

Though our faith in God should eliminate fear¹, it was with some trepidation that I considered what I was about to do. In a way I felt like Jacob, who offered to work for 7 years to obtain his bride Rachel². I had spent the same amount of time in a growing relationship with the artist schoolteacher³). And, like Jacob when he moved the stone from the well by himself⁴, I was powerfully motivated to have her presence in my life. She was more service/relationship - oriented than “mission”- oriented like myself. Together I felt that we sort of balanced art (seeing God in beauty), and study (seeing God in the message of Goodness).

I thought it was finally time to propose marriage to her. When we first began to spend time with each other, I realized that I wanted a relationship with her even if there was perhaps no physical intimacy. I valued her being, her spirit, and desired a union of souls. She was a soul worth far more than rubies⁵, who offered herself in sacrifice for others (and in a special way to me)⁶.

We had much in common in terms of previous relationships in that we each had years of famine, and now years of feasting!⁷. She had suffered abuse⁸, and I had been treated without respect, even ridicule⁹. We were each confronted by those who were not genuine followers of the Way. We ended up saving each other from that past and helped each other to see the true meaning of love. And our “second” life was much better than the first¹⁰.

I had gone to a goldsmith that we both knew, a real artisan, and asked him to prepare a suitable ring to offer to her. He had once been one of her students. As we all shared a love for the beauty of the Creation, I asked the goldsmith to design an engraving that expressed that beauty. The theme of the engraving was to be “The Heavens Declare the Glory of God¹¹”, referring to the creative nature of True Love. I supplied gold and precious jewels to the goldsmith that were an inheritance from my parents, and asked him to incorporate them into the ring.

When it was finished, I offered the ring to my friend. When I told her that I had a special gift for her, she smiled broadly, but later I learned that she thought I was giving her a puppy as a pet because she loved animals so much! That was a little disappointing! But she agreed to be joined with me in marriage. Seeing her face as she accepted was to me like seeing the face of God!¹²

The thing about love is that it is creative¹³. God created the heavens and the earth, and He absolutely loves that creation (for creation is a part of His very nature¹⁴! He “stretched the curtains of heaven”¹⁵, and in an artistic sense He painted the starry night. God wants to see our creativity (as we build new things) within the scope of His will¹⁶.

The ring is a gift of commitment to her - a symbol of creativity and growth in our relationship as God shares His Spirit with us. It wraps around her finger as our love wraps around our lives. The scene is static, but has the sense of something dynamic, animated, and growing. Love sometimes means having to let go of “control” to support that creativity, reaching for (and painting) the stars at night, and as such essentially painting the “face” of God and His Goodness.

The years since have illustrated to me the mystery of two becoming one in the marriage relationship¹⁷. God and His Kingdom are really more about the mystery of many becoming one, though we keep our separate personalities. The oneness we share is in purpose and belief in God. We become integrated into that Great Goodness¹⁸.

Like the roots of flowers growing together, we become entangled with a retention of personal bloom, but subject to God’s dominance. There are many connections in the Kingdom, and we

merge together as we grow together in Him. Continual growth with God is our ideal, and it is definitely possible by the Grace of God. In earthly relationships, love should also grow as we travel in life together; this is the way it should be. As Jesus said, the Kingdom of God is like the growth of a mustard seed¹⁹; and so it is with True Love!

1. 1 John 4:18
2. Genesis 29
3. related in other stories
4. Genesis 29:10
5. Proverbs 31:10-31
6. Romans 12:1
7. Genesis 41
8. like Abigail's treatment by Nabal, 1 Samuel 25
9. like David's treatment by Michal after his dance when the ark was brought into Jerusalem, 2 Sam 6:16 ff
10. like the life of Job, Job 42:12
11. Psalm 19:1; consider the image of Van Gogh's "Starry Night" on the ring
12. Jacob, being accepted by Esau as he returned home from exile, Genesis 33:10
13. "The thing about love is that it is creative." N.T. Wright
14. Genesis 1:1ff
15. Isaiah 40:22b
16. God made us in His image, Genesis 1:26-27
17. Paul's analogy of marriage and the church, Ephesians 5:23-32
18. We want something else which can hardly be put into words - to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it. C.S. Lewis
19. Luke 13:19

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When I was young, I wondered if I was “worthy” of love. I wondered if anyone ever actually love me. I figured that I needed help – a lot of it. So, I prayed for God to help someone love me, and sought signs that I was making proper choices. But I interpreted the signs to support my desires, and so I chose poorly in the past. Once I decided to stop working things according to my own vision, God began to provide for me. I realize, though, the irony of God, who created us and so strongly wants us to love Him, has to hear our prayer that we want someone else to love us. But when He created Adam, He did not keep him to Himself, but created Eve as a companion [Gen]. And the marriage relationship is a preview of God’s relationship to His church [Eph 5], and His Grace which makes us worthy through Christ.

trepidation

starry night -> The Heavens Declare

SSM slant on my giving a ring to the teacher/artist

going to the goldsmith; preparing the gift: design and materials (inherited gold and jewels)

working 7 years like Jacob; (chasing her for 7 years)

Presentation of the gift:

thinking that I was giving her a pet puppy (she loves animals so much);

Energized: Jacob moving the stone from the well

Wanting to be with her; Presence: our response to God

We had much in common from previous relationships in that we each had 20 years of famine, then 20 years of feasting! (like Joseph).

a previous relationship was one without respect, even ridicule (like David and Michal); perhaps even for religious reasons; no religion or hyperPharisaic

Abigail – married to Nabal, superseded her husband because she chose to protect her family and home; but when it was over, she came to David when he asked; delivered from an abusive marriage

Other models:

Ruth – who sacrificed what she thought was her future and home to follow / be with someone that “drew” her; but became much blessed instead (and the world was blessed through her); commitment

Lydia – creative, and greatly loved and honored

Proverbs 31 – the SZ writeup

First girlfriend

Magnify blossoms: Kudzu, taking over

Do I not mean more to you than ten sons?

The sense of a dynamic (animated, growing) scene? The illustrated Ring

The meaning of the ring – all of Goodness shone in the stars;

Goodness: not vague Nirvana, but highly personal

Integrating into Goodness

CS Lewis quote about being integrated with God: We want something else which can hardly be put into words - to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it. C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory [underline hsl]

Our relationships on earth should keep growing, too; this does not always work out

Expanding universe; mustard seed growth

Job's "second" life was better than the first; parallel to my first and second marriages;

Trying to "be" worthy; Christ; Grace; we are only worthy through Him

[Rom 12: offer living sacrifice (body); given a name meaning / interpretation].