

The Gift of Godly Marriage

By Ray Hollenbach - in Thriving Marriages email July 26, 2023

I married a Southern woman. Whatever I know about love, I first learned from her. It would be a crime against the goodness of God not to give thanks for her. Indeed, a man who does not give thanks for his wife does not understand he has received a good gift from God. And godly marriage is a gift day by day.

Marriage is so commonplace we miss the miracle daily. Yet a godly marriage should be the cause of everyday thanks. It was God's idea from the beginning. He saw that it was not good for man to be alone. Nor was it within man's power to remedy the situation. The same is true today: it takes divine intervention, it takes a new creation, and it takes a humble heart day after day to discover the wonder God puts in front of us. Among men, what fool dares to presume he knows the treasure of a spouse?

I am that fool. In the foolishness of youth, I imagined my wife was some kind of "reward" for the years of my walk with God. (*In the words of Bugs Bunny, "What a maroon!"*) It only took a few years for me to realize this was nonsense. But the fool in me fought hard. My fallback position: "You are my reward in advance—for all my life," I gushed silly nonsense toward her. She thought it was sweet, but I suspect she was merely matronizing me. Eventually, I came to see it was all grace. Godly marriage is a grace. Grace surprising, grace unending, grace miraculous.

We should not limit our thankfulness for our spouse just to an anniversary. My more liturgical friends have it right when they call marriage a sacrament. Yet not completely right. The true sacrament of marriage is daily, ongoing, just as it has for us, for 36-plus years.