

God's Love Message Is the Sweetest Gift of All

"What are you thinking?" I asked my husband, Terry, who was staring at the lineup of 15 throwaway cameras that graced our kitchen counter.

"Valentine's Day," Terry answered.

You're not married for 26 years without getting a glimmer of your spouse's next thought. So I revealed it to him: "I know—you were going to find a photo of us from these and frame it!"

"Right; how did you know?" Then Terry added with an ornery smile, "What you didn't know is that I bought a special frame to hold it. It says, 'BE MINE!'"

We surveyed the cavalcade of cameras and tried to guess what special moments were on each one. In all these pictures there were probably 10 good photos of us smiling as a couple but 1,001 cute cat photos! (Did I tell you we have two spoiled cats, Sammy and Barnie, who are naturals on camera?) Terry and I began to wonder *which* of the 15 cameras contained that one good photo of us.

Resigned to having to get all the cameras developed to find those few good—or any—shots of us, we tiredly concluded, "Well, the Lord knows where they are!"

Yes, the Lord had been with us in those smiley, camera-ready moments and even in the not-so-ready-for-camera moments: like the day when we cried in private after the doctor in public told Terry that he had a heart condition; or months later when the same doctor announced in his office that there was no more heart condition, and Terry and I jumped up and down after they all left the room; or the night we watched an old movie and we

laughed ourselves silly—so much so that my black mascara streaked down my face; or the morning I wore no makeup at all and was feeling down and Terry surprised me with a love message that told me I was beautiful, makeup or no makeup.

These moments that pass, whether caught on camera or captured only in our memories, have made me reconsider the messages of love on Valentine's Day. Of course there is nothing sweeter than to say, "Be mine" to a sweetheart. But when God almighty has been through the thick and thin and richness of our love relationships, how can we miss His love message found in His Word that beckons us to be His?

Consider how He tells us through His prophet that He knew us before we were formed in our mothers' womb (see Jer. 1:5)! Consider how He has always known the thoughts He has had for our futures (see Jer. 29:11)! Consider His greatest gift of all to us: Jesus died on the cross so that we could be His!

Yes, eventually Terry and I will get those throwaway cameras developed. And when we do, I will thank the Lord for those moments caught on film. I will praise Him also for those moments that went unrecorded, still special and set deep within me—gifts from the One who calls us to "Be Mine" forever, without end.

PRAYER POWER FOR THE WEEK OF 2/11/2013

This week thank the Lord that He always has us on His mind, that He knew and designed us before we were born, and that He has a perfect and fulfilling plan for our lives. Praise Him for the gift of life and for the opportunity to enjoy every moment, whether it is with family, friends, nature or sitting quietly in His presence. As you pray this week lift up Israel and pray for its protection and its fulfillment of God's purpose. Remember those persecuted for their faith in Christ and pray for the youth and leaders of the next generation. Remember President Obama and those working with him to ensure

stability, security and success for the nation. Continue to pray for revival in our churches and for the spread of God's kingdom around the world. Jer. 1:5; Jer. 29:11, 1 Tim. 2:1-6