

THANK GOD SHE IS NOT THE SAME WOMAN I MARRIED 31 YEARS AGO

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SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 18:22, 'A man's greatest treasure is his wife— she is a gift from the LORD' (CEV).

Spreuke 18:22, 'Wie 'n vrou gevind het, het iets goeds gevind en 'n welgevalle van die *HERE verkry*' (AOV).

INTRODUCTION

There is no shortage of marriage advice on the Internet, for instance:

- Two things are necessary to keep wife happy. First, let her think she's having her own way. And second, let her have it.
- Marriage is a relationship in which one person is always right and the other is... a husband!
- Listening to your wife is like reading the terms & conditions of website. You understand nothing, but still you say, 'I Agree!'
- If a woman says, 'do what you want,' do not do what you want. Stand still. Do not blink. Don't even breathe, just play dead.
- Marriage is not always 50-50. Some days you will wake up and may have to give 90% and your spouse will give only 10%. Other days you may give just 25% and your husband will have to put in the rest 75%!

Funny yes, accurate no. In particular, I disagree with the last one because marriage requires 100% from both of you, and this is only possible when God is at the centre of your marriage. Only then, can you live out what Christ has given you and can your marriage reflect what God has ordained marriage to be.

BODY

Lizette and I were married for 31 years on April 22nd just passed and we are still madly in love with each other and I pray that our marriage will last for at least another 31 years, if not longer.

My grandparents were married for 57 years, until my grandfather passed away in 1995. My mom and dad were married for 53 years until my dad passed away last year. My grandparents and parents gave Lizette and I powerful example of what Godly marriage is and what 'until death us do part' actually means. They proved that a marriage, in the power of God, can weather the storms of life. They proved that marriage is a blessing, it is truly something wonderful, a gift from God.

I enjoy being married to Lizette and in her, I see God's love for me. Do you realize that for 35 years, I have had a constant reminder of God's love for me? Yes, even before we were married, I could see Jesus in her.

Not only that, but our wedding vows that we made 31 years ago before God and our friends and family still ring true. We do still value them and still do our best to live them out. Here is what stands out.

31 years ago, Ds. Frans Klopper instructed us, *'Daarom moet julle albei opkyk na die Here en vir Hom sê: Aan U bly ons altyd gehoorsaam en getrou. Ons sal u Woord lees, dit oordink, ons lewe daarvolgens inrig, saam bid en U saam dien.'*

Brothers and sisters, this is 'heavy' because it speaks into a new family unit the way the new family unit should be lived out. This means that couples look up to the Lord and then commit to listen to Him, be faithful to Him, be obedient to Him, spend time in His Word, meditate on His Word and apply His Word to their lives. Furthermore, they promise to pray together and to serve Him together.

This instruction is foundational, let me ask of you, 'If you are not doing what you promised, then what are you doing?' It is no wonder then, that when couples take their focus off of God, things go wrong.

Listen – be faithful – be obedient – intensely study His Word – pray together – serve Him together and let your married life reflect the fact that you are a God fearing, God honouring and God serving couple.

Then Ds. Klopper asked us, *'Aanvaar julle alles wat die Here vir ons in Sy Woord oor die huwelik leer? Is dit julle opregte voorneme om julle huwelikslewe hiervolgens in te rig? Begeer julle om met die seën van die Here in die eg verbind te word?*

Here are three extremely serious questions we answered in the presence of God and witnesses. If they were asked to you right now, what would your answer be?

1. Do you still accept everything that the Lord teaches us in His Word, about marriage? Yes / No.
2. Is it still your honest intention to live your married life in accordance with His Word? Yes / No.
3. Do you desire to continue your marriage with the blessing of the Lord? Yes / No.

Brothers and sisters, it's never too late, you can turn your marriage around. Likewise, even if you are happily married, your love for one can intensify because God is intimately involved. The undergirding strength in marriage is not of yourself, it is of God. Never, ever underestimate the power of reconciliation and restoration, when God is involved.

Then Ds. Klopper got to the vows, *"Voor God en Sy gemeente belooft ek liefde en trou vir altyd en in alle omstandighede aan my bruid / bruidegom"*

Let me highlight a few things here:

- Before God. Scripture reminds us that God knows our heart. There is no hiding from Him. He knows your character, thoughts, feelings, motives and most secret place.
- Before His congregation. Those gathered can witness that your answers are genuine, and in my mind, they should have the freedom to lovingly pray for you, encourage you, strengthen you and stand by both of you in the 'always' and 'in all circumstance.'
- I promise. A promise is an irreversible declaration that gives the other person the right to expect something. In short, don't promise unless you can deliver on your promise. God, who instituted marriage, and has called a couple

together, also promises His blessing on your marriage. Therefore it is only in the power of the Lord that a husband and wife can make wedding vows to God and each other.

- Love and faithfulness. This speaks to your adoration, appreciation, admiration, affection, attraction, cherishing, loyalty, reliability, assurance, truthfulness and genuineness toward the other.
- Always. When you promise 'always,' you are promising 'forever and constantly.' There is no pause button, there is not 'get out' clause. 'Always' is always and in marriage, 'always' is a blessing because it is God who blesses marriage. 'Always' is the desire of our heart.
- In all circumstances. Your circumstances are the state of affairs in your life.

Some wedding vows expand a bit and use the wording, 'for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health.'

Often, couples get caught up in the mindset of, 'if _____ improves then we will _____.' No. In all circumstances, come what may, because God is with us and blessing our marriage. God is with you in the valleys and on the mountaintops.

CONCLUSION

Do I love Lizette more today that on our wedding day? Yes. Even with a few health challenges that come with the blessing of growing older? Yes. Even with her stretch marks and grey hair? Yes.

You may ask how this possible. Let me explain, we are one flesh bound together in the unconditional love of the Lord. She is part of me and I am part of her.

So I am pleased that she is not the woman I married. I am pleased that she loves God more than she loves me because she has her life correctly ordered. I am pleased that her loving is still growing and intensifying because she is alive in God. I am pleased I am pleased that she is maturing because this is evidence of our God-blessed time together, I am pleased that she is growing spiritually, I am pleased that my Saviour is shining through her.

If my wife was the same person I married, then it means that she has not grown as a daughter of God, not grown spiritually or emotionally and she did not take our wedding vows seriously. But she has grown and continues to do so. And she is still very beautiful to me.

Therefore, my greatest treasure is my wife – she is, indeed, a gift from the LORD!

Amen