

Thanking God For My "Sweet Thang"

Kerry Doyal

"My sweet thang is my good thang, and man did God bless me!" Such is my paraphrase and testimony of agreement to God's word in Proverbs 18:22.

For those who like a bit tighter rendering, here you go: "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD" (NIV).

Way back in the beginning, when God surveyed His awesome handiwork of creation, He beamed with proper pride and said to Himself "good job!" (see Gen. 1-3). He rated His work as "very good", setting an example of a holy work ethic.

Interestingly, when God had Adam inventory and catalogue the animals, a hole was revealed. A divinely designed deficiency - not defect - was discovered.

God allowed Adam to make an important self-discovery: perfect though he was (this was pre-Fall), Adam was incomplete none the less. The animals did not provided a suitable companion for Adam.

Adam and God agreed that it was not good (or safe!) for man to be alone. Our gracious Creator took surgical steps to fill in the hole to help make man whole - He formed Eve and brought her to Adam. The first arranged marriage.

Marriage was God's idea, plan and gift. One man, one woman, becoming one, "until death do they part." It is not a dead or deadening institution, but a life enhancing means of favor from God.

As Scripture also affirms, it is a sinful and deadly business to attempt to tear apart what God brings together.

Two events have me mulling over these matters. First and foremost is the impending birthday my dear wife is facing down. Enough said. Prayers appreciated. Not for her, but for me as I publicly honor and probably unwittingly embarrass her. again.

The second prompting to ponder God's gift of a wife is a wedding I am honored to do this weekend for Art & Heather. I mention them as a tribute and so you can pray for them and all newlyweds.

For the record, and as a partial birthday gift, allow me to make this public affirmation: If any man is half as blessed with and through his wife as I am, he too is blessed well beyond what he deserves.

I have come to believe that as when God put Adam in a deep sleep to bring forth Eve from his side, so too God must cause women to swoon deeply to cause them to marry the likes of most of us men.

Most men marry far better than their wives do. I certainly did. Talk about the deal of the century. God must have caused a suspension of good judgement and vision for my wife to say "I do" to me. Thank you Lord for that favor.

I cannot imagine life without my sweet soul mate. As much growing up as I still have to do, it scares me and terrifies others to think of how much more immature I would be were it not for her.

A guy gets past his teen years and thinks he is somewhat mature. God then allows us to marry and then quickly and graciously reminds us how selfish and petty we still are. For those blessed with children, He repeats the process through them.

Though women have ongoing growing up to do as well, they usually stay a step (can you say "giant leap") ahead of men. Longsuffering is a trait God possesses and often develops in women through men (see James 1:1-12). No need to thank us.

God alone knows the contribution my dear wife has had to my life and ministry. While she has not been an anchor holding me back, she has kept me from drifting into dangerous waters, many shipwrecks and neglecting needed harbor time to retool and rest.

Robin, my gift from God, has willingly gone without, cheerfully made do and displayed flexibility beyond reason to her husband's - that would be me - lack of forethought or aft-thought (a new word; dedicated to her.)

Beyond laughing at my jokes, she provides my best sounding board and screening device. Many have been spared much due to her godly, timely insight. I have been protected countless times as well.

Bearing and raising five children is not conducive to the enjoyment of chocolate Bon Bons, with one's feet on the couch, TV remote in hand, phone under the ear, and Calgone waiting to take one away. My beloved is one of the hardest workers I know.

As the old poem goes: "A man may work from dusk to dawn, but a woman's work is never done." Laundry and dishes seem to be far more fertile than we are. With four boys romping through the house- five counting me - repairs can pile up almost as fast.

Proving her sainthood and flirting with martyrdom, she has home educated our children as well - five unique students in five grade brackets. No small task, but yet another one that she has handled very well.

The demands of ministry fall to me in the context of my family. Late night calls, emergencies that pull me away, meetings, the pressures of shepherding. Robin has and does willingly bear these with grace and maturity. She makes it possible for me to brag that we are truly a team.

More than once "bringing my work home with me" has meant people moving in with us with little or no notice. We have taken in more people for weeks or months at a time than I can recall. These were more "sacrifices" that I was praised for but she once again did almost all the work.

I could easily go on about her tiresome efforts, incredible meals, patience, forgiveness and endurance, but I fear providing ammo for her and conviction for me if I continue.

Happy birthday, my precious gift from God. I could never begin to repay you for who you are, what you have done, endured and overlooked. True to style, you would not demand or accept repayment anyway, for you have done these things unto the Lord.

You have lived out the verse you had inscribed inside my wedding band: "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God" 1 John 4:7 (NIV).

Your love shows that you have indeed been born of and know God. And, as Eve was made by God for Adam, so too you were made and brought to me. What a gift you are! Makes you wonder whose birthday it is. I love you too.