

The Best Love

by Dr. J. Vernon McGee



Published and distributed by
Thru the Bible Radio Network
P.O. Box 7100
Pasadena, California 91109-7100
(800) 65-BIBLE
www.ttb.org

Unless noted otherwise, all Scripture references are from the
New Scofield Reference Bible.

(This message was originally published in 1964, later fell out of print, and then was revised in 2005 for online publication. The message is also included in Dr. McGee's hardback book, *Marriage & Divorce*, copyright 1998 by Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN.)

Preface

Every Bible-believing and Bible-preaching minister seeks the mind of the Lord in preparation for his pulpit ministry. Sometimes he feels that the Spirit of God gives him a special anointing for a particular sermon, which may be lacking on other occasions.

This message came through severe travail of soul and through a sweet inspiration to the spirit of the speaker. It is our firm conviction that it was given at this time to meet the desperate need of young people who are planning to launch out on the sea of matrimony. The spoken message wrought upon the hearts of many, as the following excerpt from a letter reveals:

As a twenty-three-year-old Christian single girl, your message really spoke to me. You made me think and realize how important it is to wait for God's best. This has been my prayer for several years, but in the business of everyday life we too often forget that God does have a plan for those who love and desire Him.

We are publishing this message in much the same way in which it was given from the pulpit in order to retain its flavor and fullness. We trust that the written word will be made potent and real to the hearts of many who read these pages.

Introduction

The fairy stories and romances always end with the bright and rosy picture of a future filled with happiness and bliss. In fact, they always end where life really begins – at the marriage ceremony. Why is it that today about half of the marriages end in divorce? Obviously, they did not live happily ever after. Some didn't make it through the honeymoon.

Many books are being written to try and mend the fences of wedlock. Most of them put down certain rules and regulations to make marriage a success. This has opened up a new field for the church to enter. Heretofore it was taboo. "Sex" was a dirty word. Now it is the main topic of conversation, sermons, and seminars in the church. The more explicit, the better the books will sell to the saints.

The problem is not marriage or sex. Divorce is not the way out. The problem is that people are getting married who are not prepared for a relationship that God alone can bless. The correction should be made before marriage, not afterward. It takes a right kind of man and a right kind of woman to have a happy marriage. God promised a happy marriage to His children who are the right kind of believers.

Only a Spirit-filled man can be the head of his home. Only a Spirit-filled woman can respond to a Spirit-filled man. Anything less ensures a rough voyage over the sea of matrimony. This old bromide is still accurate: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

The Best Love

Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. (Revelation 2:4)

I must put down at the beginning a rather black background, and I trust the picture we shall place on this background will be rewarding enough to justify the introduction.

There is an obsession with sex today that is positively frightening and absolutely alarming! You need only to consult contemporary literature to recognize this. In a leading British paper not long ago this statement was made: "Popular morality is now a wasteland, littered with the debris of broken convictions." And it was a judge of the Superior Court of Massachusetts who said, "At too many colleges today, sexual promiscuity among students is a dangerous and growing evil." The Billy Graham paper, *Decision*, carried an editorial on the church and the moral crisis. In it there was this quotation: "So our young people go riding down the high road to hell in an atmosphere that would make any self-respecting animal sick to its stomach, and no one thinks that matters are as bad as they seem." An outstanding Christian writer in America says:

But where are the compelling external cries to match the inner voices of the soul which at times murmur darkly and other times shout clamorously that all is not well, that wayward feet are treading the way of wrath, the path of judgment? The answer is not simply in passing more laws. It is to be found in regeneration by His Spirit, who alone can set men's souls on fire with a divinely sent thirst for greater purity, both for the individual and for the body politic. Apart from such spiritual burning and purging, men sink beneath the weight and corruption of their own sin.

There are other voices being lifted in alarm. But all about us are the advocates of this erotic cult who falsely claim that all of this emphasis on sex is a signal of a new, broad-minded and enlightened era. The facts are that there is nothing new about it. Furthermore it does not mark the entrance upon abundant living. On the contrary, it has characterized the demise of all decadent and decaying civilizations – Egypt, Babylon, Greece, and Rome to name but a few. The sex symbol marks the decline and fall of many a great and noble people; it is part of the death rattle of a fading nation. The French Revolution marked the departure of the glory of France, and it was during that time that a prostitute was placed on an altar and worshiped.

The excuse for paying this abnormal attention to the subject, given by these purveyors of filth and licentiousness, is that a bluenosed generation of the past put the lid down on it. The false charge is made that the Bible and the church have frowned upon the subject of sex until it is taboo today and can be only whispered in secret. They go on to place the blame of present-day marriage failures and the increase in divorce on the gross ignorance of young people. "If only they knew more about this fascinating subject," they counsel, "there would be success in marriage." Also they play upon the fact that we Americans do not like censorship, and therefore even the basest element in society should be free to say and publish what they choose.

Well, these modern Pied Pipers of Hamelin are leading the younger generation into a moral morass of debauchery with dirty films and pornographic literature. They give the impression that you must be knowledgeable of this lascivious and salacious propaganda to be sophisticated

and suave and sharp. These filthy dreamers have flooded the marketplace and the schoolroom today with this smut and depravity – so much so that a modern father said, “It is not how much shall I tell my son, but how much does he know that I don’t!” In spite of all this new emphasis on sex, the divorce courts continue to grind out their monotonous story of the tragedy of modern marriage in ever increasing numbers.

Now a knowledge of the physical may have its place in preparation for a happy marriage, but it is inadequate *per se* to make a happy home, and it gives a perverted and abnormal emphasis that does not belong there. Someone has said, “One of the troubles with the world is that people mistake sex for love, money for brains, and transistor radios for civilization.” That is the problem of the hour.

The Word of God treats the subject of sex with boldness, frankness, and directness. It is not handled as a dirty subject, and it is not taboo nor theoretical, but it is plain and theological. The Bible is straightforward and deals with it in high and lofty language. I think it is time that God is heard. I feel that the pulpit is long overdue in presenting what God has to say on this subject.

In the very beginning, it was God who created them male and female. It was *God* who brought the woman to the man. And I would like to add this, He did not need to give Adam a lecture on the birds and bees. God blessed them, and marriage became sacred and holy and pure. And, my friend, it is the only relationship among men and women that God does bless down here – He promises to bless no other. He says that if marriage is made according to His plan, He will bless it down here. (See Genesis 1:27 and Matthew 19:4-6.)

God wants His children to be happily married. He has a plan and purpose for every one of us if we would only listen to Him. Again I refer to our text. The Lord Jesus says to the church at Ephesus:

Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. (Revelation 2:4)

Yet the church in Ephesus is the church at its best. It has never been on a higher spiritual level since then. It is difficult for us in this cold day of apostasy to conceive of the lofty plane to which the Holy Spirit brought the early church in its personal relationship to Christ. The believers in the early church were *in love* with Christ. They loved Him! And five million in the early centuries of Christianity sealed that love with their own blood by dying as martyrs for Him.

I would like to make a change in the translation of Revelation 2:4. The word for “first love” is *protan* in the Greek. It actually means the “best.” It is the same word our Lord used in the parable of the prodigal son, in which the father put on the son the *protan* robe – the first, the foremost, the “best” robe, if you please. To the Ephesian believers, Christ is talking about the *best* love. To this church on its high plane, into which a coolness was creeping, Christ says, “Nevertheless, I have against you that you are leaving [they had not yet left] your best love.” Salvation is a love affair. The question that the Lord asks all of us is, “Do you love Me?” He is not asking, “Are you going to be faithful?” He is not asking, “How much are you going to give, or how much are you going to do?” He is saying, “Do you love Me?” The apostle John put it like this: “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

The second book I ever wrote was on the little Book of Ruth. My reason for writing it was to show that redemption is a romance. God took the lives of two ordinary people, a very strong and virile man and a very beautiful and noble woman, and He told their love story. In the story

God revealed to man His great love for him. It was a way to get this amazing fact through to us. Salvation is a love affair.

In Christ's last letter to the Ephesian church here in Revelation, He sounds a warning. We do not quite understand this. But I go back thirty or forty years to His first letter to these believers, written through Paul. We call it the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians. In this epistle He discussed this matter of marital love and compared it to the love of Christ for the church. This has been one of the most misunderstood passages in the Word of God. Listen:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.
(Ephesians 5:22)

There has been natural resentment against this on the part of some, especially very dominant women, for many years. But to resent this is to miss the meaning that is here. Submission is actually for the purpose of headship in the home. It is not a question of one lording it over the other. It is headship for the purpose of bringing order into the home. But in addition to this, it reveals something else that is quite wonderful. He said,

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the savior of the body. (Ephesians 5:23)

The analogy, you see, is to Christ and the church. Christian marriage down here, if it is made under the Lord, is a miniature of the relationship of Christ and the church. Christian marriage is an adumbration of that wonderful relationship between Christ and the believer. Christian marriage and the relationship of Christ and the church are sacred.

Now will you listen to me very carefully. The physical act of marriage is sacred. It is a religious ritual; it is a sacrament. I do not mean a sacrament made by a church, nor is it made by a man-made ceremony. But it is a sacrament that is made by God Himself, one which He sanctifies, and He says that this relationship is to reveal to you the love of Christ for your soul. Therefore, the woman is to see in a man one to whom she can yield herself in a glorious abandonment. She can give herself wholly and completely and find perfect fulfillment and satisfaction in this man, because this is the man for her.

Spurgeon had something to say about this:

She delights in her husband, in his person, his character, is affection; to her he is not only the chief and foremost of mankind, but in her eyes he is all in all. Her heart's love belongs to him, and to him only. He is her little world, her Paradise, her choice treasure. She is glad to sink her individuality in his. She seeks no renown for herself; his honor is reflected upon her, and she rejoices in it. She will defend his name with her dying breath; safe enough is he where she can speak of him. His smiling gratitude is all the reward she seeks. Even in her dress she thinks of him and considers nothing beautiful which is distasteful to him. He has many objects in life, some of which she does not quite understand; but she believes in them all, and anything she can do to promote them she delights to perform....Such a wife, as a true spouse, realizes the model marriage relation and sets forth what our oneness with the Lord ought to be.¹

My beloved, that is a marvelous picture of the wife in a real Christian marriage. The man is to see in the woman one he can worship. Someone says, “Do you mean worship?” I mean exactly that. What does worship mean? You will find that worship is respect that is paid to worth. If you go back and read the old marriage ceremonies, you will find that the bridegroom always said, “I with my body worship you.” That is, he sees in her everything that is worthwhile. He must love her so much that he is willing to die for her.

Now the Bible is very expressive, and I do not know why we should be so reluctant to speak as plainly. If you turn back to the Song of Solomon you will see the picture of the bridegroom and what he thinks of his bride:

Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee. (Song of Solomon 4:7)

As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. (Song of Solomon 2:2)

That is rather expressive, is it not? That is what the bridegroom says. Now hear the words of the bride:

My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies. (Song of Solomon 2:16)

There is no greater compliment!

In that moment of sexual intimacy, intended by God to be supreme and sweet ecstasy, either the wife will carry him to the skies or plunge him down to the depths of hell. Either the husband will place her on a pedestal and say, “I worship you because I find no spot in you,” or else he will treat her with brutality. When the latter happens he will kill her love, and she will hate him and become cold and frigid. In counseling we find that this is one reason that a great many marriages are breaking up.

Bacteriologist Rene Dubois of the Rockefeller Institute has made this statement: “Aimlessness and lack of fulfillment constitute the most common cause of organic and mental disease in the Western world.” This lack of fulfillment is breaking up many a marriage. A wife becomes dissatisfied and nagging, and the husband settles down to a life of mediocrity. He becomes lonely and either develops into a henpecked milquetoast or a domineering brute. You will find both in our society.

Now let me ask a question: Are you the kind of woman that a man would die for? I am going to be very frank. If you are one of these women who is merely making eyes at every boy that comes along, although you may have beauty and personality, you will never be the kind of woman that a man would die for. If you do not have beauty of character, if you do not have nobility of soul, you will be but a flame without heat, a rainbow without color, and a flower without perfume. The Word of God deals with that outward adorning – and do not misunderstand, the Bible does not militate against it. All of us ought to look the best we can. Some of us have our problems, but we should do the best we can with what we have. God intends us to enhance the beauty He has given us. But God puts the emphasis, not on the outward adorning, but on the meek and quiet spirit, the inward adorning that is in God’s sight of great value.

Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. (1 Peter 3:3,4)

Now, young man, are you the kind of man that a woman would follow to the ends of the earth? You may look like a model but have no purpose, no ambition, no heart for serving God as a Christian, no capacity for great and deep things, no vision at all. If you are that kind, a woman will not follow you very far. She may go with you down to get the marriage license, but she also will be going down to get the divorce later on.

All across our West there are monuments erected to the pioneer wife and mother. I noticed one the other day as I was traveling through Colorado. She is a fine looking woman, crowned with a sunbonnet, the children about her. You know she did not go to the psychiatrist or marriage counselor. Do you know why she never had to go to the preacher to talk about her marriage breaking up? Because one day a man came to her and said, "I am going West to build a career and a home. Will you follow me?" She said, "I will." And she learned that this man would stand between her and danger; she had many experiences when he protected her from the menacing Indians. She had no problems about whether he loved her or not, and he did not doubt her loyalty. They loved each other. These are the kind of people who built our country. It is the other element that is tearing our lovely country to pieces – how I hate to see it happening!

I know that someone is saying right now, "Preacher, I am not that kind of a person. I'm no hero." Young man, God never said that every girl would fall in love with you. Ninety-nine women may pass you by and see in you only the boy next door. That's all. But let me say to you very seriously, one of these days there will come by a woman who will see in you the knight in shining armor. It is God who gives that highly charged chemistry between a certain man and a certain woman.

A young woman may be saying, "But I'm not beautiful of face or figure." May I say this to you, God never said that you would attract every male – only animals do that. Ninety-nine men will pass you by and see in you no more than what Kipling described, "a rag and a bone and a hank of hair."² But one of these days there will come by a man who will love you if you are the right kind of person. You will become his inspiration. You may inspire him to greatness – to write a book, to compose a masterpiece of poetry or music, to paint a picture, or even to preach a sermon. If you are his inspiration, do not ignore him, do not run from him. God may have placed you together for that very purpose. If in God's plan He intends for you to marry, there *will come* that one.

Perhaps you are thinking, "Preacher, you are in the realm of theory. What you are talking about is idealistic. It sounds good in a storybook, but it does not happen in life." You are wrong. It *does* happen.

I think of the story of Matthew Henry. If anyone ever wrote a musty commentary, Matthew Henry did. Although a great work, it is to me the most boring thing I have ever read. I never knew that fellow was romantic at any time in his life. But when he came to London as a young man, he met a very wealthy girl of the nobility. He fell in love with her, and she loved him. Finally, she went to her father to tell him about it. The father, trying to discourage her, said, "That young man has no background. You do not even know where he came from!" She

answered, “You are right. I do not know where he came from but *I know where he is going*, and I want to go with him.” She went.

I am reminded again of the story of Nathaniel Hawthorne when he lost his job as a clerk. He came home and sank into a chair, discouraged and defeated. His wife came behind him, placed before him pen and paper, and putting her arm about him, said, “Now, Nathaniel, you can do what you always wanted to do, you can write.” He wrote *The House of Seven Gables*, *The Scarlet Letter*, and other enduring literature – because a wife was his inspiration. There was an eternal love. “In one of her last letters the widow of Nathaniel Hawthorne penned this ineradicable hope, which became an anchor of comfort in her soul’s sorrow: ‘I have an eternity, thank God, in which to know him more and more, or I should die in despair.’”³

You say I am talking about theory? I am talking about fact. Consider Adam and Eve. That was a romance.

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.
(Ephesians 5:28-31)

Eve was created to be a helpmeet for Adam. The language is tremendous. She was taken from his side, not molded from the ground as were the animals, but taken from a part of him so that he actually was incomplete until they were together. God fashioned her into the loveliest thing in His creation, and He brought her to Adam. She was a helpmeet, she compensated for what he lacked, for he was not complete in himself. She was made for him, and they became one.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. (Genesis 2:23)

Let me move down in history to the early twelfth century. I want to take up a story that always has thrilled me. It is the true story of Abelard and Heloise. When John Lord wrote his *Great Women*, he used Heloise as the example of marital love. The story concerns a young ecclesiastic by the name of Abelard. He was a brilliant young teacher and preacher in what became the University of Paris. The canon had a niece by the name of Heloise whom he sent to be under Abelard’s instruction. She was a remarkable person; he was a remarkable man. You know the story – they fell madly in love. But according to the awful practice of that day – and this day as well – the marriage of a priest was deemed a lasting disgrace. When John Lord wrote their story, he gave this introduction, which I would like to share with you. It is almost too beautiful to read in this day. It is like a dew-drenched breeze blowing from a flower-strewn mountain meadow over the slop bucket and pigsty of our contemporary literature. Here is what he wrote:

When Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise, they yet found one flower, wherever they wandered, blooming in perpetual beauty. This flower represents a great certitude, without which few would be happy – subtle, mysterious, inexpli-

cable – a great boon recognized alike by poets and moralists. Pagan and Christian; yea, identified not only with happiness, but human existence, and pertaining to the soul in its highest aspirations. Allied with the transient and the mortal, even with the weak and corrupt, it is yet immortal in its nature and lofty in its aims – at once a passion, a sentiment, and an inspiration.

To attempt to describe woman without this element of our complex nature, which constitutes her peculiar fascination, is like trying to act the tragedy of Hamlet without Hamlet himself – an absurdity; a picture without a central figure, a novel without a heroine, a religion without a sacrifice. My subject is not without its difficulties. The passion or sentiment is degrading when perverted, it is exalting when pure. Yet it is not vice I would paint, but virtue; not weakness, but strength; not the transient, but the permanent; not the mortal but the immortal – all that is ennobling in the aspiring soul.⁴

Abelard and Heloise, having fallen in love, were not permitted by the church to marry. Therefore they were married secretly by a friend of Abelard. He continued to teach. But the secret came out when a servant betrayed them, and she was forced into a nunnery. Abelard was probably the boldest thinker the Middle Ages produced. He was among the few who began to preach and teach that the Word of God was man's authority and not the church. This man, a great man, became bitter and sarcastic in his teaching because of what had been denied him. When he was on his deathbed, for he died a great while before Heloise, being twenty years her senior, he asked that she be permitted to come to see him. The church did the cruelest thing of all – they would not allow her to come. Therefore he penned a letter to her. To me it is the most pathetic thing I have ever read. He concludes it with this prayer:

When it pleased Thee, O Lord, and as it pleased Thee, Thou didst join us, and Thou didst separate us. Now, what Thou hast so mercifully begun, mercifully complete; and after separating us in this world, join us together eternally in heaven.⁵

And I believe in God's heaven they are together.

A recent letter from a bereaved wife reads: "I have just buried my husband, and the preacher told me that we are not to be together in heaven because Christians are neither married nor given in marriage in heaven. But really, it would be very lonesome there and I could not stand it without him." I was able to say to her, "It is true you do not marry nor are given in marriage in heaven – you do that down here. You will be with him in heaven because you want to be together."

John Wesley's story is not told in England, it is told in this country, in Georgia. When John Wesley came as a young missionary to Georgia, the crown had already sent a nobleman there – I think they wanted to get rid of him at court because he was an insipid fellow, devoid of personality and masculinity. Yet due to the terrible custom of that day, the nobility was entitled to marry the finest, and he had married a woman not only of striking beauty and strong personality, but one who was an outstanding Christian. Then there came into their colony this fiery young missionary. Again you know the story – they fell in love. And that happens to be John Wesley's

love story.

He begged her to flee with him and go live among the Indians. She said, “No, John, God has called you to go back to England, and He has called you to do some great service for Him.” It was she who sent John Wesley back to England. The night came for his ship to sail. They had to wait for the tide and the wind, and she came down to bid him goodbye. Oh yes, she held him that night and he held her, but even the worst critics of Wesley say that nothing took place that was wrong. He still begged her to go with him among the Indians and live. The biographer of Wesley says that he came down that gangplank twice, but she sent him back, back to England – to marry the Methodist Church. He returned to England a brokenhearted man, yet she had become his inspiration.

Back in England he was unhappy and dissatisfied with the legal system he had worked out and by which he was living. He had come to the realization that he was a sinner and was not a converted man. His biographer quoted him as saying, “I came to America to convert the Indians, but who is going to convert John Wesley?” Several years later he was saved at Aldersgate, and he married a woman who was really a battle-ax. She found out about his romance in America and used to stand up in the service and denounce him. Wesley always felt that it was the judgment of God upon him, and he would just stand there and take it. When she would finish her tirade and sit down, Wesley would stand up to preach, and the Spirit of God would come down upon the congregation. The inspiration for that man was back in Georgia. When she had bidden him goodbye, she had said, “Providence and Christ may not let us be together in life, but we shall be together over there.”⁶

Oh, I know someone is saying to me, “You have gone back to a romantic period. What about today?” Therefore I want to bring this down to date. Let me bring it down to this generation. I counseled with a Christian man who has permitted me to give part of his story without, of course, betraying any names. He is a very modern man, dedicated to God, wanting God’s will in everything. He has met a woman with whom he has fallen madly in love. A wall separates them. He has described that wall as being as high as heaven and as deep as hell; he will not cross over. I do not know the feelings of the woman. He says she has a warm personality, and to him she is beautiful. He says she is fine and noble and a dedicated Christian and wants God’s will in her life. The words that he kept repeating to me were, “She is lovely.” She has inspired him, I am sure – and probably she is the only one who can. “But,” he says, “we are separated down here.”

All right, this generation, go ahead and say it, they are a couple of squares. This generation that has been brainwashed with Freudian psychology says, “Let yourself go. Do what you please, you are to have no inhibitions. Live like animals.” No, these folk are not animals. He said that he will wait. With a wry smile, he said this to me, “You know, the walls of Jericho were formidable, but they fell down. If it is God’s will, He will remove the wall between us. If not, I remember your sermon on the New Jerusalem, where Christ said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ We have bungled our lives down here, but over there God will let us begin all over again.”

I am speaking now to young people. You can have a bargain basement, secondhand, hand-me-down marriage if you want to. It can be sordid and sorry and shabby. If you take the cheap way, you will have a home that in no respect will represent Christ and the church. It can be a hell down here. Take it from one who has counseled with many couples who are Christians. But, my young person, you can ask God for the best. You can tell Him that you will not accept anything short of the best. And He will give you a life in *living color*.

Sex is not taboo. In a Spirit-filled Christian marriage it is a holy relationship. It is a sacrament, sanctified of God. When it is not, it is no more than an animal act. Sex is not a dirty word; it is a sacred act. It is not salacious; it is sanctified. When a man and a woman give themselves to each other in an act of marital love, they can know the love of Christ as no one else can know it. That is exactly what is said in the Word of God:

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.
(Ephesians 5:32)

As I have said before, I believe that at one time the apostle Paul was a married man and that he loved some good woman who returned his love because he spoke so tenderly of the marriage relationship. He wrote: “I cannot quite tell you how wonderful this is, it is a great mystery, but I am really speaking of Christ and the church.” Then he comes back and adds,

Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife, see that she reverence her husband. (Ephesians 5:33)

When a man and woman come to that place, then they can know Christ who gave Himself, who gave Himself *in love* for us. And they can know then what it is to bring themselves and offer themselves in total dedication to Him.

Down among the Tzeltal Indians in Mexico there is another love story. It has been put on the screen – you may have seen *The Bill Bentley Story*. Bill Bentley was a fine young missionary among the Tzeltal Indians. He was engaged to a very wealthy, cultured, educated girl in Pennsylvania. She was to come down and marry him. But they never married, for Bill Bentley was struck with an illness and died. Marianna Slocum, the girl to whom he was engaged, said, “I’ll go down and finish the job.” And she did. She learned the language of those Indians and translated the Word of God for them. Leaving six thousand or more believers behind her, she and a nurse moved on to Colombia in South America to pioneer in one of the Indian tribes that has nothing of the Word of God in their language. Someday she and Bill will have their honeymoon – they never had it down here.

The last time I saw Marianna Slocum was in the airport in Mexico City. She was sitting there praying because we could not get our reservations that Saturday morning, and I had to be here on Sunday. I want to say to you that she *prayed* me on the plane that morning. She has a way with God.

My friend, do you know a Savior who loves you – more than a wife could love you, more than a husband could love you? He has tried every means imaginable to tell you of His love. He gave himself for you, that He might present you to God without spot, without blemish – which is all His work. He asks of you only that which is asked of any girl when she has a proposal of marriage. She can either say yes or no. You can either say yes or no to Christ who loves you.

And those of us who are His own, may He keep us from leaving the best love. May He sweeten our relationships down here and make our homes truly Christian homes, setting forth the love of our Savior.

Notes

1. Richard Ellsworth Day, *The Shadow of the Broad Brim*, p. 104.
2. Rudyard Kipling, "The Vampire."
3. Walter A. Maier, *For Better Not For Worse*, p. 556.
4. John Lord, *Beacon Lights of History, Volume VII, Great Women* (New York: James Clarke & Co., 1886), pp. 23, 24.
5. Ibid.
6. Nehemiah Carnock, ed. *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (London: Epworth Press, 1938).