

GROWING IN FAMILY TOGETHER (GIFT)

Letter for Husband and Wife



SEVENTH LETTER TO THE FAMILY- THROUGH GOD'S EYES

by Pastor Thomas and Ma'am Pamela Teh

Dear Family,

This photograph, "The Struggling Girl", won the Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography in 1994. It was taken by Kevin Carter in southern Sudan during a time of famine. Nyong, the girl in the photo was so weakened by hunger that she collapsed several times while walking to a feeding center. Kevin chased the vulture away before leaving to take more photos elsewhere.

Kevin saw the event as an opportunity to take an unusual picture. He felt that chasing the vulture away was sufficient and made no further attempt to help the struggling child. As you look at this picture, you may think of several other ways you could have helped the child. You may surprise yourself with the list you come up with.

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This short exercise also highlights areas I find lacking in the way I relate to others, especially my loved ones in my home:

1. Image Bearer of God:

I am created in His image (Genesis 1:27). Created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Ephesians 2:10). This means I am to reflect Christ-likeness resulting in good works which is the fruit of my faith. When it comes to helping out, I must admit that at times, I would do the minimum and walk away, proud of the fact that at least I had done something.

On many occasions, I could have helped my spouse in many more ways. Over time, I naturally became more aware that I was falling so short of the Godly image that He had called me to emulate. Looking back on the life of Christ had helped me understand that the only way I could reflect a Godly image is to 'die to self' (Luke 9:23).

An act of love towards my wife was not sufficient. If I purposed to love my wife for life, I had to be prepared to keep demonstrating my love for her for the rest of my life. Likewise, ladies, your act of submission to your husband needs to be consistent for the rest of your life. Christ showed His love for His Father by accepting death on the cross. At the same time, He also showed His submissive spirit through obedience to His Father's will. Jesus embraced the qualities of God such that others could see His Father through His life. Let us have this same desire.

2. Through God's Eyes:

It took me a long time to realize this and I am glad for the Lord's patience with me. He taught me to see things through His eyes of love rather than merely from the eyes of man. The lens of man's eyes is tinted with selfishness, greed, envy, jealousy and pride. With spiritual lenses, we can see:

a. Man's Disobedience vs God's Love

When our children disobey us, it brings out our anger and wrath. A similar act of disobedience took place in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But what God saw was their innocence and simplicity. His desire to save them gave rise to His promise of a Redeemer (Genesis 3:15). This is God's love.

b. Man's Sins vs God's Grace

Man continued to sin. There was a need to cleanse the world. But our omniscient God saw how lost man was and designed a plan to give him time to repent and turn from sin. The length of time that Noah took to build the Ark, meeting the specifications that God stipulated, was between 80-100 years. Over that span of time, God used Noah to warn the people of His impending judgement. This is evidence of God's grace from the beginning of time.

c. Man's Wickedness vs God's Forgiveness

Christ showed what living a life that embodies His Father's image really means. When we are criticized for right, we often feel hurt and misunderstood. However, we need to forgive, persevere and trust God to direct us. Christ went through a great deal of physical and emotional suffering. Yet He still willingly suffered and died for our sins. Christ's Father had to even "separate" from His Son because the sins of the world were upon Him, prompting Christ to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). Feeling God's absence was more painful than all the pain and suffering He went through. In all that took place, Christ saw the depravity and the hopelessness of man. He had compassion on us and did what was needed to save us. He died for us. This is the extent of God's love and forgiveness.



I often wish I can do more to demonstrate the attributes of God to my wife. I know several areas that I need to improve on: I should willingly lend her a hand when she needs me, and if the situation calls for, help her several times within a short period of time. I should also be patient when I need to teach or explain things to her, happily stop my work because she needs help urgently and take the initiative to do more for her to lighten her workload. This is my prayer, "Lord, teach me to see people and events through Your eyes and to have the desire and ability to be a blessing even to those who are challenging."



Marriage is not a promise or contract which can be broken or changed. Marriage is a Covenant. A Covenant is a binding and solemn vow. Marriage magnifies the truth and greatness of God.

He uses it to illustrate the everlasting relationship between Him and the church (Ephesians 5:22-27). One form of love exists in most situations, but it is only through marriage that we can experience the four types of love in a relationship:

1. AGAPE Love (unconditional love): If we love because our spouses love us, are kind to us or care for us, it is conditional love. I am sure you have heard husbands saying, "I will love my wife if she submits to me" or wives remarking, "I will submit to my husband if I can feel his love." AGAPE love is the ability to love without any conditions attached. This means we love our spouse in favorable or difficult situations. This is how God loves us, unconditionally.

2. STORGE Love (protective love): When we want to understand and share in the feelings of the person, it will bring out our compassion and empathy for the person. Only then can we show STORGE love towards the person. This is how God cares and protects us.

3. PHILIA Love (friendship love): When God saw that Adam was lonely, He created Eve as his companion and friend. They were able to laugh with each other, trust one another, do things together and enjoy the comfort of their togetherness. God provides this form of relationship in a marriage.

4. EROS Love: Marriage allows us to express our love towards each other in romance and intimacy. EROS love involves passion and emotion, and as followers of Christ, it adheres to the one man and one woman love relationship. This love is so strong that a man and woman, who may have known each other for a few short years, are willing to leave their parents who have cared and loved them for about 20-30 years, just to be with their partner. This is God's matrimonial blessing and mystery.

SUMMARY: Learn to see people and situations from God's perspective and value people as more important than the completion of a task or the price of an object. Our spouses are precious. God designed marriage to illustrate His relationship with His church. Marriage is a means to demonstrate God's love and to spread the Gospel.

HELPING EACH OTHER: Share with a few families (audio or video call) the following:

- a. How can we turn struggles and problems into challenges so as to draw closer to God?
- b. Look at the "The Struggling Girl" photograph and name 3 possible ways you could have helped Nyong if you were there. What are your scriptural motivations?
- c. Reflect on a difficult time in your home. Name 3 possible ways you could have helped to make the situation better. Which verses give you inspiration? Let us make a significant difference in our marriage relationship.

*By His Grace,
Pastor Thomas & Ma'am Pamela Teh*