

PENIEL

My Ministry Minute From The Heart Of The Founder

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Dr. Marion Spellman

What Does Love Look Like?

"Hon, did I leave my red coat in the car, it's not in the closet?"
"No, Babe, your coat is not in the car! Don't you have another one that you can take?" "Oh, now I remember! I left it in my office. Will you please run over to the center and get it for me? I'll be ready by the time you get back."

"OK, Babe! I've got the coat." He says proudly. "Thanks Hon, just hang it up in the closet in the play room and I'll be right down." "Hang it up? Hang it up? He says again, as if he did not hear himself the first time. I thought you wanted to take it with you?" "I did at first, but then I thought about it and I think my long black coat will be more appropriate – It's right in the closet down stairs." Well, you've never heard such a deafening silence in your life; but then the all too familiar words rang out from the bottom of the staircase. "Marion, I thought you said that you were ready. "I am, I am." I impatiently reply, "I'm coming! I'm coming! Spelly... give me a minute." "Oh, Hon," I continue, as if I am having an after-thought, "I have just one more tiny little thing I need. I need you to put something in my brown cosmetic bag that I almost forgot."

"Marion," my frustrated husband responds, "the suitcases are already in the car. Didn't I ask you to please pack everything that you would need in advance – and didn't you clearly tell me last night that everything was packed?" With a very deep sigh, or maybe I should say an exasperated groan, and without wanting or expecting an answer, he continues his chastising. "How many times do I have to ask you Marion, to please, please pack everything you need the night before?" Intentionally ignoring his aggravating questions, I purposely refocus the attention with a demanding question of my own. "Harold Spellman, what in the world is this attitude about? Are you going to put this stuff in my bag or not?" I have deliberately stopped referring to him as 'Hon' or even Spelly. Now, I am calling him by his birth name and subtly transferring my guilt. At the same time, I am also insinuating that I am injured, insulted, and confused about why he is acting so mean and irritated. My voice tones purposely communicate that I am the one who is upset here, and furthermore, I am also very, very offended.

Bulls-eye! He picks up the vibes! "Okay, okay Marion, give it to me! I hope that jar's gonna' fit in that small cosmetic bag because we are absolutely not taking one more piece of luggage." Then he continues grumbling something else, as he takes the 'must have' cleansing cream, the 'forgotten' slippers, and the 'just in case' extra pair of jeans. Giving one final check to assure that the lid is screwed on tightly; he continues to make inaudible mumbling noises.

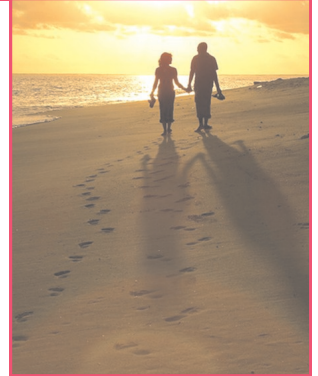
Still, I couldn't help but notice as he walked toward the car that the trunk had already been left wide open. He knew that I would surely forget something. He had expected this all the time! Chuckling to myself, I thought, "Why then does he put himself through all this aggravation every single trip?" But trying to make the situation a little bit better, I half-heartedly ask "Can I help you with the bags, Hon?" Bad timing!! Wrong question!! He looks at me as if I was speaking in another language and defiantly refuses to answer.

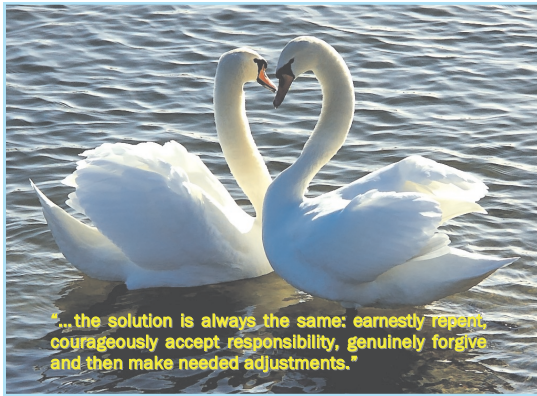
Well anyway, with a fasten your seat belt reminder; we're finally on our way. It is completely quiet in the car and his breathing is slowly coming back to normal. "Are you hungry Babe, or do you just want to wait until we get to Breezewood?" he says, interrupting the silence. And without saying another word, he smiles and visibly affirms that all is well between us.

The trip ahead promised to be long and very exhausting, but now the atmosphere has dramatically changed. We both feel a sense of anticipation and excitement. And so, we settle in for our usual "travel talk." We are eager to take full advantage of this opportunity to be alone together.

It is our time to just talk. We talk about everything and we talk about nothing. We discuss the latest crisis that our children are facing and why they should know better. Next we shift to the problems of Peniel and the victories happening within our church. We discuss politics a bit and then agree to put that subject on the burner for now. We share precious moments of absolute silence and we also chatter like teenagers about silly stuff.

But no matter what we discuss - our conversations invariably lead us straight to Biblical principles. God's recorded mind-set on every matter so influences us that we either make an attitude adjustment or we reinforce God's position on the subject.





And it never ever fails! Even as we are speaking about something that is absolutely unrelated, the Holy Spirit is certain to prick my heart with a sense of shame and genuine repentance. I speak softly as I slowly reach for his hand. "I'm sorry that I upset you this morning, Hon. I'm really going to do better." "No Babe," he gently interrupts, "I am the one who is sorry. I'm sorry that I wasn't more patient with you. My behavior was simply unacceptable and it certainly wasn't necessary." We smile at each other and he tenderly squeezes my hand. Still deep inside, I suspect that we both know that this scene is sure to play out again. But we always have the hope that we will get it right the next time.

Does this incident sound familiar? You had a bird's eye view of a moment in the life of the Spellmans. You probably know by now that this was a minor incident, and that there are of course conflicts that are far more serious. But the solution is always the

same: earnestly repent, courageously accept responsibility, genuinely forgive, and then make needed adjustments.

The question is, can a healthy loving relationship exist or even grow where disagreement, disappointment, or confusion are possible and yes, even inevitable? Does it matter if spurts of disharmony or even manipulation happen between family, friends, or spouses? Frustration, friction, and conflict are all common in relationships, but Biblical principals always remain and must ultimately prevail.

Let's settle some basic particulars about love! There is "true love" and then there is something that dresses up and "passes for" love. This is an imitation that talks and looks the part, but is in fact an absolute counterfeit. This spirit is manifested by sensual thrills, chills, and passions. THAT OLD FAKER!

It is best known and most commonly modeled among the lonely and the superficial population within a society. Its formal name is LUST! It has declared itself to be legitimate, when the truth is, it is really a barefaced unadulterated abuser and is as bogus as a three dollar bill. Lust's greatest tools are deception and camouflage.

In far too many cases, lust is actually chosen over true love because it doesn't demand the same effort, promise the same pain, nor require the same commitment. Excuse me for one second. "Helllllll - looo! Hel - looooo. Is there anybody home? We need to wake up and smell the coffee!" That self-serving FRAUD is claiming to be authentic but really it will ultimately demand ALL, give NOTHING, and always, always leave its victims WANTING. Now here is the "scoop" about this Old Phony - it is as far from genuine as the east is from the west and we dare not settle for it on any level!

Unfortunately the term "I love you" is a mistaken concept and is sadly reduced to a misused cliché. Until and unless we accurately identify, distinctly characterize, and conspicuously experience the awesome love of God, we will never know what we are looking for nor if we have even found it. We will falsely assume that misunderstanding and human failure determine the significance, the strength, or the worth of a relationship.

Actually, love can be a gratifying and rewarding vehicle toward personal growth and contentment or it can be the most incapacitating and the most devastating phenomenon known to man. It can be blissfully challenging or excruciatingly painful - sometimes simultaneously. Love requires tremendous effort, even in its purest form.

Indeed, love is the most powerful and fertile divine or human emotion that this world will ever know. No! - let me restate that! True love is more ... much more than a mere emotion. It is the utter core and the very essence of Almighty God. It is the most elusive achievement and the most extreme conquest that any individual will ever realize. It is the single most meaningful and the most sought-after power revealed to the human race since the beginning of time. It is the absolute greatest of all heavenly gifts. Ah yes, it is God incarnate. Rest assured and stand secure that God is Love. We opened our visit with a question, What does love look like? Well, here is what love looks like:

- 4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;
 - 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;
 - 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;
 - 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
 - 8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.
- 13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. Read 1 Cor. 13:1-13 (NKJV)

My Ministry Minute
is a monthly publication by Dr. Marion Spellman mailed exclusively to selected church and community leaders.

HOW AWESOME IS THAT! Thanks for sharing a part of your day with me again this month - I really value our time together. We could talk more, but Spelly and I are on our way to the Pennsylvania State Prayer Conference and I have to go up-stairs and pack.