

## Introduction

Oneness in marriage is God's intention from the beginning. Eve was created specifically for companionship and intimacy with Adam. *"And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.'"* (Genesis 2:18). That is why she was born of Adam's side. This intimacy is holistic and diverse in quality and quantity ranging from spiritual, physical and emotional levels. In the book of Ecclesiastes, in four verses (Ecclesiastes 4:8-12), King Solomon defines a friendless, lonely person and displays the outcome of this loneliness.

*"There is one alone, without companion: he has neither son nor brother. Yet there is no end to all his labors, nor is his eye satisfied with riches. But he never asks, 'For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?' This also is vanity and a grave misfortune. Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken"* (Ecclesiastes 4:8-12).

Looking for a life partner should ideally be looking for someone to befriend and become intimate with for a lifelong duration. Searching for a spouse to argue with or boss around is definitely not normal nor the right intention behind marriage. Intimacy mirrors a lot of positive, interrelated outcomes in marriage among which are:

- a. Companionship: a noble human relation in which two people feel comfortable in the presence of each other, get support from one another, open up to each other sharing everything together in a mutually edifying manner.
- b. Productivity: the natural outcome of intimacy because productivity is a sign of life.
- c. Support: an emotionally mutually required act that gives a sense of security and provides happiness.
- d. Warmth of feelings: the offspring as well as the parent of companionship. Warm feelings cannot exist in the absence of companionship.

e. Protection: important for the continuity of the human race. Likewise within the family unit, protection preserves the family from extinction.

f. Sharing: the fountain that waters companionship between husband and wife and is a proof of the existence of Companionship. This means being able without inhibition or reservation to share genuine and deep feelings of fear, aspirations, desires, dreams, pains and aches in the prevalence of true love. Adam and Eve's experience of living "naked and unashamed" represent the concept of being able to share everything together unreservedly. Our Lord Jesus Christ, raising the status of His disciples from 'slaves' to 'friends', established the fundamental precept of sharing when He shared with His disciples and subsequently us, all that He had heard from the Father. "*I have made known to you*" (John 15:15).

g. Challenge: a natural force springing from the normal life challenges Occasionally a true friend may act harshly on their friend and play the role

of a corrector and that is biblically accepted and recommended, "*faithful are the wounds of a friend but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful*" (Proverbs 27:6). Under the protective umbrella of true love, correction of a mistake will not threaten the oneness because "*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear*" (1 John 4:18) and true love is retrievable and restorable.

These aspects are the byproducts as well as the constituents of friendship. If friendship in marriage is initiated and preserved, all these attributes will be practiced and preserved too and oneness in marriage will be secured.

## **Obstacles in Friendship**

- *Lack of quality time together*. Many forces compete over our daily schedule and draw people apart. Ten years ago, the main reason for divorce was infidelity. Nowadays it is the preoccupation with the internet which addictively takes people to another world different than theirs. Amidst all these forces, friendship takes a back seat showing what priority it takes in people's life.

- Loss of warm feelings. This results from the loss of intimacy which is brought about by the neglect to spend quality time together. Warm feelings get replaced by boredom which might open the door to sinful thoughts and sinful acts.
- Loss of closeness. This takes place when sharing disappears from the life of a couple and gets replaced by barriers to reach each other in intimacy.
- Persistence of bruises and emotionally painful memories. This results when sharing gets abused and misused. In a moment of intimacy when all the barriers are down and hearts feel at ease to open up and secrets are disclosed and old memories retrieved, it so happens that those secrets turn into weapons of attack by partners. The innocence of "naked and unashamed" is lost. Adam and Eve symbolically covering themselves with fig leaves announced the loss of innocence and the inability to trust indefinitely. Example, a wife, in moments of vulnerability shares with her husband painful childhood memories or information about her family

background that otherwise she would not disclose to anybody else.

## **How to Protect Intimacy in Marriage**

Friendship in marriage, once established, needs to be protected and nurtured to ensure its safety and duration. There are lots of happy stories of successful marriages in which oneness has been sustained and maintained. However, there are equally many sad cases of broken marriages just because intimacy and friendship started to fade away and was allowed to drift into the abyss of intolerance and ignorance of the nature of things and one another. The protection has to start by acquiring spiritual discernment that need to underscore any practical protective measures. St. Peter draws the spiritual map saying:

*"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-*

*control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love" (2 Peter 1:2-7).*

If we know that:

- We have God's Divine power to live a life of godliness
- Jesus Himself has given us by His glory and virtue great promises
- We are partakers of His Divine nature
- We need, in Faith, to practice self control, perseverance, brotherly kindness, and love

Then it becomes possible to protect Oneness and friendship in marriage by taking into consideration some practices such as:

1. *Provide the time for drawing nearer to each other.* This means:
  - a. Set apart specific time for being present for each other in warmth and love away from existing unsolved issues. During these times you need to focus on each other with appreciation and intimacy. There is much less quality time when there is less quantity time. Do not allow your busy life to rob you of this specific time you need for each other.

During this time it is forbidden to discuss any problems or skirmishes. It is surprising to see how powerful it can be for a couple to regain their friendship during such set times.

- b. Let it be your goal to turn all your lifetime into a friendship mood and the exception is the time set for problem solving. Above all, do not let circumstances control your life but rise above all situations and control them.
- c. Listen like friends normally listen; attentively and patiently remembering that your spouse is not your enemy and therefore no need to utilize your defense mechanism.
- d. Listen with objectivity knowing that your spouse is seeking a listener and not a corrector or an admonisher, (someone with an immediate plan to change or improve them). Avoid giving unwanted advice.

e. Avoid interrupting because interruptions to a troubled heart burden the burdened heart even more. In addition, interrupting the speaker is a sign of a bad listener and defected communication.

## 2. Learn how to handle conflicts.

Do not spend all your time and energy on problems and conflicts because this will lead to hardening the heart and feelings. Escalating fights result in bruises and hurts and lead to permanent damage to relations. Learn to forgive and move forward in a proactive way remembering that all human beings are prone to mistakes and have their shortcomings.

Friendship flourishes in forgiveness. Never use shared secrets as weapons in a fight and means to belittle or degrade your partner.

## **Conclusion**

Oneness is the heart and essence of marriage. It interprets God's goal and aim behind instituting the family unit. This oneness is defined as the dissolving of the two persons in the marriage covenant without loss of identity, personality, interests, intellects or talents. This oneness gives birth to friendship and is born out of friendship. The two concepts are intertwined and intermingled inseparably and invisibly. Oneness can be subjected to nurturing and

preserving factors or starving, stifling and destroying factors depending on how wise the couple conduct their married life. Choose to nurture your married life friendship or else you will be like the man Solomon described:

*"There is one alone, without companion: he has neither son nor brother. Yet there is no end to all his labors, nor is his eye satisfied with riches. But he never asks, 'For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?' This also is vanity and a grave misfortune. Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:8-12).*

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