

Feminism and the Problem of Pride

Self-seeking pride is the bane of any relationship between human beings, simply because pride is the antithesis of love. It is selfless, sacrificial love that enables human relationships to work effectively, and love cannot flourish in a relationship dominated by pride. James wrote, "But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there" (Jas. 3:14-16).

In no relationship does pride do more damage than in marriage. When spouses selfishly see themselves as most important and their own will as most decisive, marriage can hardly be what God wants it to be. Just as human self-will drove a sinful wedge between man and God, it will destroy the union between a man and his wife. The kind of love that sustains a rich marriage is patterned after Christ's love for the church: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Eph. 5:25). The husband who, like Christ, would give his life for his bride is certainly not the proud egotist who sees her simply as an appliance to make his own life easier. If either the husband or the wife has an "I infection," the marriage has a problem.

There can be little question that the feminist movement has fed the fires of pride within the marriage relationship. And this is true for men as well as for women. Reacting to the abuses of fallen, sinful masculinity, feminists have promoted (however unwittingly) a self-seeking competitiveness in marriage that encourages women to commit the very same errors that lie at the root of most men's problems. Selfishness, pride, and a me-first orientation toward relationships is destructive to any marriage, and when women adopt these traits to assert their rights, their husbands respond by selfishly reasserting themselves — and a vicious cycle is set in motion. Here at the close of the twentieth century, many marriages are in much worse condition than they would be if our culture had not been subjected to the feminist proclamation of pride.

Feminist visions of marriage typically define the ideal husband as one who makes the best appendage to his wife's pride. A typical example is found in *The Path*, a current best-seller by Laurie Beth Jones, who describes her pre-career life with this simple statement: "I grew up, got married, got edu-

cated, got divorced (or 'freed' as I like to call it)." Jones tells about a client who wanted to get married and needed help formulating her "vision" of what a great marriage might look like. Under Jones' influence, this young woman "finally took the time to write out in her journal exactly what her vision of the ideal marriage would be. For her it involved having a husband who was supportive of her career, who loved to cook and do housework, someone who had his own career, and enjoyed staying at home, fixing or building things. Being a firm believer in the power of the written word, she also wrote her vision statement out in her Day Timer and referred to it regularly: It is Friday afternoon, 5:30 P.M. My husband picks me up from the airport with champagne on ice. We drive to our newly constructed home, and have dinner, which he has lovingly prepared. After dinner we walk down the two steps to our sunken living room, and sit in front of the fire, have wine, and talk about our day.

"Many people who enjoy good marriages will sense a vague uneasiness that something is wrong with this picture. Whether we are men or women, if we see our spouses as creatures whose reason for existence is to adorn our lifestyle and lavish happiness upon us, we have made a fundamental mistake. Jesus taught that blessedness comes from giving, rather than receiving (Ac. 20:35). When pride turns this principle around and sees joy and fulfillment in terms of how well a mate respects our own rights, the basis for marriage as God intended it has been damaged. In our day, feminism has done much to spread this damage.

Paul wrote, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3,4). Here is a basic truth that affects the quality of every human relationship. When we live consistently with this principle, we reap pleasant rewards. When we do not, the long-term consequences cause us much heartache and regret.

Gary Henry

I See Four Men

William Stewart

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had set up a huge gold statue. Throughout the land, a proclamation was made, that all people should fall down and worship the image when they heard the symphony of music. The warning was given,

...whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. (Daniel 3:6)

And so it was, when the horn, flute, harp and lyre sounded, the people would bow down and worship the statue of Nebuchadnezzar, all but a few of the Jews who had been set in authority by the king. Three men were accused of not giving the king honor - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed Nego (Daniel 3:12). They would not bow to the golden image, nor would they serve the Babylonian gods.

Enraged, the king called for the young men to be brought before him. He charitably gave them an opportunity to mend their ways. But if they would not worship his image, they would be sentenced to death by the fiery furnace. He was wasting his breath, for they, like Daniel, would not defile themselves with the things of Babylon (Daniel 1:8, 17-20).

These young men spoke to the king,

...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up (Daniel 3:17-18).

Note, they did not tell the king that God would save them from the fiery furnace, but that He was able. They acknowledged that He could, but did not know if He would save them from the furnace. But even if He did not, that would not alter their devotion to Him or confidence in His goodness.

Nebuchadnezzar was angry at these young men already, but now his rage climaxed. He had the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. The king had his mighty men of valor bind the three Hebrews and cast them into the furnace. The fire had been kindled so hot, the men who cast them in died from the heat.

The king was astonished, for as he looked into the furnace he saw...

...four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. (Daniel 3:25)

What Nebuchadnezzar saw, prompting him to call the fourth man as being "like the Son of Man," we do not know. From a Christian view, do we here see the Christ?

The three Hebrews came out of the fire, not a hair or a thread singed, and no smell of the fire on them. The king then proclaimed,

Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! (Daniel 3:28)

The king went on to decree that destruction would come upon anyone who spoke against the Hebrew God,

...for there is no other God who can deliver like this. (Daniel 3:29)

A Lesson For Today

May we learn from Daniel's friends that we should always trust in God, no matter how dire the circumstances. Had these young men allowed fear rather than faith to guide their actions, then they would have bowed before the image and committed adultery. Many of their countrymen had done so; in fact it was the idolatry of Judah which brought them into captivity in Babylon.

It is important to stand for the faith, not to compromise in order to fit in or avoid punishment by those who are in power. John the Baptist spoke out against Herod's marriage, for it was not lawful (God's law). He was put into prison and eventually beheaded because he stood for truth.

Though Christians today are not being forced to worship idols, other challenges exist. We, like John, must still stand for God's plan for marriage (one man, one woman, for life). We, like Lot, must still oppose homosexuality (it is contrary to nature). We, like Paul, just still stand against those who try to corrupt the church by leading people away from the word (none, not even an apostle or angel could change God's word). We, like the apostle John, must stand firm against those who claim special knowledge (ie. Spirit-led). Keep the faith; it will benefit you, and may affect those around you also.