

Romans 12:9-10 (1984 NIV)
Devotion and Honour in Marriage¹

Introduction

We are gathered today to witness the holy matrimony of this beloved couple, and to rejoice with them as they begin life together as husband and wife. For our purpose today, I like to share some thoughts with the couple as well as with all present here based on what Paul says in Romans 12:9-10.

The Apostle Paul when writing to the Roman believers exhorted them in v. 9 to let their love for one another be sincere. The word “love” here is the “agape” kind of love—the God-kind of love; the love that comes from God to us; the kind of love that we as human beings can express only when God by the Holy Spirit so enables us.

So, the pertinent question today is: “How can we express this kind of agape love practically in our relationships with one another, especially between husband and wife?”

Paul says in v. 9, “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good,” and then adding in v. 10, “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”

I want to focus on two terms in v. 10. The first is ...

I. BE DEVOTED to one another in love (v. 10a).

If I may paraphrase Paul here, it would be something like this—“Be devoted to one another in loving togetherness.” In other words, Paul is calling the Roman believers then (and us today) to show devotion to one other in loving togetherness as befitting of people who are in close-knit relationships with one another. This is because our common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ binds us together as members of the same family of God.

- What does this mean for the husband to love his wife in the Lord?
- What does this means for the wife to love her husband in the Lord?

As a man and a woman prepare to say their marital vows to each other, they are reminded by Scripture to be devoted to each other in loving togetherness.

There is one very important implication associated with this—i.e. their devotion for each another in the Lord must be resilient. This is because such devotion recognizes and accepts the weaknesses of the other. Such devotion helps them both to realize that they are fellow pilgrims walking down the same

¹ This is a wedding sermon.

road of life. At times one or the other will stumble or fall. And when it happens, one will need the other not to give another kick; not to abandon; not to slander; not to ignore; not to give up hope. Rather, the fallen one will need the other to help him/her stand up again.

That's what it means for a couple to be devoted to each other in loving togetherness as husband and wife in the Lord. *Be resilient in devotion for each another—i.e. they must persevere to stick together in marriage.*

Notice that I have chosen my words very carefully—"stick together in marriage". This means the couple don't give up on each other no matter what. I did not say "get stuck with each other in marriage"—this implies you actually want to get out but you can't ... because you are stuck with that person. It is so easy to talk about getting out when the going gets tough and rough. Your mind starts to think, "My life would be so much easier and happier if I am not with that person."

Of course, there will be disagreements time to time, but these need not be divisive. My own experience in marriage has convinced me that disagreements don't necessarily divide us; what does is often a lack of forgiveness.

In their disagreements time to time, the couple must remember to stick together because peace in marriage is not so much the absence of disagreements, it is very much the presence of forgiveness for each other in God's name. So, they are to let their hopes of forgiveness, and not their hurts of disagreements, shape the future of their life together in the Lord.

Focus on the positives in each other. This is not to say that you turn a blind eye to the negatives. But if you keep looking at the negatives in a person, it is so easy to spiral yourself down to an endless cycle of complaints and contempt. However, if you focus more on the positives in a person, it brings thankfulness and hope for better things to come.

So, let the couple define each other by the good they see in each other; appreciate each other and thank God for the good they see in each other; and thereby reinforcing the good in each other.

Because of the reality of sin, every marriage has difficult moments. The groom should be well aware that he is marrying a woman, not a goddess. He can at best call her his "Cinderella", but she is not his goddess.

In the same vein, the bride should be well aware that she is marrying a man, not a god. She can at best call him her "Prince Charming", but he is not her god.

What I mean is that both are to be aware that they are marrying someone that the Bible says is not perfect and will stumble in many ways. And once they recognize this, it will prepare them to be resilient (to stick together) as they

face challenges in their marriage; to use the ups and downs in life as opportunities to make their marriage stronger.

Moving on, the second term I like us to look at in v. 10 is ...

II. HONOUR one another above yourselves (v. 10b).

If I may paraphrase Paul here, it would be something like this—“Honour one another by first serving the other before serving yourself.”

What this implies is that with humble-mindedness, the couple should strive to outdo each other in terms of giving honour to the other. If you want to compete, then the man is to outdo the woman in giving honour to her. In the same way, the woman should strive to outdo the man in giving honour to him.

To so honour your spouse is to show him/her that you bear his/her welfare and well-being deeply in your heart. You show love, respect, appreciation, and value without feeling that you are a lesser person for doing that. In other words, you do this to your spouse without the need to prove yourself to be better. Very often, when spouses fight to be number 1 in the workplace and carry that “aggression” into their home, they continue to fight *IN* their marriage instead of fighting *FOR* their marriage.

So, let the couple *work at giving honour to each other—serving the other before yourself—so that when you should fight, you fight together FOR your marriage, and not fight each other IN your marriage.*

Seek the Lord to honour each other by showing mutual love and respect. The Bible instructs husbands to love their wives because it is easy for husbands NOT to do so. Wives are told to respect their husbands because it is easy for wives NOT to do so. So the Bible calls on us to do things that might not come naturally to us—man to love his wife and woman to respect her husband (Eph. 5:33).

So the man is to honour his wife by loving her, and she will grow to be more lovely and lovable a woman. In the same way, the woman is to honour her husband by respecting him, and he will become even more respectful and respectable a man.

Conclusion

An elderly man was invited to his buddy's home for dinner one evening. He was impressed by the way his buddy addressed his wife with very endearing terms—like *Dear, Honey, Darling, and Sweetheart*. This couple were in their late 80s and they had been married almost 60 years. Yet they still appeared very much in love. While the wife was in the kitchen, the invited man said to his buddy, “I think it's so wonderful that after all these years, you still call your wife by those romantic pet

names.” The old man leaned over and replied, “I have to tell you the truth. I forgot her actual name some years ago.”

I have heard couples married for many years using pet names to call each other—*Old Man, Old Lady, Ah Lau, Ah Soh*. The wedding day is always a day of happy moments, especially for the groom and his bride. But 60 years down the road, the groom and his bride today may have well forgotten much of the happy moments on their wedding day. But I hope they will still remember and not forget each other’s name ... AND their marital vows to each other on their wedding day.

All of us are here because we have accepted the invitation from the couple to come and celebrate with them their love story. But do you know that there is also another invitation for you to accept today? It is perhaps the most important invitation that you have ever received ... because it comes from God Himself, inviting you to be part of His love story for the world; inviting you into His heavenly family and blessings.

The Bible gives God’s open invitation with these words: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12). If you wish to know more about what this wonderful invitation means and why it is important for you to consider it seriously, I encourage you to talk with any of the Christians (maybe the ones seated with you at the lunch table) after the service.

Let me say this to the couple as I close, “The Lord in His love has brought you both together as husband and wife today. May He who has begun His beautiful work in you continue to guide and bless your life together in Him and with Him in your coming days. Congratulations!”

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come to you asking your blessing and favour on this beautiful couple. Help them build a life and a home together where there is an atmosphere of devotion and honour for you and for each other. We pray that both of them will enjoy the freedom to become all that you want them to be individually and as a couple. Grant them courage to follow your ways in a world that has often rejected these. Guide and watch over their life together from this day onwards. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen!