

As One

Like Christ and the Church

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Dedication

I HAVE MANY people to thank for pushing me and supporting in the birthing of this work, but only after I first thank my Father God. Thank you, Father, for giving me so many do-overs after all my blunders.

There is my pastor who we call “The Great Illustrator and Teacher,” Bishop Horace E. Hockett, and First Lady Elder Kiwanis Hockett. You have loved me and allowed me to grow with liberty and grace.

Additionally, to all those who were willing to be interviewed on the spot and give your insight to this work. To Karynthia Phillips for all the advice, patience, and guidance.

To my three children who continue to give me exceedingly more joy than this daddy deserves. My

parents, Richard and Nola Holder, who assured that all your children were introduced to Christ and the scriptures at an early age.

Then there is the love and encouragement from my beautiful wife, Dr. Greta Manning, without whose push I may have quit on this process.

My forever girlfriend, Thank You.

Foreword

IN ECCLESIASTES 1:10 Solomon asked, “Is there anything of which one can say, look! This is something new...?” This question is often asked about books on marriage. We may believe we know or have heard it all, but be advised, to keep our relationship strong, regular maintenance is required.

On any given Sunday, you can look out over a congregation of well-dressed couples praising God and giving the impression of a stable and substantial marriage. However, a large majority of these couples are struggling to maintain their well-dressed facades.

Like most pastors, I have spent many hours in pre-marital, marital, and divorce counseling. I have also found that Proverbs 11:14 rings true. “Where

no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.”

This book is a relevant and timely resource. It gives sound practical counsel for those desiring to strengthen or repair their marriage.

I have witnessed Reggie’s journey through a difficult season of his life. Each subject addressed in this book is a testimonial to Reggie’s devotion to family and the application of God’s principles. My adoration and trust in him as a progressive servant of God has only increased.

Yes, this is another book on marriage, but it is written from a layman’s perspective. It is written by one who sought and followed sound biblical counsel and reaped the blessings of God.

We all know that marriage is a complex, yet rewarding status if properly entered and prayerfully maintained. On the pages of this book you will find invaluable lessons that will help fortify your marriage as you live out God’s will for your life.

—Bishop Horace E. Hockett

Preface

MEN HAVE HEARD for years that they are to love their wives. The issue with this advice is they are never told how this is to be accomplished. Many methods have been tried with varying successes and failures. What I missed in my life was the lack of real love being displayed in front of me. I never saw a flesh-and-blood example of how a man was supposed to love his wife.

My questions were, “How do I put real love for my wife into practice, each and every day? What are simple ways to love my wife?” Then there is also the biblical command to deal with that tells me to “love [my] wife as Christ also loved the church.” Is there anyone who is doing this?

In undertaking these questions, I spent lots of time in prayer to God and in conversation with others seeking out answers. As I traveled, I'd walk up to total strangers and pose the question, "How does a man love his wife the way Christ loves the church?" I asked men and women. I asked young and old. I asked church people and non-church people. Some of the answers I received are included at the beginning of each of the following chapters.

The remainder of this book explores the different roles men play in marriage. It's important for men to know their wives well in order to be able to love her sufficiently, so another question this book deals with is, "Just how well do you know your wife?" In order to work through all these questions, the reader will find practical daily tasks to follow throughout the book. By the turn of the final page, each man will find that he is encouraged to present his wife unto himself just as Christ will present His bride to Himself. Husbands and wives truly can live "as one."

"Be the role model of love in the home."

—William Myers

Learning from Home

I WAS BORN into a family that was every bit the prototypical American family of the 1960s and 1970s. Dad was the primary breadwinner. Being a carpenter by trade, Dad worked hard. He not only worked as a carpenter, but he always had that extra job; you know, the one he went to after his regular work that we called a “side hustle.” Mom was 80 percent homemaker in our house and 20 percent part-time employee outside the home.

Our story is similar to many others we’ve known or heard about, as our economic status varied between lower middle class and just plain “po.” Mom checked the grades while Dad checked the conduct, and with five siblings interacting, there was always something

going on. Dad would often say, “I have my word and my name. Don’t mess with that.”

We spent lots of time with our extended family and stayed involved in activities such as scouting, sports, plays, and of course, church. Mom and Dad both served in various areas in the church and this meant we children were visible and active as well. We were expected to be really good and to behave without succumbing to the normal temptations of almost everyone else in the world.

No such luck for me because as I came into my teen years, I started noticing the different equipment females were blessed with (and that I liked what I saw). I also realized that no one talked about how to properly relate to the opposite sex. A real talk was not the tenor of the day. So how did we learn? It just happened.

Sex and expressions of physical tenderness were just not talked about around the church, in the neighborhood, or at home, and public affection or outward demonstrations of love and tenderness were non-existent. It was said that outward demonstrations of love by men indicated weakness. The men around us would

never have wanted to look weak, so most of the time, there wasn't any affection toward their wives to observe.

I remember my mom once saying to my dad that he hadn't said he loved her in a long time, much less shown her his feelings toward her. The look on his face trying to figure out what she wanted from him was priceless. He looked as if he wanted to ask, "Really? You really mean this?" He was stunned by Mom's statements. And why shouldn't he have been? In his day, if a man worked hard, came home with the money, applied discipline to the children, and supplied protection for the wife, he was a good man and his actions were enough to say, "I love you."

With this being the standard measure in my dad's mind, he knew he was doing good. As a husband, he thought himself to be at least a seven and a half to eight on a scale of ten, but Mom wanted more and she persisted in making it plain by spelling it out.

Her questions came fast and furious. "When have we gone on a date? What about dinner for just the two of us? When have you bought me flowers or a card that

was not on my birthday, on Mother's Day, or from the kids?"

I was now looking at a man I'd never seen before. My dad was a man who was perplexed and stunned. He had no answers, even though he was always resourceful in other ways. If we needed it – food, clothing, shelter – he found a way to get us what we needed. If something was broken, he found a way or a friend to fix it.

But this sensitive stuff Mom was asking for, these matters of the heart, this reaching deeper inside than he ever had reached before, had crippled him. He was at a loss concerning how to meet the requests of the wife he loved.

Finally, he said back to her, "Are you saying you're not happy?"

Mom just turned and left the room with a final statement to my dad, saying, "You just don't get it."

A couple of days later, after enduring very little interaction or conversation with Mom, Dad came home with flowers. Yes, flowers! He walked over to her, and with all the tenderness he could muster he said, "Okay, take 'um." Now remember, this happened in the early

1970s. When I tell you of Mom's shock, she was floored! Yes! She absolutely loved it. Her response was complete with tears and nerves as if it were her first date.

I am telling you all of this to give you a view of the beginnings of my life's perspectives on male/female interactions. Music, movies, television, and the older guys on the street were outside influences that also gave me a somewhat limited, yet also expanded points of view on relationships outside of my home environment.

As I continued my own journey to maturity and manhood, I began to leave the God I knew as a child to embark on a real, much deeper relationship with Him. I wanted and needed to know more, both about God and about relationships. When I finished high school and began college, my relationship with God had been more or less dependent on the prayers of my mom and the discipline of my dad. It was time for me to grow in my personal knowledge of God and my experience of walking with Him. I began to read the scriptures. I didn't do a word study or take a specific course; I just read the Word. Starting with the New Testament, I read it from start to finish and started over again. After

about four times through, I began to add the Psalms and Proverbs. It was at this point that the Holy Spirit began to slow my pace down, as I would stop and ponder a passage or a word.

One day, when I was married with a family of my own, Ephesians Chapter 5, verse 25 “leaped off the page” at me. It said, “Husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the Church!” My wife and I were mostly happy and content, but I was also working with a limited, outdated, or even broken model of what a loving husband should look like. My wife at the time had not been raised with her father in the home, which made it difficult for her to express her needs to me; therefore, we mostly operated by trial and error.

Years passed by, and after a lot of ups and downs, my wife and I eventually divorced, but even then, I could never shake Ephesians 5:25. “Husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the Church!” The words kept running through my head. I couldn’t get past this portion of the verse.

And thus, my journey of inquiry and discovery began concerning being a godly husband. So, come with

me as we go on this journey together learning how to love our wives “as Christ loved.”

“Treat her right. Just treat her right!”

—Pastor Myett