

# Till Death Do Us Part

When young, Rachel, one of my grandchildren, who was handicapped, had two goldfish which lived in an aquarium in our living room.

They were living the good life, with a spacious beautiful home, all their needs promptly supplied. No financial problems, no in-law problems, no problems at all.

But their serenity was not to last.

In spite of a lot of attention and care Flip and Flop developed a disease common to fish and became terminally ill. As it turned out, they were not even separated in their death. We found them one morning both dead floating on the top of the water in their aquarium.

What do the words "*Till death do us part*" mean to you?

To most of us they are a solemn reminder of one of the few vows we take in our lifetime, the marriage vow.

In a rosy glow of anticipation, our future mate beside us, we hear the words and we know the expected response and we give it.

But have we really counted the cost?

Are we approaching that vow as seriously as we should?

In many cases, no we have not and no, we are not?

I am writing to you singles as well as those who have already taken this marriage vow.

Are you really counting the cost of sometime developing or now maintaining a permanent, very intimate relationship between yourself and another human being?

No, in many instances you are not.

Why aren't you and why didn't those already married?

Because you and they prefer your romantic illusion of what marriage is to the reality, we are all this way, we naturally think in terms of get instead of give.

I have to admit that when I was confronted on the day of my marriage with the question "*do you really know what you have taken on by marrying Sylvia?*"

This was asked by one of her long time friends and I had to admit that I did not.

This was over 50 years ago, Sylvia and I are still married and I love her far more now than I did on our wedding day.

When we are contemplating marriage to that so-special person, we don't like to think negative thoughts.

Things like illness, hard times and death.

But like Flip and Flop, serious problems will come to any relationship at one time or another.

Do **not** think that those difficult times and situations we see in other marriages won't happen to our marriage.

Marriage is a training ground for Christians.

Our Creator God commands that we live joyfully with our mates in a society that ridicules His guidelines for marriage.

**Ecclesiastes 9:9** [Living Bible] *“Live happily with the woman you love through the fleeting days of your life, for the wife God gives you is your best reward for all your earthly toil.”*

We are all human beings and as such we are bound to have problems.

Many of these problems we will bring on ourselves by not following the guidelines given to us in the Handbook For Life, the Christian Bible.

At times we are going to face problems that affect our marriage inspite of everything we do to avoid them.

When these problems, come along, will we hang on and trust in God to deliver us?

Or will we say *“Nobody told me marriage would be like this, it just isn't fair, I can't take it any more, I quit.”*

God the initiator of marriage expects more than just enduring what has happened to our marriage, but taking wise decisions to bring about reconciliation and renewed bonding and love.

## **Make a change**

Where do you start?

You start by first improving your relationship with your Creator God.

I know that sounds pretty basic, but hear me out.

Some of your marriages have deteriorated to the point that you are deeply lonely.

You singles may be surprised to learn that married people can be lonely.

Their mates may be physically there, but the communication is little and unsatisfying or practically none at all.

There should never be a time when a Christian experiences intense, painful loneliness.

If there is, you are **not** as close to your Creator God as you should be. Quit kidding yourself.

Don't expect your mate to fill a vacuum you have created because you have allowed yourself to drift away from God.

Put your relationship with God first in your life and He will then be there to help you with your marriage problems.

**James 4:8-10** [NIV] *“Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. **Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.**”*

Why not start today to make a list of things that keep you every day from praying, studying His Word and meditating long enough to maintain your personal relationship with your Creator.

Actually you will find this list is **not** very convincing.

Go ahead, be brave and make this list. I have done this at times and found it frightening. My excuses are so shallow and weak.

But you will find it is a very valuable tool that can change your life.

Next set yourself a timetable with a space each day that **you do not own**, it belongs to God and is when you communicate with Him.

You may find you have to get up an hour earlier each day before the rest of the family do to do this.

Talk to God about your hopes and dreams, ask Him to show you through your study of the Handbook For Life, the Christian Bible, how you can love and serve your mate better.

After the first few awkward tries, you will find this two-way conversation with your best Friend not only satisfying but rewarding.

You will begin to look forward to that time with Him and will talk to Him also at other times as you go about your daily duties.

**I have a special place where I can spend time with my Creator.** It is a shed at the bottom of our garden that I have fitted out to be this “*special place*” over the years.

There is **no** telephone there, I do **not** take my mobile with me and I am as far as I can be from the road and my nearest neighbours do **not** disturb me [I am right next to the local church graveyard].

I used to call this my “*snug*” but I now call it “*the power house*”. I am writing this article in my “*power house*”.

This is good but be aware, **don't** use God for an excuse to ignore your mate and family.

You will **not** be helped by God if you do, no matter how many hours you spend with Him in prayer and study.

**Quit blaming your mate or circumstances for your unhappiness and lack of peace of mind.**

**Philippians 4:11-13** [NIV] *“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”*

Paul attained that state of contentment by staying close to God, there is no other way.

## **Learn from others**

Singles talk to some married couples about the problems that you can expect to face in marriage.

If children are involved, again talk to those with experience.

Get to know your prospective mate well before you make a commitment to a lifetime marriage.

People interested in one another tend to try to appear as compatible as possible, but use time and situations that you share to ensure that such compatibility is not just a façade.

**Don't be pressured** into making one of the most important and significant vows of your life.

Get counsel, and once you have made that vow, stay close to your Creator God and trust Him to help you keep that vow.