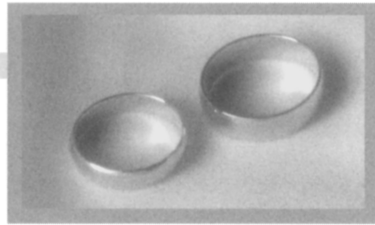


Made for Each Other



DEVOTIONS
for Newly Married Couples

ROY G. GESCH

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE • SAINT LOUIS

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*To Dorothy,
through whom God has brought
about so much joy
and blessing throughout
our years together.*

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PREFACE

A number of years ago, at a time when I was heavily involved in marriage counseling, I felt a tremendous need for more devotional material designed to help strengthen the marital ties. To help meet that need, my wife and I developed two small books on the essence and concerns of marriage. Though the one was geared to a husband's perspectives, the other to a wife's, they followed the same table of contents. It was our hope that they would be used privately first, then shared to open the door to further discussion and exploration.

Concordia Publishing House published these companion books under the titles *A Husband Prays* and *A Wife Prays*. Both authors and publisher have been gratified at the response.

Recently it was suggested that we take a fresh look at marriage, in the light of today's environment. Concordia published this manuscript also, *To Love and to Cherish*, and suggested a companion volume of devotions to strengthen young Christian couples as they venture forward to make a life together. That is the purpose of this book.

We pray God that it may meet and serve that purpose.

I.
THE
ESSENCE
OF
MARRIAGE

MADE FOR EACH OTHER

Stroll along any popular beach on a hot and sultry day. The sands are overlaid with wall-to-wall bodies. Each wave of the incessant surf stands poised to deposit more human flotsam at the water's edge.

People! Masses of people! Of all shapes and sizes. Of all races and nationalities. Scanty bathing attire has become the great equalizer. It's almost impossible to distinguish rich from poor, people of high position from those of lower estate. They're just thousands and thousands of people.

Yet the little child, half-empty pop bottle in hand, threads his way between the bodies to those two who are his own special people. There are many men all around who are stronger than his father, and many women prettier than his mother. But these are his! He recognizes, knows, and loves them. No others in the surrounding thousands could ever take their place.

Multiply this scene by a million, and you appreciate the marvelous phenomenon of human relationships. Billions of people all over the earth. But here we stand, hand in hand, uniquely alone, yet together.

By God's good grace, we found each other. We hold to each other. And we are confident that God will enable us to weather all the storms through our entire life together too.

Isn't that what God had in mind in the very beginning?

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

Gen. 2:18 RSV

And here we are now! By God's creating love two people, yet uniquely one. Two people, made for each other! It is indeed good!

PRAYER

Lord God, we thank You for each other. We see you as the wise and loving Designer and Giver of life and living relationships. We appreciate the many close friends and companions You have given us. We are fully aware of the host of the world's "beautiful people" that television and the rest of the media parade before us. But in contrast to them all, we are grateful that You brought us together. You truly made us for each other. Now we ask You to enrich our togetherness each day.

Keep us truly one in every way, that we never lose our sense of wonder over our special love for each other—or of Your special love that made us what we are. In Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

LIFETIME WARRANTY

It feels so good to invest our hard-earned money in a product that has a lifetime warranty.

In a junkyard world of broken and obsolescent wares, here at last is something that should stand up under use, and still be functional after all the installments have been paid.

A lifetime warranty. But wait a minute! What does that mean? Whose lifetime? Mine? Yours?

It's a bit deflating to learn that it really has nothing to do with our lifetime. Usually it is the lifetime of the product. The company will stand behind it for what it considers a normal period of use. Or as long as it still has replacement parts for that since-outmoded product. Or as long as the company remains solvent.

A lifetime warranty. But is it?

At the altar we made a lifetime promise to each other, and anticipated a lifetime warranty. We saw marriage as a lifetime commitment. We looked forward to a lifetime of joy and blessing.

But what about that promise and warranty? In today's context what does "lifetime" mean? Our lifetime? The lifetime of the marriage? Or the readiness of the present company to stand behind it?

Apparently many today have forgotten the wording of the promise. Or have taken it lightly. What we said—and, we hope, meant—was "Till death do us part." "I pledge my faithfulness to you as long as God gives us life."

In Ecclesiastes 9:9 we find these words: "Enjoy life

with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this . . . life that God has given you.”

That’s all we want, and all we expect! Lord, make it so! Make and keep us truly one all the days of this life that You have given us.

PRAYER

Faithful God, You never go back on Your Word. We can bank on every promise You ever made. We lay claim to heaven and unending life even now because Jesus, in accord with Your promise, has gained and given it to us.

Now help us to be true to our word too—especially to the promise and commitment we made to each other in marriage. Help us to find the full lifetime of joy and blessing that You intended for us from the very beginning. In Jesus’ name we ask it. Amen.

II.
MARRIAGE
ENRICH-
MENT

“GO FOR THE GOLD!”

There's a tongue-in-cheek story that circulated after the Olympic Games. It told of an Olympic athlete who proved he was the best by winning the gold medal in his event. He was so excited that he took it home and bronzed it!

“Go for the gold!” That phrase became a common byline. And a good one it is!

It's hard to imagine a trainee whose competitive ambition was to strive to be number 12, or even to come in second or third. The gold medal, coming in first, was the ultimate dream.

Yet, win a medal or not, all competitors had this deep and lasting satisfaction. They gave it their best shot. Every one of them was in that select group set apart from the rest of the world, a small group who had worked hard to be the best they could be.

That's a good goal for our personal lives too, and for our married lives. “Go for the gold!”

Our life together may not be perfect. There may be others around us who may seem to be more fulfilled and enriched in many ways. But they may be thinking the same about us and our marriage.

What matters most is that we strive together to be the best we can be. It's not for a medal, a ribbon, or a crown. These eventually become memento clutter. It's what we gain and what we become personally that really matters.

Paul encouraged his Christian friends:

Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone

who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

1 Cor. 9:24–25

There are blessings and prizes that never lose their worth or glory. They are not earned. God gives them to those who prevail. We will find them in our personal life, in our marriage, and in our spiritual life together, as we “go for the gold.”

That’s the ultimate goal. We dare not dream or pray or work for anything less.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, set our sights high. Give us the drive to put everything into our marriage to make it the best it can possibly be. Don’t let us settle for lesser goals, or bronze over the gold we have already been given. Make us “faithful unto death” that we together may receive Your promised “crown of life.” Amen.

III.
PRACTICAL
LIVING

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Just who do you think you are?"

That simple question, properly asked, can certainly cut anyone down to size.

And it should! Few things can damage a marriage more—or any human relationship—than illusions of being what we are not.

An inferiority complex may prevent people from reaching their full potential, but so can a superiority complex—that feeling of being a cut above others.

As long as we feel we are “the Greatest,” we will never strive to grow in greatness. And we will expect and demand more of others than we do of ourselves.

It’s pretty hard to keep love alive that way.

But how do we achieve that delicate balance between thinking too little or too much of ourselves?

Part of the secret is revealed in Romans 12:16: “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud. . . . Do not be conceited.” Jesus puts it this way (Matt. 22:39): “Love your neighbor as yourself.” We must nurture the same high regard for one another—especially as husband and wife. We may not be at all alike. But neither is superior to the other. Together we make a good life and a good marriage.

There’s yet another secret to popping the empty bubbles of conceit. The apostle Paul put his finger on it when he confessed in 1 Cor. 15:10: “By the grace of God I am what I am.”

He didn't put himself down. He never belittled his accomplishments. But he knew where the credit belonged. By God's grace and with God's help he had become what he was, and had achieved what he had done.

That's the key element for our home too. We're two people accepted just as we are. But by God's grace and with God's help we can build and we are building a good marriage, a good life together.

Thank You, Lord!

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, give us the ability to see ourselves as others see us. Then give us the courage to work to become the way You would rather see us. By Your grace it can happen! In this way enrich our togetherness, and deepen our love for each other, and strengthen our home. In Jesus we ask it. Amen.