

A Picture of True Love

Thomas Tewell, preacher and leadership consultant, writes in his book *Running the Last Lap* about a wedding he once conducted.

Tewell was requested to perform this wedding, not in a church but on a farm. The reason was because the bride's mother had an advanced case of Alzheimer's. She was barely conscious. She never responded with words; all she could do was groan, which she did most of the time.

The couple wanted to be wed on the family farm so that the mother could attend the daughter's wedding.

Tewell arrived to find a large front porch that had been beautifully decorated with ornate white chairs. The members of the bridal party were there. They were graduates of Harvard, Stanford, Duke and Dartmouth. They all had either MBAs or law degrees. They were bright, beautiful young people who had the misfortune of being aware of their elite status in life and showing it.



When Tewell checked on the bride about 30 minutes before the service, she asked if it would be all right if her father took her mother up to the first row. She assured him that if her mother's groans grew too loud, they would take her out. Tewell said, "Of course, that would be fine."

When the bride and groom took their places, the minister repeated the traditional vows that all of us have heard: "I, Andrew, take you, Melissa, to be my wedded wife; and I promise before God and these witnesses to be your loving and faithful husband; in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, for as long as we both shall live."

And that's when it happened, Tewell said. "God's Spirit penetrated those groomsmen, and they heard those words in all their fullness. You could see it wash over their faces. Suddenly, they were not so assured of being bright, beautiful people whose futures boasted of money and power and prestige and all the things the world says will make your life complete. It was as if they realized for the first time that despite their young, brilliant lives, something someday might go wrong.

"Fifty years earlier, the father of the bride and his wife, now cradled in his arms, had spoken those same vows," Tewell said, "and everyone in that wedding party was saying, 'Look at them now. She can't even respond.' And the tears welled up in their eyes as they realized that life doesn't always play out as you plan. You can run into problems you never dreamed of encountering."

(more)

Tewell made this observation: "That husband, cradling his wife of 50 years, earned a Ph.D. in loving. He finished the race and kept his vows. He cared for his wife until the end."

The word is love. Can you love your spouse as that husband loved? Can I? God does, but can we?

We begin with those closest to us. But love, if it is Christ-like love, does not stop at home.

And praise God, that kind of love is reflected in the commitment and the actions of those who work in Life Care and Century Park. It is a love that goes beyond themselves. It is the love Christ cited in the two great commandments:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these (Mark 12:30-31 NIV).

– Beecher Hunter