

# A Trinitarian Wedding Meditation

---

Jeffrey Meyers

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1Cor. 13:4-7).

What family would you identify as a model for your marriage and future household? In terms of this reading, where have you seen or where will you see the love of 1 Cor. 13 lived out? Is there a couple or a family that you would name as exemplifying the kind of life together that you would experience?

I can't read your minds and I'm not going to ask you to tell me of whom you are thinking, but I will wager that you are setting your sights too low, way too low.

Whatever human couple or family may have come to your mind and however radiant and attractive their relationship may be, it is but a dim reflection of the fullness of love, the eternal riches of love resident in the Holy Trinity. That's right. The Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in their shared eternal life together.

Well, I will tell you both that God himself holds the key; God himself is the key to marital happiness and fulfillment. He is the definition of, the very living embodiment of love. As the Apostle John says, “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16). This does not mean simply that God is nice—the dear, kind God. Reduced to this, “God is love” comes dangerously close to being innocuous and sentimental nonsense.

Rather, John means that in himself, in his own inner life, God is characterized by love. Love binds Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are eternally covenanted companions. God is in himself the fullness and perfection of love, in loving and being loved, in giving and receiving. And this eternal communal existence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as God is the ultimate model for every human social bond. Today, of course, that means your marriage.

Cornelius Plantinga has put it this way: “The precincts of heaven are occupied by more than one divine person. The unity of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is more like a marriage, or like persons bound together in a single community.”

The active movement of reciprocal love within the eternal being of God is the one ultimate source of all love in the universe. What that means for us, for you, is that the Triune God constitutes the very ground and possibility of love between human beings, not the least of which is marital love. The marriage covenant, you see, is grounded in the original covenant of love and companionship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

But wait a minute, isn't that like telling you that Robert and Jennifer Smith possess the secret of marital happiness and love? Robert and Jennifer Smith? That would be all well and good, but who are they? Where do they live? If you have no access to their household, to their personal relationship, what good is it to you?

You might find out where they live and go and stand in front of their house and look through the windows or even bang on the door. You could park in front of their house and try to get glimpses of them as they come outside. You might even get a listening device and try to catch bits and pieces of their conversations. A telescope to see them interact. But unless they graciously invited you into their circle of love, unless they allowed you in, you would never benefit from what they had.

Similarly, we cannot know of or experience God's love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit from the outside. God as he is in himself is not open to our inspection. We cannot pry into his Three-Personed being for the purpose of examining his life.

And just as the Smith's must invite you into their family for you to know them, so in a similar way, God himself must invite us in if we are to know him as the perfect communion of love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God himself must open up himself to us and draw us into his life of communion so that we can experience and know his covenant love.

That is exactly what has happened in time and space history as the Father loves the Son so much that he finds a bride for him that will be his eternal covenanted companion. This is the wonder of God's love. This is what God has done for us in Christ.

Jonathan Edwards puts it well: "There was, as it were, an eternal society or family in the Godhead, in the Trinity of persons. It seems to be God's design to admit the church into the divine family as his Son's wife." Jonathan Edward's again: "The end [goal] of the creation of God was to provide a spouse for his Son Jesus Christ, that might enjoy him and on whom he might pour forth his love. . . Heaven and earth were created that the Son of God might communicate his love and goodness to a spouse."

I need to stop here to make sure that everyone has this right. God didn't create the world to have people to dominate and manipulate. To command and control. He created the world and humanity to share his glory, to turn his eternal love outward on humanity and to bring us into the circle of his blessed fellowship.

Your life in the covenant of marriage must model that eternal covenant of love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as it has been revealed, manifest, uncovered for us in Jesus Christ.

Now, you may be thinking, what? He's talking about the Trinity at our wedding? Isn't that just some abstract, confusing ecclesiastical doctrine invented to confound simple people about the nature of God? Shouldn't the pastor just give some pointers on how to act as husband and wife and get on with it. Some practical "how to" advice. Absolutely not!

Have you ever noticed that whenever the Apostle Paul addresses a very practical problem in one of his churches, he doesn't offer some cute emotional story or merely quote or construct some catchy religious aphorism, rather he gets very theological.

My favorite example of this is the church at Philippi. Read Philippians 2:3-7. It was because Jesus was God that he humbled himself. It was because he was in very nature God that he emptied himself. This is God's mode of life as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They live together is self-giving humility and love.

This, then, is your God! This is the one in whose image you have been created. Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . in the image of God he created them, male and female, he created them. This is the image that you are being renewed in. The likeness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is love.

As Christians, we do not look primarily to an abstract impersonal idea or set of ideas for our model. We are imagers of God. We have been made to resemble God. We are to actively seek to conform ourselves as creatures to his perfect character. "Be ye holy as I am holy."

Another way to put this is that our flawless exemplar is the Person(s) of God himself, especially the Father and the Son! When we ask what does it mean to love, how can I know what it means to love, we, as Christians (who bear the name of Christ) answer: It means to imitate the Lord, Jesus Christ.

1 John 3:16, “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” John 15:12 “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

Without this context, this list in 1 Cor. 13 degenerates into pious platitudes, religious mush. So substitute the word “Christ” for the noun “love” in this list and you make explicit Paul’s reason for using this literary device called personification. “Jesus Christ suffers long, Christ shows kindness, Jesus does not envy. . . .”

Here then is a positive, healthy ideal towards which to strive. Here in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 is a vivid picture of purity and spiritual health.

You know we might have settled this afternoon a fast-food, sugar-high from cute little aphorisms and sentimental sayings about marriage. Or we could have gotten a temporary emotional buzz from the current fad in psychological marital advice and techniques. But that kind of thing will never satisfy your need for lasting nourishment as a couple. As you begin your life together, do not settle for such junk food. You’ve got something more nourishing. Something that will transform you through and through. Let me suggest to you that thinking, reflecting, meditating on your own participation in the covenantal love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as husband and wife is worth more than whatever techniques or marital slogans or psychological advice you can find in the millions of how-to-books on marriage.

As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

If you have experienced the love of God in Christ, if your marriage is going to be rooted and grounded in love, then you will have to this life-long goal of making progress towards understanding what is the

width and length and depth and height of the love of God in Christ which surpasses human comprehension.

By means of the marriage covenant God permits you both to taste something of the inexpressible bliss of the personal intimacy and companionship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You are called upon this afternoon to begin a life of love towards one another just as God is love.

“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:14-19). Amen.