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A Biblical Approach to Establishing Marital Intimacy

Part I: Intimacy and the Trinity

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Marital Intimacy Introduced

Marital intimacy is a frequent topic in mass media productions, in social settings and in private discussions. Various isolating factors at work on the American family have stirred this interest. The mobility of families, the impersonal manner of a technological society, the lack of time to establish personal friends, the lack of extended families, the approval and ease of obtaining a divorce and spectator sports are some of these isolating factors which move people's interest toward marital intimacy. Marital intimacy is a oneness (closeness, communion or unity) between a man and a woman who have committed themselves to each other before God in marriage. Its three aspects are cognitive intimacy, emotional intimacy and behavioral intimacy (sexual, social, work-related, spiritual). Its characteristics are love, trust, acceptance, honesty, fidelity (loyalty, faithfulness), respect, self-disclosure, affection, appreciation, joy and identity. With the family as the basic unit of society, people look to it to provide the warmth, concern, sense of identity and belongingness which is absent in a lonely world. Denton observes:

Marriage is now expected to meet nearly all the needs for companionship, affections, relatedness and meaning. To be sure, friends and relatives still meet some of these needs, but the marriage relationship is increasingly being expected to bear the load of these needs.¹

To this agree the words of Baute:

The economic, status-giving, educational, religious, recreational, and protective bonds that tied the nuclear family together have attenuated. In spite of this, the family still remains the center of emotional life. And according to Vincent (1966), this function has increased in importance as the others have decreased. Satisfaction in personal relationships is practically the main buttress left to support the entire building (Despert 1962, 251).²

Even with this pressure upon the family to provide satisfaction in personal relations for its members, there is greater responsibility for intimacy upon the married couple who is to be a model for the other members of the family. To understand the significance and importance of marital intimacy for the stability, enjoyment and life-long success of a marriage, the interested person will consider evidence of the desire for it, causes for the absence of it and the basis for establishing it.

Evidence of the Desire for Marital Intimacy

Man was created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27). The image of God in man consisted of a natural likeness to God, or personality and moral likeness to God, or holiness. Strong explains:

By virtue of the first, man possessed certain faculties (intellect, affection, will); by virtue of the second, he had right tendencies (bent, proclivity, disposition). By virtue of the first, he was invested with certain powers; by virtue of the second, a certain direction was imparted to these powers. As created in the natural image of God, man had a moral nature; as created in the moral image of God, man had a holy character. The first gave him natural ability; the second gave him moral ability.³

Scripture presents a functional/descriptive model of personality. Man is an ontological duality and a functional plurality.⁴ This means that he has two parts or aspects of existence—body and soul/spirit (Gen 2:7; Eccl 12:7). Yet, there is an overarching unity in these two parts (Heb 4:12). As a functional plurality, man relates to God, man and the universe with his whole being which involves thinking, feeling and behaving in his body.

Direction imparted to man's powers was given by God so that man would function morally, socially and purposefully. As a moral being, man was to behave according to a righteous standard (God's holy nature and directions 1 Pet 1:16; Eph 4:24). As a social being, man with personality was to live in relation to other personalities (Phil 2:3; Matt 22:39). As a telic being, man was to live with a sense of purpose or in a goal-oriented productive manner (Gen 1:28; Cor 10:31; Isa 43:7). Since man was designed with the capacity for personal intimacy with God and other persons, he experiences loneliness apart from them. Even with God's fellowship, man felt a loneliness without communion with another human being (Gen 2:18). Of all of God's creation, man's aloneness was declared "not good." God's remedy was the creation of a woman as a companion or completer of man (Gen 2:18, 20-23). Marital intimacy with its closeness, openness, appreciation, affection, trust and other qualities began with Adam and Eve (Gen 2:24-25). When sin affected God's universe by the fall of man (Gen 3:6), man lost his holiness and his personality was marred. His will was bent away from God. His emotions were corrupted and were expressed in sinful ways. His intellect was so affected that he could not think God's thoughts after Him. He was still responsible to function as a moral, social and purposeful creature, but sin warped these ways of functioning. God in His grace has provided redemption for alienated man by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. By faith in Christ as Savior, man is regenerated and made a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). Through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit by the Word of God, man is conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29). Saved man by the power of the Spirit is able to function once again morally, socially and purposefully in ways pleasing to God (Phil 4:13; Eph 5:18).

Whether saved or lost, man has the desire to enjoy marital intimacy because he was created a social creature and because marriage provides

the way to the greatest depths of personal closeness (Gen 2:18). Solomon urged, "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he has given thee under the sun" (Ecc1 9:9).

Causes for the Absence of Marital Intimacy

The causes for the absence of marital intimacy are many because sin may be manifested in a variety of ways. Sin is what destroyed marital communion in the beginning (Gen 2:24-25; 3:6-10). Instead of oneness with openness, alienation, fear and shame characterized the relationship of the first couple. In place of appreciation, closeness and unity, there appeared blameshifting, accusations, distantiation by location and coverups and unity-destroying selfishness. From this first couple a sin nature has been passed on by natural propagation to all mankind (Rom 5:12; 3:10, 23).

So the causes for the absence of marital intimacy today come either from a multitude of personal sins or from copied sinful patterning from improper models or from the pressures of a sinful world system which push toward wicked behavior that is not conducive to marital intimacy (Col 3:5). The following paragraphs present and explain these causes.

Lack of Intimate Experience

People who have been reared in an environment devoid of parents and leaders who provide a warm, close relationship have not learned to show intimacy. It is as if the person is paralyzed by a limited behavioral repertoire.

The quality of love and its expression in a couple's marriage will affect the quantity and quality of their children's love and even their grandchildren's love. The reason intimacy is so unfashionable today is the scarcity of intimate models. Ways of expressing appreciation and love must be learned. A person's lack of training should not be used as an excuse for laziness. A loving mate or another person who knows how to be intimate can be a model for correcting behavioral patterns. Johnston rightly concludes:

Nothing teaches behaviour and communicates moral standards more effectively than a good model. If our own Christian homes and families radiate contentment, security, warm acceptance and understanding, and are felt as places of blessing and health, we shall be commending the Gospel and providing our children—and the young people of the surrounding neighborhood—with an argument for God's family pattern which cannot be gainsaid.⁵

Cultural Conditioning

Western culture has assigned certain traits to men. Tournier traces this conditioning back to the Renaissance and describes it as a "masculine strategy."⁶ Enthroned were power, combativeness, rational thought, cold objective relationships, technology, the manipulation of things and Roman law which sanctioned the dominance of the male. Men were taught that

masculine behavior is not evidenced by gentleness, tenderness, compassion or a spoken affection of love. Boys were told that men do not cry or show their emotions. Balswick writes, "Our society plays a mean trick on males. All along males are taught that they should not talk about their feelings, only to have the rules changed on them when they marry."⁷ After marriage, they are expected by women to be open, sharing and intimate. However, they have been conditioned to be distant, withholding and non-emotional. Olthius observes that men are victims of the socialization practices in America:

Learning that their identity is in their separateness, they are wary of intimacy and defend themselves well against it. Men grow up learning that it is wrong to let down, to be weak, dependent, and vulnerable. They deny or try to deny those parts of themselves and try to put up a front of self-sufficiency, control, and confidence. At the same time, as especially Luise Eichenbaum and Susie Orbach have noted, growing up with the confidence that their deepest needs will be taken care of by women, they seek marriage. But when women enter marriage seeking identity through connection and men enter marriage seeking solace without having to give up their separateness, both men and women suffer.⁸

This cultural conditioning is a main cause of absence of marital intimacy.

Contributing to and affected by this cultural conditioning is the business world which demands emotional detachment. A man is simply regarded as a performer or an achiever. "Any personal intimacy with others in his work-a-day world might disclose his weaknesses, create distrust on the part of associates, and possibly precipitate loss of prestige."⁹ Thus, the man reveals his feelings, interests and private life as little as possible. When the husband leaves his work for home, he switches from the occupational world of limited responsibility, authority and non-emotional expression to the domestic scene which is unpredictable and emotionally charged. His family expects him to be warm, trusting, affectionate and relaxed. The switch between the business world and the home is difficult for men who have been culturally conditioned toward an absence of intimacy.

Lack of Affection

Women who experience a lack of affection conclude that their men do not love them. Affection to them means security, protection, comfort and approval. Without affection, women interpret the behavior as communicating a negative message and usually will involve themselves in other intimate activities. When it comes to sex and affection, a mate cannot have one without the other.¹⁰ God has made man to be the initiator of love by showing affection in selfless ways (Eph 5:23-33). In loving his wife, the husband causes her to love him in return. When a wife experiences a lack of affection, progress is stopped toward marital intimacy.

Confusion of Romantic Intimacy with Marital Intimacy

Romantic intimacy is primarily the emotional closeness two people feel in their strong attraction to each other. Marital intimacy is based on the reality which comes from true knowledge of the person and selfless caring for the mate's best. Marital intimacy is lacking in some marriages because couples have confused romantic intimacy for it. When the routine and the responsibilities of marriage began, romantic intimacy was shattered. The couple may conclude that they made a mistake in marrying their mate or that love has been lost. The resulting disillusionment, discouragement and depression are not conducive to bringing marital intimacy. Esau counsels such couples with the words, "The awakening is a new awakening, not a reawakening of love. In this new awakening of love lies the hope of vitality in your marriage."¹¹

Fear of Marital Intimacy

Closeness seems to be something couples want and yet some are afraid of it. Why are they afraid? Intimacy implies vulnerability. "Emotional sharing requires self-disclosure, and for many of us that idea of opening up our inmost centers is a scary prospect."¹² Intimacy reveals the weaknesses, inadequacies, faults, sins, existing differences and how short each one falls of the expectations of the other. People fear that rejection, exploitation, domination, loss of identity or misuse of private information will happen if they are intimate with their mate. Pollak explains:

The Latin root of the term signifies fears. We find it in the words "timid" and "timorous" still. If we extend the meaning of the Latin root, "intimacy" means a relationship in which one enters the fear of the partner. In our society where one comes more and more to realize to what degree his destiny is determined by impersonal and unpredictable forces such as atomic warfare, occupational obsolescence and simply bureaucratic career mishap, the need for family members willingness to enter into one's fears will become urgent and demanding. It will probably be one of the most important functions of the family in our time.¹³

As long as fear of marital intimacy controls the person, he will not experience the joys of intimacy. When the couple deeply love each other, their love will shield them through the searing experience of self-revelation. "Only love can drive out the constant threat of condemnation and rejection that otherwise haunts and spoils all experiences of intimacy."¹⁴ As 1 John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

Lack of an Accurate Self-Image

The lack of an accurate self-image will keep a person from experiencing marital intimacy. The person will tend to focus on himself, to misinterpret the words and behavior of the mate and to fail to relate as he should. A Christian can have an accurate self-image by seeing himself in Christ as a saved sinner who has been gifted by God to love God and his neighbor (Matt 22:37-40). He can learn to think of himself accurately as he rightly

relates intimacy to his mate (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:8-9). Olthuis states, "Self-identity prepares us for intimacy, and intimacy generates a stronger sense of self-identity. The mutually supportive interaction between identity and intimacy is the woof and warp of the fabric of human life."¹⁵ Thus, the lack of an accurate self-image can keep marital intimacy out of reach.

Unrealistic Expectations

Every person entering marriage has certain expectations. However, those with unrealistic expectations can sow seeds for loneliness in marriage. Great disappointment may come to those who are picturing marriage as the panacea for all of life's ills. David and Vera Mace observe:

With the increase of secularism and the hushing of the apocalyptic note in religion, dreams of bliss in heaven hereafter have been replaced by dreams of bliss in marriage here and now. Marriage is a good and rewarding relationship. But it cannot deliver the goods matched to this anticipation. Moreover, what it delivers is strictly dependent on what husband and wife bring to it in terms of enlightened understanding and sustained effort.¹⁶

Those who enter marriage with the basic purpose of having their needs met have a problem. This approach to marriage will not lead to marital intimacy. It is a selfish approach. Unrealistic expectations for marriage which come from selfish thinking, media advertising, lack of premarital training or improper evaluation of marital models will not be conducive to marital communion.

Lack of Effort

Marriage is a task two people work at in selfless ways to experience oneness. A lot of thought and effort is put into many courtships. However, after marriage with its routine and responsibilities, the couple often settles down and fails to continue the loving actions. Nelson and Friest stress, "Marriage partners need to think about, and work on their relationships as vigorously as they attend to their specific employment or homemaking tasks."¹⁷ Even a dying love can spark again when a couple put effort into making the marriage succeed.

Lack of Communication

Without communication no marriage will experience intimacy. Self-disclosure is the key to oneness. A vulnerability that allows a person to share feelings, thoughts, deep hurts and great joys is essential to a healthy climate of closeness. When hostile feelings and overt conflicts are suppressed, they develop into resentment, frustration and anger. Holding dissatisfactions can lead to withdrawal, depression, "blowing up" and even health problems. Failure to communicate erodes trust, intimacy and growth. In a poll of over thirty thousand women by *The Ladies Home Journal*, only one problem ranked above conflicts over money, that was "poor communications."¹⁸ Communication ranked higher than sexual attraction, physical appearance and personality.

Couples need to know how to settle conflicts in their marriage. Among the abrasive factors that increase tensions are: disrespect, blaming, failure to take responsibility for self, demanding that a wide range of problems be solved simultaneously, refusal to stick to the issue, ineffective listening and incompetence at verbalizing what one would like to say.¹⁹ These need to be dealt with and corrected. "To be secretive or reserved or defensive toward each other in marriage is inevitably to condemn the relationship to superficiality."²⁰ To have marital closeness, a couple must abandon all poses and reveal themselves as they really are. Improper or lack of communication leads to an absence of intimacy.

No Agreement on Life's Meaning

The prophet Amos asked a pertinent question, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (3:3). The answer is obviously "No!" Neither can a couple who disagree on life's meaning and goals have unity. Agreement on life's meaning by Christians should cause each believer to encourage his mate by his love and service for the Lord (Isa 43:7). "As loving husbands and wives, such partners are servants called to mediate God's love, letting their love for each other serve a higher end."²¹ Couples who do not agree on life's meaning and goals cannot enjoy true marital intimacy.

Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism in a marriage will not allow marital intimacy to exist. This type of leadership is overpossessive, unreasonable and exacting in demands. Men and women are of equal worth with different roles in marriage. Mutuality of two persons requires equality. Mutuality is needed for intimacy. The Scriptures do not teach authoritarian leadership. Paul stressed the need for a husband to be a loving leader (Eph 5:22-33). Authoritarian leadership sets limits to companionship and prohibits true oneness in marriage.

Lack of Trust

Trust is the key to closeness and openness in marriage. When trust erodes so does intimacy. "Getting through all the issues and problems of marriage requires unswerving trust in each other."²² Untrustworthiness may be communicated in several ways: telling secrets, breaking promises, critical reactions to the mate's disclosures, inconsistency in the relationship and unreliability when asked for a favor. Honesty and selfless behavior leads to trust. "Without a well-cultivated, well-preserved trust, a marriage will more than likely flounder in time."²³

Sinful Practices

There are many causes for the lack of marital intimacy. Carter, Meier and Minirth list ten ways to avoid intimacy²⁴ including workaholism, sports fanaticism, substituting sex for intimacy, going to bed at different times, separate bedrooms, sarcasm, having an affair and confessing it, counter-

ing your mate's personality, overzealousness about church work and ignoring your mate. Each of these are self-explanatory except having an affair and confessing it and countering your mate's personality. The person who has an affair and confesses it is doing this to hurt his mate in order to avoid emotional or sexual intimacy according to the authors. The person who counters their mate's personality becomes introvert if the male is extrovert. This leads to different social lifestyles and different sets of friends resulting in lack of intimacy.

Selfishness, pride, sinful expressions of anger, sinful jealousy and bitterness are some of the most frequent sins which hinder or prevent marital closeness. Selfishness is caring unduly or supremely for oneself. It is a regard for one's own comfort and advantage along with disregard for or at the expense of others. This behavior is the opposite of agape love which is selfless behavior.

Pride is inordinate self-esteem which has its root in self-centeredness. It manifests itself in boasting, complacency, arrogance and other sinful forms. Proud behavior in marriage can lead to disgust, defensiveness, and delay of repentance and forgiveness. Persons with this problem need to replace pride with humility (James 4:10; 1 Pet 5:5-6).

Anger is an emotion which can be expressed sinfully or righteously (Eph 4:26, 31). The energy of anger should not be expressed in clamming up or blowing up, but should be directed to behavior which can justly solve the problem.²⁵ Married persons who have not learned to rightly handle anger need to do so to avoid further marital problems and loss of intimacy.

There is a righteous jealousy and a sinful jealousy. Jealousy is an emotion which can be shown in sinful or righteous ways. God is righteous and is also a jealous God (Exod 20:5). Jealous people are distinguished by fear of losing to someone else what rightfully belongs to them. It is not wrong to be a steward of what God has given; however, there may be no valid basis for the concern which displays hostility, lack of trust or even hatred. This destroys intimacy in marriage which is based on trust.

Bitterness literally means pointed, sharp or acrid. It denotes anger, belligerence or animosity. The root idea is to cut or prick causing pain to oneself and others. Bitterness may come from unwise, unfulfilled or uncontrolled desires. It may come as a reaction to the behavior of others; the position, power, or possessions of others; the physical attributes and abilities of oneself; the environment of home, school or work or the events of life. A bitter person may become depressed, emotionally exhausted, displeased with self or suicidal. Bitterness in a marriage destroys edifying communication, proper sexual relations, marital intimacy and other characteristics of a good marriage. A bitter person stops loving God, halts spiritual growth and may entertain doubts of salvation (1 John 4:20-21; 1 Cor 3:13; Rom 14:23). The bitter marriage partner needs to follow the instruction of Ephesians 4:31-32:

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

He or she needs to agree with God about the sin of bitterness and ask God and their mate for forgiveness (Eph 1:7; Col 3:13). Then, selfless behavior toward one's mate will bring back the close feelings if the other partner is receptive.

Selfishness, pride, sinful expressions of anger, sinful jealousy and bitterness prevent marital intimacy. There are other sinful behaviors which hinder intimacy, but those enumerated in this section are among the most frequent.

Basis for Establishing Marital Intimacy

Intimate marriage must have the right basis or foundation to stand the tests of time. As a skyscraper must have a secure foundation to avoid toppling in times of storms, so an intimate marriage must be solidly based on one's relationship with God and mate and on agreed-upon-practices which allow love and closeness to grow.

Relationship with God and Mate

Marriage was designed to be a relationship of intimacy. The Designer is God—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14). With this plurality of persons, the Godhead expresses and experiences loving relationships. God chose to create man in His image with personality, so that man and God could relate and that man could relate to other personalities. Therefore, God is the Originator, Model and Source of loving relationships. Edward Thornton correctly states:

Intimacy with God is of the essence of the spiritual life, but true intimacy with God is never separable from intimacy with one another as brothers and sisters who have the same father and who live in one family bearing their father's name.²⁶

Thus, the three persons in marriage—God, self and mate—must be envisioned in a stable state as a triangle. Marriage manuals with their triangles with God on the top and the husband and wife forming the base points come close to this concept. However, this is more a recognition that the marriage is “under God” and subject to biblical teachings rather than a relational diagram. Garland and Garland are correct in their conclusion:

We believe, however, that our relationship with our spouse takes on meaning only as it transcends itself in relationship with God and God's purposes. Our relationship with God has substance only when we move beyond into service to neighbor/spouse.²⁷

Triangulation with man, wife and God existed before sin affected the race (Gen 2:22; 3:8). It can exist today in any marriage where the husband and wife have both received Jesus Christ as Savior. As such a couple ex-

perience God's love they are able to express it to one another. As they are conformed to the image of Christ, they become more compatible (Rom 8:29). When problems arise in marriage, the couple can look to God for solutions in their relations.

Several family theorists operate on the premise that the triad is the basic interpersonal unit.²⁸ They see dysfunctional families as triangling with children, a sexual partner outside the family, or some other person. However, triangling with God should happen in all interpersonal relationships including well-functioning marriages. Intimacy with God is a vital part of the basis for establishing marital intimacy.

Recognition of the Qualities of the Mate

In the creation and presentation of woman to man, the similarity and differentness between the man and the woman were clearly revealed. Adam recognized the similarity by saying, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23). God indicated that Eve was created for a helper or assistant (Gen 2:18, 20). Delitzsch writes of *azer kenegedo* "a help of his like: i.e. a helping being, in which, as soon as he sees it, he may recognize himself."²⁹ Due to their similarity, they could be close in thinking, feeling and behaving. Intimacy was possible because of their likeness.

Their differences were also recognized by Adam. He called her "woman" (*isha*) instead of "man" (*ish*) (Gen 2:23). By observation, communication and sexual relations, Adam learned of Eve's unique differences. Eve was a separate identity from Adam with her own characteristics, personality and abilities.

Man and woman are similar and different. Recognition of this is vital to intimacy in marriage. "Self-identity prepares us for intimacy, and intimacy generates a stronger sense of self-identity. The mutually supportive interaction between identity and intimacy is the woof and warp of the fabric of human life."³⁰ The communion of love requires two separate identities. Mike Mason observes:

The very heart of intimacy is reached when two people are neither afraid or ashamed of being possessed by love, when in fact they give themselves freely to the pure joy and liberty of owning and being owned. There is a delicious relaxation, an unspeakable peace in knowing that one belongs in another's arms, and that far from being swallowed up by the other's heart, it is there that the mystery of one's own true identity opens up as never before.³¹

Marital intimacy is made richer by the contributions of each partner with their own abilities, interests, backgrounds and acquired skills. God acknowledged these differences when he assigned men and women their roles in marriage (Eph 5:22-33). Difference in role does not mean difference in worth. The persons in the Trinity function in different roles, but are of equal essence and worth. Awareness and allowance of difference and sameness are important for marital intimacy.

Separation from the Original Family Unit

Marital closeness depends on the severance from the original family units. Moses writes, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother" (Gen 2:24). This breaking of family dependence is the first step to reliance on a mate. The marriage bonds take precedence over the relationship between parent and child even though the parent-child relationship is the closest natural blood tie. "It is a new primary loyalty, a new basic allegiance which overrides other allegiances."³²

Parents have a responsibility to prepare their children for marriage and adult life. Mack lovingly writes to parents, "Your life must not be wrapped around them or you may make them emotional cripples."³³ Leaving parents does not relieve the married child of the responsibility of honoring parents (Exod 20:12), but of the responsibility of obedience. Numerous marital problems may be traced to the failure of parents and married children who have not observed this admonition. Severance from the original families is a must for oneness in marriage.

Commitment to Marriage

Entering marriage is making a covenant with one's mate in the presence of God (Matt 19:6; 28:20). A covenant is an agreement between two parties based on promise, which includes four elements: (1) an undertaking of committed faithfulness by each person, (2) the acceptance of that undertaking by the mate-to-be, (3) public knowledge of the commitments, and (4) the growth of a personal relationship based on and expressive of such a commitment.³⁴ The marriage covenant is used in Malachi 2:14 to stress the performance of marriage:

Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

Another reference to the marriage covenant is in Proverbs 2:17 which condemns the adulteress woman: "Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God."

The covenant of marriage is the "glue" of marriage. The second command in Genesis 2:24 is for the man "to cleave" unto his wife. The word *dabaq* means "to cling to," "keep by," "keep close to," "join together."³⁵ Kalland writes, "*Dabaq* also carries the sense of clinging to someone in affection and loyalty. Man is to cleave to his wife (Gen 2:24)."³⁶ Therefore, at the very foundation of a marital relationship there must be commitment on the part of the couple to live together in a unique and lasting union. God views marriage as bound by a sacred covenant which is never to be broken. When couples take the marriage covenant seriously, even difficulties can deepen intimacy and love. Writing against a contemporary secular view of intimacy, Stafford asserts:

And it is a loving monogamy – not merely a convenient social compact, but a covenant to be filled with love as a cup is filled with wine. There is an important distinction here. Nowhere does the Bible say that love is the basis for marriage; marriage is the basis for love. Paul's command is "Husbands, love your wives" rather than "Men, marry your lovers."³⁷

To cleave to one's mate takes a commitment at marriage which must be renewed daily by selfless behavior. Such a commitment is an act of faith and unconditional love. It is the willingness to keep one's promise, regardless of the reasons to renege. It is commitment to God's Word. It is a declaration that marriage is permanent. Commitment generates love, trust, loyalty and security. Commitment to each other is anchored in a Christian couple's commitment to Christ. Commitment to marriage is a key part of the basis for establishing marital intimacy.

Complete Intimacy

God intended that man and woman become "one flesh." This is the consummation of marriage. Leaving and cleaving lead to complete intimacy. "The three strands from which a human marriage covenant is made 'leaving,' 'cleaving,' 'one flesh.'"³⁸ One flesh refers to the union of Adam and Eve. Oswalt referring to the Hebrews writes:

Rather they saw the human reality as permeating all the components with the totality being the person.... In this way, to refer to someone as being of one's own "flesh and bone" (Gen 2:23) was to say more than that they shared the same bodily heritage. Again, to say that a man and woman become one flesh in the sexual embrace (Gen 2:24) is to say more than that they are united bodily.³⁹

Sexual union is certainly included in this concept, but the whole person is involved at the deepest level. It is a union of the entire man with the entire woman. "One flesh" indicates a unitary existence, a complete partnership of man and woman, which cannot be broken up without damage to the partners in it.⁴⁰ Johnston writes:

The fact that in human relations the "one flesh" interpersonal communion comes into being through (and is maintained by) sexual intercourse, is supported by Paul's use of the phrase to refer to the ghastly parody of marriage enacted between a man and a prostitute in 1 Cor 6:16. The sense of that whole paragraph is of the incongruity of attempting to separate the sexual part of life from total personal commitment. The one is intended to be the expression of the other. Sexual union seals and completes the marriage covenant as an affirmation of exclusive love and of the commitment to parenthood.⁴¹

The sexual union of man and woman in marriage allows the couple's oneness in other areas to be joined. The sexual connection is a channel through which flows their mutual feeling, appreciation and understanding. The sharing is sensual, but it also is emotional, intellectual, and spiritual involving the total person.⁴² It is a blending of persons. It is the opposite of aloneness. It is "knowing" and "being with" in the closest way. They enjoyed the intimate sights, sounds and touch of each other in an uninhibited way. The body can become the means by which the mate can communicate totally to their spouse. Marriage is the uniting of two people in a relationship which can lead to one of the greatest of human experiences. Complete intimacy is only possible in a marriage where each

partner is open and close to the mate in all areas of their being. Each mate responds to the needs and desires of the other. This is marital intimacy at its best. It is possible for a couple to enjoy it today by following God's model and His message on marital intimacy.

Intimacy Modeled by the Trinity

Intimacy is achieved by practicing learned, selfless behavior. This knowledge is not natural because of the alienation which resulted from man's fall into sin. Although man was created a social being, his skills and knowledge are deficient because of sin's affects on human personality. Therefore, people must learn the behavior which leads to intimacy. This can be learned from personal, direct experience or by indirect or vicarious experience (modeling). Actually, behavior which leads to intimacy can be learned more efficiently through modeling, since much of the trial and error process involved in learning by direct experience is eliminated. Through modeling, people learn conceptual schemes, judgmental orientations, linguistic styles, information-processing strategies, cognitive operations and standards of conduct.⁴³ The Scriptures are full of persons, descriptions and instructions as models for intimacy.

The perfect model for human intimacy is God. God created man in His image (Gen 1:27) with personality as a social being. God not only has revealed Himself in theophanies, dreams, visions and "face-to-face" encounters, but also He has sent Christ in human flesh to disclose Himself. Pink states, "The Lord Jesus Christ is not only a perfect and glorious Pattern of all graces, holiness, virtue, and obedience, to be preferred above all others, but He alone is such."⁴⁴ Scripture presents Christ as the believer's example. Christ is described as "going before them" as a shepherd (John 10:4), as "an example" in behavior (John 13:15), as One to be "likeminded" with (Rom 15:5; Phil 2:5), as One to look to as "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb 12:12), as an example in whose steps we should follow (1 Pet 2:20-21), as a pattern for the believer's walk (1 John 2:6), and as a Friend (John 15:13-16).

"Although Jesus Himself never married, His strategy of concentrated love nevertheless provides the pattern for Christian couples and reveals God's own strategy, His inmost intentions for the marriage unit."⁴⁵ Jesus began His ministry of miracles at a wedding in Cana, concluded Scripture with the marriage of the bride, His church. Throughout His ministry he stressed the permanence, joy and privileges of marriage (John 2:1-2; Rev 21-22; Matt 5:32; 19:4-12). Christ is the model for married persons as He relates to the Father and to His church (Eph 5: 22-33; 1 Pet 2:23-3:1-6). In the OT, God used the marriage motif with Himself as the Husband and Israel or Judah as the wife (Hos 2:16-20; Isa 50:1; 54:5-8; 62:1-5; Jer 2:2, 32; 3:1ff.; 31:1ff.; Ezek 16, 23; Mal 2:10-17). Since marriage is the closest analogy in earthly experience of what it means for people to be united to God in love, the Bible uses the imagery of marriage. From these passages, one can learn approved patterns for relationship which will lead to intimacy in marriage.

To understand God as the model for marital intimacy, a person must first comprehend what the Scripture teaches regarding the Trinity. Warfield defines the Trinity: "There is one only and true God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three coeternal and coequal Persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence."⁴⁶ The word "substance" might sound materialistic; some prefer the use of the word "essence." "Subsistence" refers to necessary existence and might better be expressed by the term "person" or "personality." Lowry explains:

Within the unity of one God there are three real and distinct Persons, three centers of consciousness, will, and activity. Each is a personal agent, fully God. Yet each partakes of and has His being in the same identical Godhead, and is constituted internally by the same attributes and or common Divine consciousness. Thus there is a real sharing, a genuine communion, an authentic love. But the diversity is within a unity which in intensity and completeness surpasses all human thought and imagination.⁴⁷

God is incomprehensible, yet what He has revealed about Himself in the Word is knowable.

Evidence for the unity of God and the tripersonality of God are found throughout the Bible. The OT emphasizes the unity of God (Gen 1:1; Exod 20:2-3; 4:35; Deut 6:4; 1 Kgs 8: 60; Isa 43:10; 44:6; 45:5). The NT states it (Mark 10:18; 12:29; 1 Cor 8:6; 1 Tim 2:5; James 2:19). The tripersonality of God is taught in the OT more by implication and intimation than by direct statement. Some theologians understand "Elohim" to denote plurality of personalities. However, others understand "Elohim" to signify "majesty" or "intensity" rather than "multiplicity within God's nature."⁴⁸ Another indication of the tripersonality of God in the OT is the plural personal pronouns used for God (Gen 1:26; 11:7; Isa 6:8). Also, the Hebrew word *ehad* which appears in Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear O Israel the Lord our God is one Lord" is a compound unity or unity with plurality. Zutrau explains:

There are two words for "one" in the Hebrew language: *echad* and *yachid*. "Echad" is a compound unity, meaning several or many in one. "Yachid" is an absolute unity, meaning absolutely and indivisibly one. The term "echad," the compound unity, is derived from a verb which is found only once in all Scripture, in Ezekiel 21:21 (Leeser, Jewish translator). It is "Yachad," meaning "to unite oneself, to gather one's strength or forces."⁴⁹

Illustrations of the use of *ehad* include Genesis 2:24 where a man marries a woman and becomes one, Judges 20:1ff where the children of the congregation are assembled as one man and Numbers 13:23 where many grapes are one cluster. The use of *ehad* which denotes compound unity allows for tripersonality in God.

Another evidence of tripersonality in the OT is intimations (Num 6:24-27; Psa 2:6-9; Isa 6:3; Zech 2:10). In the Zechariah passage, the one who is called the Lord is sent by the Lord of Hosts to dwell in the midst of Israel. An additional proof is allusions to the Holy Spirit and His work (Gen 1:2). The description of the Angel of the Lord as Jehovah is yet

another line of evidence (Gen 16:7-10, 13; 21:17-18; 22:11-12). The last proof for the tripersonality of God in the OT is direct statement (Isa 48:16; 61:1-2; 63:7-10). Isaiah 48:16 reads: "Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, From the time it took place, I was there, And now the Lord God has sent Me, and His Spirit."

The tripersonality of God in the NT is clearly revealed. First, there are a few passages where trinitarian formulae are used (Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; Rev 1:4). The passage in Matthew 28:19 contains a baptismal formula: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Secondly, there are passages containing triadic form (Eph 4:4-6; 1 Cor 12:3-6; 1 Pet 1:2). In Ephesians 4:4-6, Paul speaks of "One Spirit...One Lord...One God and Father." A third type of passage mentions the three Persons together, but without any clear triadic structure (Matt 3:16-17; Gal 4:4-6; Mark 1:9-11 Rom 8:1ff; 2 Thes 2:13f; Titus 3:4-6; Jude 20f). Another group of passages bring out the relationship between the different Persons of the Trinity (John 14:6, 26; 15:26; 16:15). Other passages where actions which are normally attributed to God as ascribed to Christ or to the Spirit substantiate the tripersonality of God (John 2:1-11; 9:5-6; Col 1:17). In addition to the evidences for tripersonality, there are passages which attest the deity of each person in the Godhead. The Father is recognized as God (John 6: 27; 1 Pet 1:2). The Son is acknowledged as God (Matt 9:4; 28: 18, 20; Mark 2:1-2; John 1:3; 5:27; 12:9). The Holy Spirit is declared to be God (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor 2:10; 6:19; John 3:5-6, 8). All three persons of the Godhead have the same essence, yet are distinct as personalities.

In the relationship of the three persons of the Trinity there is a functional subordination in the economy of the divine redemptive program.⁵⁰ This is based on their work and revelation concerning it. God the Father has ascribed to Him the responsibility of designing the work of redemption (Ps 2:7-9; 40:6-9; Isa 53:10; Matt 12:32; Eph 1:3-6), the works of creation and providence, especially in their early stages (1 Cor 8:6; Eph 2:9), and the work of representing the Trinity as the holy, righteous being whose right was violated (Ps 2:7-9; 40:6-9; John 6:37-38; 17:4-7).⁵¹ He is revealed as the cause of all things.

God the Son, Jesus Christ, is presented in Scripture as the mediating cause of all things. In the realm of nature, all things were created and are maintained through Christ (John 1:3, 10; Heb 1:2, 3; Col 1:17). In the work of redemption, Jesus Christ carries out the plan of redemption in His incarnation, life, sufferings and death (Isa 53; Matt 2:23; John 19:30).

The Holy Spirit's task is to bring things to a completion by acting upon and in the creation or creature. In the natural realm, He completed creation (Gen 1:2) and inspires and qualifies people for the responsibilities (Exod 28:3; 31:2, 3, 6; 35:35; 1 Sam 11:6; 16:13-14). In the work of redemption, the Holy Spirit has a great number of responsibilities: (1) He prepares and qualifies Christ for His mediatorial work. He prepared Christ a body through the conception in Mary (Luke 1:35; Heb 10:5-7). Christ was

anointed by the Spirit at His baptism (Luke 3:22) and received the gifts and control of the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). (2) He inspired the Scriptures. He brought to men the special revelation of God (1 Cor 2:13; 2 Pet 1:21) and the knowledge of redemption through Christ. (3) He forms and increases the Church by regeneration and sanctification (Eph 1:22-23; 2:22; 1 Cor 3:16; 12:4ff). (4) He teaches and guides the Church. He testifies to Christ and leads the Church into all truth. He increases the knowledge of Christ, protects the Church from error and prepares the Church for eternity (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14; Acts 5:32; Heb 10:15; 1 John 2:27).⁵²

The revelation which presents the work of the Trinity shows the Father sending the Son and both of them sending the Spirit (Mark 9:37; Gal 4:4; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). Theologically this is called the generation of the Son and spiration of the Spirit. These are eternal acts and refer to the personality in its function and not to a subordination of essence. Even with these works attributed to the respective persons of the Trinity, there is occasionally a work attributed to another person who normally is not identified with it (the Son creates, Col 1:16; Heb 1:3; the Father sanctifies, John 17:17). This is explained by the unity in the essence. This subordination in no way indicates inequality. Bromiley draws the parallel to marriage:

As in the Trinity the Father, as the fount of deity, has a certain precedence over the Son and the Spirit, yet all are equally God in eternal interrelation, so it is with man and woman in the fellowship which God has purposed and created.⁵³

Howell further elaborates:

The doctrine of the Trinity witnesses to a concept of personal equality between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with the only differentiation of personhood being related to the functional tasks of each person in the Godhead.

In the one-flesh union, by analogy, the oneness which is possible is a dynamic unity of persons in which equality of personhood exists yet functional subordination to one another also exists for the fulfillment of tasks related to family life.⁵⁴

“Trinitarian theology is *par excellence* the theology of relationship.”⁵⁵ The Trinity is the ground, source and model for intimacy in relationship.

Relationships within the Trinity

God is a social being (Matt 3:16, 17; John 17). He did not need the world or mankind for His existence. One writer expresses:

The doctrine of the Trinity helps us to apprehend in God something of his own inner life, and to see in him the intimate attachment of the Father to the Son, of the Son to the Father, of both of them to the Holy Spirit, and of the Holy Spirit to both of them. This may help us to grasp how God is self-sufficient and how creation, involving as it does all three persons of the Trinity, was not, however, necessary for God's existence or happiness.⁵⁶

Recognizing the nature of the relationship in the Trinity, Bull taught that since God must be thought of as having

self-sufficiency and most perfect bliss and happiness in himself alone, before and without all created things...it plainly appears, that himself alone is a most perfect and blessed society, the Father, the Son, and Spirit eternally conversing with and enjoying one another.⁵⁷

Yet, God in His own freedom chose to create the world and social beings in it (Gen 2:18). The very first social unit He created was a marriage relationship. The first couple had His model for communication and fellowship. He communicated with them as they related to each other (Gen 1-3). After sin affected the human race, God gave revelation of Himself and His relationship within the Trinity as a model for redeemed man (Lev 11:44; 1 Pet 1:16; 2:21, 23-3:6; Eph 5:25-33).

These relations disclose how perfect personalities relate. These interpersonal relationships include: making the other person known, glorifying or praising the other person, honoring the other person, expressing pleasure with or desire to please, audible expression of love to each other, knowing each other, communicating with one another, working with and for one another, being sent or commissioned by the other person, submitting to the will of the other person, abiding in unity and love, giving gifts, enjoying the fellowship of the other person and trusting in a time of suffering, loneliness and questioning. The first three patterns of behavior sound similar, yet making the other person known, glorifying or praising the other person and honoring the other person are expressed by words with different connotations. These three practices relate to speaking about the other person but have slightly different connotations which should be observed. A consideration of these fourteen behavior patterns in the interpersonal relationship of the Trinity follows.

Making the Other Person Known

In a close relationship characterized by love, a person is proud and happy to make the other person known by speaking of them. There are many verses which show that this is true of the Trinity. One such passage is John 1:18 "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He explained Him." This verse closes the prologue of John's gospel by picturing Christ as fully qualified to reveal the Father (v 14) by reason of continual fellowship with Him. The "begotten God" refers to Christ because He is described as begotten or unique in verse fourteen. The word *exegesato* which is translated "has explained" is from *exegeomai*; which means "to draw out in narrative" or "to recount."⁵⁸ Thus, Christ is uniquely able to reveal God to men because of His oneness with the Father from eternity (1:2). In John 16:14-15, the Holy Spirit is to testify of the Son who possesses those things which the Father has. This passage refers to all three persons of the Trinity and presents a unity of attributes as well as purpose. Even as the Son declares the Father, the Spirit makes known the Son. The Greek verb for "show" is *anangello* which

means to report, announce, proclaim, teach or make known.⁵⁹ Just as the persons of the Trinity make each other known, so married couples should be moved by love and pride to recount their mates' qualities or behavior (Matt 12:34-35; Eph 4:29).

Glorifying or Praising the Other Person

In the relationship between the persons of the Trinity, there is glorification of one another. The word "glorify" finds its root idea in the Hebrew word *kabod* "heavy" or "weighty." In the OT the glory of God is related to His self-revelation. It refers to God's essential nature and the display of that nature as He acts in the material universe.⁶⁰ The Greek use of "glory" referred to the valuation placed by others on a person's actions or achievements. However, the NT use of "glory" usually reflects the OT idea of recognizing God's presence and praising Him for the qualities which His acts disclose.

John 16:14, "He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you" conveys the idea that "glorify" means to display the truth about the nature and activities of Christ. Another key passage which helps to demonstrate this meaning of "glorify" is John 17:1, 4-5:

These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee. I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do. And now glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I ever had with Thee before the world was."

In verse one, Christ in His prayer to the Father just before His crucifixion requests that the Father might display the truth about His nature and activities as He completes the redemptive plan. Commenting on the "hour is to come," one scholar writes:

The announcement enhances the significance of the prayer because it becomes Jesus' evaluation of the purpose of his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The word "glorify" should be applied to the total complex of these events as the climax of the Incarnation. The Son glorified the Father by revealing in this act the sovereignty of God over evil, the compassion of God for men, and the finality of redemption for believers. Jesus focused his entire career on fulfilling the Father's purpose and on delivering the Father's message.⁶¹

In verse four, Christ defines "glorified Thee on earth" as "having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do." The work which Christ did on earth displayed the nature and the activities of God. In verse five, He requests the return to the heavenly relationship with the Father where He would resume the personal exercise of His divine attributes as He had before the incarnation.

In these passages (John 16:14; 17:1, 4-5) illustrating the use of "glorify," it is evident that it means to show the nature, qualities and acts of another. Of course, this would always be a positive display because of the sinlessness of God. Certainly there is a great difference between the infinite God

and finite man who has been redeemed by faith in Christ. The principle of positively displaying the nature, qualities and acts of another can be applied to marriage. This can be done by doing the work which is given by the other for one to accomplish as well as speaking about the other. This is one way of showing love to one's mate (Eph 5:25, 28, 33; John 13:34-35).

Honoring the Other Person

The persons in the Trinity honor each other. The verbs which denote this are "honor," "exalt," and "crown." The Hebrew word for "honor" (*kabod*) is the same word translated glory. The Greek word "to honor" (*timao*) means to value, revere, respect, reward.⁶² It refers to the proper respect gained through one's position or wealth or to the position itself.⁶³ John 8:49 and 54 illustrate this:

Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me." Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing, it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'"

Jesus declares that He shows respect for or reveres the Father. It is interesting that these verses use *timao* (v 49) and *doxazo* (v 54) to show Christ's relation of the Father. Both words mean "to value" or "show respect to." In 2 Peter 1:17, Peter refers to the transfiguration of Christ by saying: "For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased.'" This verse uses glory and honor together and demonstrates the way in which these were used by the Father of the Son.

The Father audibly expressed His pleasure with Christ whom He called His "beloved Son." This is only one way to glorify and to honor another. Another way to honor another is to delegate responsibility to him. Jesus said in John 5:22-23:

For not even the Father judges any one, but He has given all judgment to the Son, in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Here the Father passes on a job to honor the Son with whom He had a rich relationship.

Another word used is "exalt" (*hupsoo*) meaning "to lift up" or "raise high" or "to raise to the loftiest heights." These passages (Acts 2:33; 5:31; Phil 2:9) are speaking of the Father's elevation of the Son to His place at the right hand of the Father in heaven after His victory over Satan, sin and death. Christ also is described as being "crowned" with glory and honor because of His suffering and death for men's sin. This speaks of conduct which recognizes accomplishment by giving the person a position and praise.

All three of the words—honor, exalt, crown—communicate respectful treatment, recognition, and reward with privilege and praise. This behavior of God can be a model for companions in marriage. Respect, recognition and reward with privilege and praise will build the couple's relationship and cause a sense of appreciation and closeness. Delegation of responsibilities is a way a husband could honor the wife and communicate trust.

Express Pleasure with or Desire to Please

It is clear in the revelation of God that the Father is pleased with Christ. Chafer points this out:

Of Him the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This voice from heaven was heard at the baptism—His induction into the priestly office (Matt 3:17)—; at the transfiguration—when His prophetic ministry was recognized (Matt 17:5)—; and will yet be heard when, according to Psalm 2:7; He ascends the Davidic throne to fulfill the office of King.⁶⁴

The Synoptic Gospels all record the approval at His baptism and transfiguration (Matt 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:6; Luke 3:22; 9:35). Peter also refers to the approval at the transfiguration (2 Pet 1:17). Matthew, when explaining Jesus Christ's behavior with the multitudes (12:14-21), quoted Isaiah 42:1 which expressed the Father's approval of the Son. Isaiah 53:10-11 reveals the Father's satisfaction with Christ's death for the sin of the human race. These expressions of pleasure by the Father of the Son are matched by Jesus' words as He speaks of the Father: "for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:29). These statements of approval and commendation and the effort to do things pleasing to the other are choice ways to keep or bring intimacy in the marriage relationship. These selfless behavior patterns are modeled by God who created marriage to be the relationship where intimacy is to be experienced on the deepest human level.

Audible Expression of Love to Each Other

Audible expressions of love are shown by the Father and the Son. The Father publicly expressed His love for the Son at His baptism when He entered His public ministry (Matt 3:17; Luke 3:22) and at His transformation on Mount Hermon (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; 2 Pet 1:17) by calling Christ "beloved" and expressing His pleasure with the Son. A second evidence of the Father's love for the Son is the delegation of all things into His hands (John 3:35). A third evidence of God's love for Jesus is the disclosure of what He, the Father, is doing (John 5:20). Jesus Christ wants the world to know that He loves the Father. He demonstrates His love by obeying the commandment given to Him by the Father (John 14:31). In His prayer to the Father, Jesus speaks again of the world knowing that the Father loves Him even from the foundation of the world (John 17:23-24, 26). Further evidence of Christ's love for the Father is that He has made the Father known to His disciples and desires the disciples to be recipients of the love which He had with the Father.

Two words are used to describe this love—*agape* and *philein*. Hermann Cremer observes that *philein* denotes love considered as a *natural inclination*, as an emotion; whereas *agapan* denotes love considered as a *tendency of the will*.⁶⁵ A further clarification of the distinction between these two words states:

While *philein* contemplates the person, *agapan* contemplates the *attributes* and *character*, and gives an account of its inclination...It [agape] is judicial rather than affectionate.⁶⁶

Philein is definitely a word of warmth, closeness and affection; it could only be properly used of the near and the dear.⁶⁸ This is the word used of the Father for the Son in John 5:20. This shows affection, loving emotion between persons in the Trinity. John 16:27 declares that the Father has affection *philein* for men who have affection for Christ. Jesus Himself had this affection for Lazarus (John 11:3) and wept near his tomb (11:38). The word *agape* is a moral love which deliberately chooses its object and can thus be commanded.⁶⁸ It is selfless behavior for the benefit of the loved object or person. This word is found describing the relationship between persons in the Trinity in all the passages except John 5:20. It was *agape* that moved God to send Christ to die for the sin of the world (John 3:16). It is *agape* love which husbands are commanded to express toward their wives (Eph 5:25, 28, 33). It is *philein* love which older women are to teach younger women to have for their husbands (Titus 2:4).

The persons in the Trinity are examples to the married and unmarried to be affectionate and selfless in behavior. The selfless behavior of the Trinity which should be copied by Christian couples includes audible expressions of love, delegation of responsibilities and privileges to the other person, disclosure to the other of what one is doing, and fulfilling the requests of the other person.

Knowing Each Other

For any relationship to be lasting the persons involved must know each other. The persons in the Trinity are presented as knowing each other and revealing each other. Matthew 11:27 says:

All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

The word for “knowing” in this verse is *epiginosko* an intensive form of *ginosko* which implies a fuller or more nearly complete knowledge. In the other passages which speak of the persons of the Trinity as knowing each other, the word *ginosko* is used (John 10:15; 14:7-10). Tenney declares, “know in this Gospel connotes more than the cognizance of mere facts: it implies a relationship of trust and intimacy.”⁶⁹ The two most frequently used words for “know” are *oida* and *ginosko* both indicate knowing and understanding. “Each emphasizes the organization of one’s perceptions so as to grasp the true nature of an issue, concept, or thing.”⁷⁰ The knowing of God expresses a relationship of trust and intimacy. God is the perfect model for a married couple with full knowledge which allows trust and

intimacy. In 1 Peter 3:7; husbands are exhorted:

You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow-heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Without knowledge and understanding, there will be no trust and intimacy in the marriage.

Communicate with One Another

Communication is a necessary factor in establishing and maintaining relationships on the human plane. God made man in His image as a social being who could communicate. He also created language by which man could communicate. This ability to communicate is evident between persons in the Trinity. Scripture evidences direct address, conferring with each other and planning with each other. Jesus addressed the Father at times before the multitudes (Matt 11:25-26; John 11:41-42). He addressed Him in prayer throughout His ministry, especially in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross (Matt 27:46; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 17:24-25). The persons of the Trinity also confer and plan with one another. The Old Testament's use of "us" in certain contexts evidences this communication between persons of the Godhead (Gen 1:26; 3:22; 11:7, Isa 6:8).

Other passages mention the Father teaching the Son and giving Him commandment (John 8:28; 10:18; 12:49-50). In John 11:41, Jesus says, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou heardest Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always..." In John 15:15, Jesus says, "...for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." Therefore as the persons of the Trinity address each other, confer and plan with one another, so must a married couple (Eph 4:15, 29, 31-32; 1 Pet 3:7, Col 3:18; 4:6).

Working with and for One Another

In carrying out the purposes of God, each of the persons of the Trinity has His respective responsibilities. Jesus speaks of these responsibilities as work:

But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

"For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel."

"But the witness which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me" (John 5:17, 20, 36).

The words used for work in these verses are *ergon*, *ergazomai*, and *poieo*. "Creation is the result of God's activity (Acts 4:24; Rom 1:20), as is salvation (Eph 2:10, 14; Heb 7:27)"⁷¹ Words in the group of *ergon* speak of work, labor, activity, achievement, and business.⁷² God is particularly at work in the deeds and actions of Christ (John 4:34; 17:4). As the members of the Trinity are at work carrying out the purposes of the Godhead, so should

married people be at work fulfilling the responsibilities of their roles in marriage (Gen 3:16-19; Eph 5: 23-33; 1 Tim 5:8; 6:8; Prov 31:10-31). It should bring satisfaction to the person to fulfill the responsibilities of his/her role as revealed by God in His Word.

Sent or Commissioned by the Other Person

To accomplish the plan of redemption, the Father sent the Son and to complete the outworking of redemption in the lives of the lost world, the Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit (John 5:36-37; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). The two Greek words for "send" are *pempo* and *apostello*. *Pempo* is a more general term than *apostello* which usually "suggest official or authoritative sending."⁷³ The authority of the one sending is given to the one sent as they fulfill their tasks (Matt 28:18). Similarly, a wife carries out her responsibilities on the authority of God's Word and her husband's instructions. A husband carries out his work on the basis of God's revelation and love for his wife (Eph 5:22-33; 1 Pet 3:1-7; Prov 31:16-31).

Submits to the Will of the Other Person

God has a singular will, yet the Scripture reveals that the persons of the Trinity each has a personality with intellect, emotion, and will (John 5:30). The Son submits to the Father's will in His active and passive obedience in accomplishing redemption (Matt 26:39, 42). The Son also submits to the leading of the Holy Spirit in the exercise of His divine attributes (John 3:34; Phil 2:5-11). The Holy Spirit submits to the direction of the Father and the Son as He convicts, regenerates, seals, fills and sanctifies (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). Subordination to one another does not indicate inequality but discloses love and oneness of purpose. So wives who are of equal worth before God (1 Pet 3:7) should not hesitate to submit to their mates out of selfless love to accomplish purposes which would glorify God (Col 3:17). The love of husbands should be manifested in the fulfilling of the needs and desires of their wives as long as these desires do not violate God's Word. As in the Trinity, so in marriage submission to functional responsibility does not denote inequality. Husbands and wives are to fulfill the functions of the responsibilities in their roles.

Abiding in Unity and Love

The relationship between the Father and the Son sometimes is described as being in the other person (John 10:38; 14:10, 20). Warfield calls this a "unity of interpenetration."⁷⁴ God as a Spirit-being (John 4:24) with one essence can function in this unity. This is not applicable to married couples because they are two different essences in bodily form. A couple can affect each other with their spirit and can experience bodily penetration in sexual intercourse. However, they do not experience a unity of interpenetration like God since man and woman are two separate identities or individuals. A unity of love can be experienced by a Christian couple in an imperfect way as the Son experiences with the Father in a perfect

way. As Christ abides in the Father's love and believers abide in Christ's love so can a Christian couple abide in each other's love by fulfilling each others' loving directions. As saved sinners, the Christian couple will experience this unity in love imperfectly, but still have the responsibility to strive for it.

There is another unity mentioned in John 17:21, 23:

That they may all be one; even as Thou Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the World may believe that Thou didst send Me. I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.

This is a functional unity which comes from a spiritual unity characterized by love. Barclay declares:

It was not a unity of administration or organization; it was not in any sense an ecclesiastical unity. *It was a unity of personal relationship.* We have already seen that the union between Jesus and God was one of love and obedience. It was a unity of love for which Jesus prayed, a unity in which men loved each other because they loved Him, a unity based entirely on the relationship between heart and heart.⁷⁵

This unity in personal relationship which is characterized by love in selfless behavior is prayed for by Christ, so that the world may know of Christ and the effects of redemption in people's lives (John 13:34-35). This unity of personal relationship certainly should be experienced in the lives of Christian couples as a testimony to the world. It should be seen in the Christian life, the Christian home, in the work place as well as in worship. Therefore, a Christian couple can experience a unity of love, a functional unity of personal relationship and a unity in affecting the other in spirit and in body. A Christian couple cannot know the unity of interpenetration because they are not one in essence.

The word used for "abide" (*meno*) means "to continue in or with," "remain," "tarry," "perseverance in continuing." This "abiding" leads to a completion in unity or oneness (John 17:23). A synonym for *meno* is *oikeo* "to dwell" or "to house with." Husbands are commanded to "dwell together with" their wives "according to knowledge" (1 Peter 3:7). Lack of unity in many Christian marriages may be traced to the failure of Christian husbands to obey this exhortation.

Giving Gifts

God is a giver of gifts (James 1:17). To the Son He has given all things into His hands (John 3:35), life (John 5:26), work to accomplish (John 5:36), redeemed people (John 6:37; 10:29; 17:2, 6, 9, 24), message (John 12:49; 14:3), glory (John 17:22, 24), a name (John 17:11-12), and the cup of agony of Gethsemane and Calvary (John 18:11). He has given Christ all authority in heaven and earth (Matt 28:18), authority over unclean spirits, authority to heal sicknesses, authority to forgive sin (Mark 2:7; Luke 5:24), authority to lay down His life in death and to take it up again (John 10:18), authority to grant repentant sinners the privilege of becoming

sons of God (John 1:12; 17:2), and authority to judge (John 5:22).

Gifts of privilege and responsibilities were likewise given to the Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). Gifts of privilege and authority characterize the Godhead. Should gifts not portray the love between a husband and a wife? Gifts of privilege especially should be enjoyed. Such expressions of selflessness contribute greatly to closeness in marriage.

Enjoys the Fellowship of the Other Person

It is very interesting that the words for partner and fellowship are not used of the relation between the persons of the Trinity. These words⁷⁶ are used of believers and of their relationship with Christ and the Father (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 1:9; 1 John 1:3). However, fellowship between the Father and the Son is clear from several passages. For instance John 1:18 reads: "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." The word "bosom" means "breast" or "chest" and "being in someone's bosom" denotes the closest communion.⁷⁷ Westcott expresses:

The image is used of the closest and tenderest of human relationships, of mother and child (Num xi.12), and of husband and wife (Deut.xiii.6), and of friends reclining side by side at a feast (comp. xiii.23), and so describes the ultimate fellowship of love.⁷⁸

Another writer explaining this passage says: "Whose relation to the Father is eternally that of one admitted to the deepest intimacy and closest fellowship."⁷⁹ In addition to this passage which presents the fellowship between God the Father and Jesus Christ, there are the expressions "came forth from the Father," "came out from Him," "with the Father," "with thee," "come to thee," and "be in us" (John 8:29, 38, 42; 13:3; 14:23; 16:27, 28, 30, 32; 17: 5, 8, 21). Warfield explains "came forth from Thee" in John 16:27 and 17:8 as meaning "from fellowship with God."⁸⁰ The greatest Scripture passage which displays the fellowship of the Father and the Son is John 17. This chapter is loaded with expressions of closeness, sharing things, honoring the other, common goals and love. Even at His death, Jesus commends His spirit into the hands of the Father (Luke 23:46). In heaven He is an advocate with the Father and is seated with Him in His throne (1 John 2:1; Rev 3:21). Christ desires intimate fellowship for believers (John 17:21). The fellowship of the persons in the Trinity should be a model for Christian couples who do not belong to themselves, but to God and each other (1 Cor 6:19-20; 7:1-5).

Trust in a Time of Suffering, Loneliness and Questioning

The trust of Christ in the Father shines forth to be emulated by believers in their relation to God and interpersonal relationships, especially marriage. Christ's prayer in John 17 reveals a loving, close relationship between the Father and the Son (17:23-26). The Son throughout His ministry, even up to His crucifixion, declared that He was not alone. The Father was with Him (John 8:16, 29; 16:32). Christ's prayer in Gethsemane begins with "Abba, Father," an address which no one had ever used to

God before. The word "abba" in Palestine in the time of Jesus was the word used in the home circle by a very young child to his father. So Jesus in this dark hour spoke to God as a little child speaks to the father whom he trusts and loves. This understanding allows a person to comprehend the manner in which Christ addressed the Father. Barclay explains:

They may be spoken in utter love and trust, as by one who does not need to understand in order to submit, who knows that a father's hand will never cause his child a needless tear, who knows that he is not the plaything of circumstance or the victim of the blind tyranny of God, or the sport of blind chance and a fate, but who is certain that he can take life and leave it in God's hand and be content. Jesus in Gethsemane is the great example of submission to the will of God, even when that will is a mystery, in the certainty that that will is love.⁸¹

The cup (Mark 14:36) which Christ prays three times to have removed is the cup of God's wrath against sin (Ps 75:7-8; Jer 25:15-16). Sanders describes the contents of the cup as the renewed attack of Satan, the anticipated assumption of the guilt of a world of men, and the anticipated averting of His Father's face.⁸² Christ's sufferings in the Garden, during the trials, and on the cross were emotional sufferings as well as physical. Six expressions in the Garden are used to show His sufferings emotionally: (1) He became "exceedingly sorrowful" or pressed upon (Matt 26:38); (2) He "began to be sore amazed" or utterly surprised (Mark 14:33); (3) He began to be "very heavy" or sore troubled which points to a confused, restless, half-distracted state (Mark 14:33); (4) He was "exceeding sorrowful unto death" which indicates an unfathomable depth of anguish and sorrow which could result in death (Matt 26:38); (5) He was "in an agony" or struggle or conflict (Luke 22:44). Hebrews 5:7, 8 states that He prayed "with strong crying and tears"; (6) He sweat "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). Luke, a doctor, describes the agony of the soul that brings sweat as drops of blood and also notes that an angel is sent from God to strengthen Christ (Luke 22:43). Centuries before, the prophet Isaiah foretold of Christ's physical and emotional sufferings for sin (53:4-6) and the Father's satisfaction with Christ's death (53:10-12). Throughout the events of the last week before His death, Christ lovingly trusted Himself to the Father's will even after the soldiers, religious leaders and Judas had come to take Him (Matt 26:54, 56) even up to His death on the cross (Luke 23:46). Of the seven sayings of Christ from the cross, the first and last begin with "Father" (Luke 23:34, 46). The fourth saying, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" reveals Christ as experiencing spiritual death, separation of the soul from the Father. This is the first and only time when the intimacy of the Father and Son is broken (2 Cor 5:21). The word used for "forsaken" (*egkataleipo*) has stronger moral and emotional overtones than *kataleipo* meaning "to leave."⁸³ This same tone of pain is seen when Paul describes to Timothy how others forsook him when he was on trial in Rome (2 Tim 4:10, 16). Jesus was not forsaken to the grave (Acts 2:27), the resurrection proves that He was not left there (Acts 2:31). The triumph of Christ over sin is seen in His victory shout, "It has been finished." One scholar says:

The term signified the completion of a transaction by the full payment of a price or the discharge of a debt by a completed payment. All sin incurs a debt which the sinner owes to God. The debt must be discharged before that sinner can be accepted by God. Every animal sacrificed on the Day of Atonement throughout the Old Testament constituted a recognition of debt (Heb 10:1-4). Because of the shed blood that was applied to the cover of the ark, God, in His grace postponed collection of the indebtedness for another twelve months. He did this in anticipation of the coming of the Lamb of God who would put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. When Christ died, He gathered to Himself the accumulated debt of a sinful race and offered to God a payment for past sins.⁸⁴

After the victory shout at His completion of redemption, Christ once again addresses God as "Father" indicating the restoration of their intimate relationship. He trusted the Father with His spirit as He entered physical death. The Apostle John says that Jesus leaned His head back and gave up His spirit. Barclay comments: "For Jesus the strife was over and the battle was won; and even on the cross He knew the joy of victory and the rest of the man who has completed his task and can lean back, content and at peace."⁸⁵ Another writer says, "There is the thought of a peaceful death, the death of One who trusts His Father."⁸⁶

The model of Christ's relationship with the Father in time of suffering, loneliness and question displays the quality of trust. This is a vital quality for an intimate relationship (1 Cor 13:7). The subordination of the Savior's will to the Father, even though He questioned, is a good model for wives to follow with their husbands (1 Pet 2:23). This does not mean that the husband is to be authoritarian, but that he will appreciate trust in his loving leadership after he has discussed the issue thoroughly with the wife (Eph 5:23-24). In the model of the Father and the Son, sin's removal allowed just as deep or a deeper intimacy to return. Christ's payment for sin allows Christian couples to remove sin from their thoughts and interactions by repentance and forgiveness (Eph 4:31-32). As the Son was confident of the Father's love (John 17:24-26), so should Christian people be with their mates. Even as Jesus prayed that the disciples might have His joy fulfilled in themselves, Christian husbands and wives should have a joy in their relationship which they want for their children. Like the Father's concern for the Son in the time of suffering, loneliness and question (Luke 22:43; Isa 53:10-12), Christian couples should help each other to renew closeness during difficult times. Although loving action (*agape*) characterized the Father and Son's relationship, there was expression of emotions such as loving affection (*philia*) (John 5:20), joy (Ps 40:7-8; John 17:13; cf Matt 3:17; 17:5) or elation (Luke 23:46; John 19:30), anger or wrath at sin (cf. cup, Matt 26: 39; cf. Eph 4:26), grief because of sin's effects (Matt 26:37-38; cf. Eph 4:30-32; Heb 5:7) and the fear of the Lord (Heb 5:7). All of these emotions will appear in a Christian marriage which is striving for closeness.

Summary

God is a Trinity, three personalities in one essence. He as a social being made man in His image (Gen 1:26-27). Learned selfless behavior for everyday life and marriage can be comprehended and practiced by following the behavior patterns of God which are revealed in the Scripture (I Pet 1:16; 2:21). The first area of observation of God is in interpersonal relationships within the Trinity.

Study of Scriptural passages have yielded the following behavior patterns: making the other person known, glorifying or praising the other person, honoring the other person, expressing pleasure with or desire to please, audible expressions of love to each other, knowing each other, communicating with one another, working with and for one another, sent or commissioned by the other person, submitting to the will of the other person, abiding in unity and love, giving gifts, enjoying the fellowship of the other person and trusting in a time of suffering, loneliness and questioning. Christian couples who practice these behavior patterns will enjoy intimacy in their marriages. Incorporating these patterns into a marriage until they become habits will generate closeness for those who lacked it (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:8-10).

Editor's Note: Part II: God in the Marriage Motif in Scripture, the second of four parts, will appear in the Spring 1989 issue.

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