my first two-wheeler bicycle. It was an English racer. I was so little I had to learn to ride it with blocks on the pedals. I loved riding that bike! However, I cannot think of one Christmas present that I got while growing up that I still have except for a Bible I received when I was nine. And the two things that will last forever is the Bible and the love and relationship I have with Barbara. *“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven”* (Psalms 119:89). *“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it...”* (Song of Solomon 8:7).

We made the vow; in sickness as in health, in poverty as in wealth, forsaking all others we promised to cleave to one another until death. People have asked will we know each in heaven and will we still have relationship in heaven? Well, the Bible says, *“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known”* (I Corinthians 13:12). We know the Bible says, *“For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.”*

(Matthew 22:30). Jesus said marriage is not introduced, in other words, they do not marry nor are given in marriage. What about those who were married for the better part of their life on earth? Although our state will be similar to the angels, we are still quite different from angels in many aspects. For instance, the angels will never know the power of blood redemption on a personal basis like we do. Returning to the thought about our relationship in Heaven, if I love my wife on earth and if I prefer her company over anyone else on earth, will I love her less in Heaven? Will I be in a bachelor existence, bereft of her company? I am afraid that does not sound like Heaven to me. I am not pretending to know how our Lord will sort this out. I do know very godly men like Robert G. Lee was talking about seeing his wife just as he was passing over. Even as Jesus and His disciples recognized Moses and Elijah thousands of years after they left this world (Matthew 17:3), I am thoroughly convinced my love for my wife will go on forever. In Heaven, next to Jesus, she is the one I want to spend time with. I look forward to a walk with her along the crystal river and sitting down beneath the tree of life with our family round about us.

As we enjoy the world-wide celebration of our Lord's birthday, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to our Lord and Savior Who gave me the greatest gift a man could ever desire other than salvation: the wife, the love of my life...Barbara. She was my best Christmas gift ever.

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