

Apply This Familiar Scripture to Become Your Best Lover-Spouse

I want to explore some very familiar territory with you. I have a little trepidation at the thought of doing this because revisiting familiar Scripture can be like that drive home you do every day.

You know, when you go on autopilot and think about other things and assume you know what's going to happen, so you don't concentrate?

I live in Colorado, and even here among some of the most beautiful terrain in the entire country, you can tune out and stop that little child voice that would normally say, "Wow, amazing!"

Fortunately, I live in constant awe of my environment. I see amazing rocks, trees and forests every day and I still say, "Wow." Because I'm also paying attention, this often keeps me from hitting the foxes, squirrels, raccoons, turkeys and larger critters that tend to think the road is a valid place to travel.

Just this morning on the way into town, I saw two dead raccoons. This happens when drivers are less aware. This can also happen in marriage when we stop the "wow" when we look at our spouse, but I digress. I also want to introduce you to the term, "lover spouse." Being a lover spouse means putting your spouse first and demonstrating your love throughout and within your marriage daily.

So, as I present this Scripture, concentrate and read every word. You might actually be shown more than what I'm going to comment on. The Scripture I want to explore is Matthew

25:31-46.

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. Before Him will be gathered all nations, and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats. He will set the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at the left.

“Then the King will say to those at His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in. I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me.’

“Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? And when did we see You sick or in prison and come to You?’

“The King will answer, ‘Truly I say to you, as you have done it for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you have done it for Me.’

“Then He will say to those at the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave Me no food, I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, I was naked and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’

“Then they also will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not serve You?’

“He will answer, ‘Truly I say to you, as you did it not for

one of the least of these, you did it not for Me.'

"And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

We could do vast amounts of commentary here, but that's not the purpose of this article. My heart is to show you how Jesus thought about love so you and I can be awesome and loving spouses to our awesome spouse. This story is easy to dissect because Jesus gives us a few ideas to evaluate how or if we love. The lovers (sheep) value others. They value the souls of people and see all people worthy of respect and love and act as if the other has value. Do we value our spouse by how we behave toward them and their ongoing needs?

This is really a question more important to answer than just read. If you look over the last few weeks or months, how would you evaluate your love toward your spouse by behavior?

Imagine (those of you my age) the old *Dragnet* television show when the actor would say, "Just the facts, ma'am." Those younger than I might have to Google this show to understand. However, if you're looking at just behavior, what would the facts conclude about how much your behavior reflects your love toward your spouse?

Love has action. The lover moves toward how they feed, clothe and visit. The lover-spouse feeds their spouse "the fruit of the Spirit [which] is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23a). When we love, we move toward our spouse.

The lover-spouse clothes their spouse. I take this to mean that you see the flaws of your spouse. When you cover them instead of exposing them to others, you cover them.

The lover-spouse "visits." Visiting is often inconvenient and takes time and often some intentionality. When we're

“visiting,” we’re making time for our spouse and giving priority to our relationship. This could be anything from daily conversational rituals such as the three dailies (pray, expressing two feelings, providing two praises), and engaging in regular date nights, overnights and vacations with just the two of you.

What’s interesting to me is how the sheep (lover-spouse) loves almost unconsciously or reflexively. The sheep had no idea what the master was talking about. They just thought it natural to demonstrate love. For this, they were blessed by the master.

Let’s turn our car up the road and visit the goat lane to contrast what love is not. This might describe the spouse who at best is a functional husband or wife or at worst a dysfunctional spouse who believes love is a noun, not a verb.

Goats don’t value the souls of others. They’re mostly selfish, self-conscious or self-absorbed. Being goat-like would show up in the way you speak toward and behave toward your spouse. If you regularly yell, curse or put your spouse down, you might not value them (goat).

Goats don’t move toward their spouse’s needs. When you’re married to a goat, you usually have to take care of your own needs. They say they love you, but the amount of time that they actually move toward your need (without convincing them they should) would be infrequent.

The amount of frequency of sacrifice your spouse makes would also be infrequent, and when they do engage in sacrifice, they generally want you to offer praise for it. If sacrifice, when made is meant to be repaid, remembered or overvalued, it is a goat-spouse view of life.

Unconscious unloving is amazing to me. The spouse who engages in this behavior is literally oblivious to the needs, desires, goals or dreams of their spouse. They’re genuinely clueless.

They're not acting clueless. They actually are clueless about why their self-absorbed, self-focused life closes their heart to the value and needs of others, including their spouse. For these attitudes, the goats were cursed by the master in this parable.

Hopefully reading this scripture and the commentary helps you better understand being a lover-spouse. Furthermore, I've shared with you some excellent tools to evaluate your current performance in this area.

Take an honest evaluation and believe your behavior. Are you caring and acting in ways to fill your marriage with love and fellowship? If not, use this knowledge to work on intentionally fixing the areas of lack.

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