

Couples Rejoice! Celebrating Oneness (Part 3 of 3)

By Harold & Bette Gillogly

In the last two Seeds we have talked about how we can rejoice with our mates, celebrating our love and oneness. By using C-E-L-E-B-R-A-T-I-N-G as an acrostic, we have discussed specific, practical ways to fill our marriages full of joy. The first eight letters of CELEBRATING have been used, so now it's time to finish our acrostic with I-N-G.

INTIMATELY RELATE — The word *intimacy* comes from the Latin word *intimus*, which means “innermost or deepest.” Therefore, when we speak of *sexual intimacy*, we’re talking about more than hot bodies. We’re talking about two whole persons **sharing themselves completely** with one another. That’s what Genesis 2:24 is saying: *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.* God created sexual intimacy to be the celebration of our relationship.

We know of no other area of our lives where satan has spent so much energy corrupting and counterfeiting the truth than in the sexual arena. His lies about sexual intimacy are everywhere! If he can’t make you believe it’s the natural initiator of a relationship (It’s hard to turn on TV without running into this lie), then he makes you think corrupt, forbidden sex is the best sex. And if that tactic doesn’t work, he makes you believe all sex is dirty, and that “good” people don’t engage in such stuff. Has he tricked you into believing one of these lies?

What do you really believe about sex? This is what God says about it. *Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure....* (Hebrews 13:4). In other words, God sees marriage as an honored relationship, and therefore, commands us to honor it as well. Then, through the writer, He talks about the purity of the marriage bed. Now, He is not talking about the place we sleep; the word *bed* means *sexual intercourse*. So He is saying in marriage, sexual intercourse is **pure**. The word *pure* here means *undefiled*, and amazingly enough, is used to describe Jesus Christ Himself a few chapters earlier by the same writer (Hebrews 7:26). This is the truth about sex, because it comes from God.

How you feel about sex came from somewhere. God created you to enjoy sexual intimacy with your spouse (Proverbs 5:18—*...rejoice in the wife of your youth*). If you dread sexual intimacy and are repulsed by it, you must remember you were not born with those feelings. They have been introduced into your conscience since then. But you

don’t have to keep believing satan’s lies about your sexuality, you can start believing God’s truth. Find out for yourself what He says about sex throughout Scripture, especially Proverbs and Song of Solomon. We also encourage you to read books like *Intended for Pleasure* by Ed and Gaye Wheat, *The Gift of Sex* by Cliff and Joyce Penner, and *A Celebration of Sex* by Dr. Douglas Rosenau. These will help you put sex into proper perspective...God’s perspective.

God gave sexual intimacy to married couples as His gift of pleasure to be enjoyed to its fullest potential. He designed it to be enjoyable for both the husband and the wife. He gave both men and women unique equipment and abilities to celebrate their intimacy and fulfill their longings for closeness. One of the most wonderful aspects of sex is that God made it to be enjoyed in the context of safety and permanence. God expects us to work on perfecting our love-making skills with our mate our whole lives through, protected inside the boundaries of marriage. This means we can learn to be honest and trust one another with our sexuality. We can learn to completely share our “innermost, deepest” selves with our mate.

NEGOTIATE DECISIONS AS A TEAM — Couples sometimes behave like they are room mates instead of a team. They make decisions that effect each other or their relationship without even consulting their partners. The key word here is **PARTNERS**. We could never get away with making solitary decisions in a business partnership. What makes us think it is good, sound policy for our marriage partnership? The answer is obvious: **we need to make decisions as a team.**

What does making decisions as a couple mean? (1) That both of you talk over any decisions that effect you both before either of you makes up your mind about the matter. Whether it’s deciding what car to buy, where to go on vacation, or what restaurant to eat in, don’t settle it in your own mind before talking it over with your partner. (2) That both of you discuss and agree on decisions that effect you both before informing others or acting on a decision. When a friend asks you for dinner, do you immediately answer for the two of you? Or do you tell them you’ll talk with your partner and call them back? It’s just common courtesy to request your mate’s help in deciding about something that effects you both before you answer. (3) That the two of you reach a satisfactory solution both of you

can own. Even when a decision results in disaster, if you made it together, you can own it together and avoid the blame game.

To help you make decisions as a team, here are some guidelines we have found helpful:

- 1. Pray together for God’s direction,** submitting your wills to Him. Philippians 4:6 — *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*
- 2. Release your rights.** If you approach a decision while demanding your own rights, you essentially jam the process. Philippians 2:3 — *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.*
- 3. Maintain an attitude of mutual submission:** to God and to one another. James 4:7a — *Submit yourselves, then, to God.* Ephesians 5:21 — *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*
- 4. Search God’s Word for direction.** If the Bible says something definitive about your specific decision or plans, obey that directive. Psalm 119:105 — *Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*
- 5. Compile a pro and con list.** If it’s a big decision where you have to weigh all the angles, a pro and con list can help. At the top of a page, write down a possible solution to the decision before you, and draw a vertical line down the middle of the paper. Then list all the reasons **for** following that solution down one side of the page, and all the reasons **against** down the other side. Remember to consider the affect on your relationship. Of course, even if you and your partner have ten reasons against and only two for, it may still be what **God** wants you to do. This exercise, however, should help you gain perspective about the decision. Luke 14:28 — *Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?*
- 6. If you still can’t reach a decision, ask a godly friend** (someone you respect) to help you discover together all the options open to you. Proverbs 19:20 — *Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.*
- 7. Wait for God’s answer.** We’ve come to the point in our marriage where, if we cannot agree on a decision, we put it off until we can, if at all possible. For if we have followed all these guidelines and

still don't have the answer, we know by now it is dangerous to forge ahead without the three of us (God, Harold and Bette) agreeing. Proverbs 19:2 — *It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.* Psalm 37:34a — **Wait for the Lord and keep his way.**

When you negotiate decisions as a team, you will nip a lot of potential resentment in the bud, and you will open new ways of celebrating your partnership. When Jesus quoted Genesis 2, He said, "*Haven't you read...that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?*" Then He added this little phrase, *So they are no longer two, but one.* You are a team, Jesus says so Himself. Rejoice in your teamship!

GIVE HONOR TO YOUR MATE —

Husbands, you are commanded to **honor your wife.** *Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect [honor] as the weaker partner [fragile vase] and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers* (1 Peter 3:7). In other words, husbands, treat with respect and sensitivity this fragile creature God has made, called woman. She is not fragile only because you are physically stronger, but because you can crush her spirit with brutish words and actions of disrespect. A clear warning is sounded at the end of this Scripture. You want God to listen to your prayers? Then take heed to this command.

Wives, you are commanded to respect your husband. *However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect [reverence] her husband* (Ephesians 5:33). In other words, wives, pay close attention to that man of yours. Listen to him. Respect his opinions. He needs to know how important he is to you.

What does it mean to *honor* and *respect*? In 1 Peter 3, *honor* means to *objectively value another.* And in Ephesians 5, *respect* means to *revere and give deference.* We also use words like esteem, regard, view as precious and treat with dignity to describe honor and respect.

Husbands, here are some ways you can honor your wife:

- (1) **Be sensitive to her needs.** If you ask what it is she needs, then listen carefully, she will reveal her needs to you. Then ask God to help you meet as many of those needs as you can.
- (2) **Let your actions, as well as your words, show her respect.** Don't sit in front of the TV while she washes the dishes, picks

up after the kids and gets them to bed. She's more than mommy, maid, cook and nurse — she's your fragile vase. Remember?

- (3) **Pay attention to her when she talks with you.** Put down the paper, look her in the eyes, and respond in more than monosyllables.
- (4) **Do not speak harshly to her and never tear her down, especially in public.** You can deeply wound her spirit by a harsh, discounting word. It's bad enough when you do this in private, but it's devastating when done in public. Remember, a wounded heart finds it hard to give love.
- (5) **Accept her feelings.** You may not understand them, but you must respect them as real and viable. Never tell her, "There's no reason to feel that way, Honey."
- (6) **Do not compare her unfavorably to someone else and never try to change her.** When you criticize, you are saying, *I don't like you the way you are. Be different or I won't love you.* On the other hand, if you show her you love and accept her just the way she is, she may change simply because she doesn't feel pressured to do so. Regardless, you must commit yourself to allowing her to be all she can be, not all you want her to be.
- (7) **Never do anything to betray her trust.** Unfaithfulness is the ultimate dishonor to your wife. Before God, commit yourself to be a faithful husband.

Wives, here are some ways you can respect your husband:

- (1) **Magnify his strengths, not his weaknesses.** Your husband needs frequent reminders of his good points. His self esteem is far more fragile than it appears to be. So build him up every chance you get.
- (2) **Do not review past failures.** He doesn't really need reminded. He probably remembers them all too well. Never use them as weapons against him. Ask God to help you forget them the way He does.
- (3) **Really listen when he talks with you.** Stop doing whatever *important* thing you're doing and look at him. Respond with respect for his ideas.
- (4) **Avoid correcting his stories either privately or in front of others.** "We lived there 2 years...." "No, Honey, it was 3 years." "Well, anyway, we then moved 2,000 miles away...." "No, Sweetie, it was 2,300 miles." It's such a temptation, but don't do it!
- (5) **Never interrupt his conversation with you or with others.** Do you tend to finish his sentences? His stories? You might think you know what he's thinking and what he's going to say, so you jump in and finish for him. Women are often

more verbal than men. Ask God to help you keep your mouth shut and let him speak.

- (6) **Never try to change him.** We repeat, criticism does not change people; it simply tears them down. If there is changing to be done, let God do it. Love your husband for who and what he is right now. Look for his good qualities, and focus your attention on them. (Philippians 4:8)
- (7) **Never do anything to betray his trust.** The ultimate act of disrespect is unfaithfulness. Before God, commit yourself to be a faithful wife.

Celebrate your relationship by giving honor to one another, and by giving honor to your marriage. Hebrews 13:4 speaks of marriage being *honorable.* That is to say, marriage is *valuable and precious.* Is your marriage valuable and precious to you? Do you see your mate as valuable, precious, worthy of honor and respect? This is the perspective God wants you to have.

Whenever Scripture commands us to give honor to people, it never bases our giving honor on the worth of the person *receiving* honor. The responsibility is always on us, the *givers* of honor. However, when we are commanded to give honor to the Lord, our giving honor is based on His worthiness. That's because He is the only One worthy. We are not to wait until we think our mate is worthy of honor and respect. Your mate will never be worthy of honor any more than you are. Then why does God command you to give them honor? Because He wants you to see your mate through the eyes of Jesus, with all the potential He sees within your mate. When you do that, you will be able to celebrate your marriage like never before!

C-E-L-E-B-R-A-T-I-N-G!! These are the eleven actions you must decide to take in order to rejoice in your marriage:

- Clear Your Conscience
- Encourage Spiritual Growth
- Lower Your Defenses
- Enlist in His Service Together
- Bust Up Bitterness with Forgiveness
- Recreate Together
- Adore God with Praise and Worship
- Talk Transparently
- Intimately Relate
- Negotiate Decisions as a Team
- Give honor to Your Mate

Remember when you decide to put these actions into practice, only the Holy Spirit can give you the power to follow through on your decisions. And through His power which works in you, you can turn your marriage into jubilation. You will have eleven wonderful reasons to rejoice in your oneness and celebrate your coupleness! Let the CELEBRATION begin!