

## Thoughts on Marriage

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Marriage is more than your love for each other. It has a higher dignity and power, for it is God's holy ordinance, through which God wills to perpetuate the human race till the end of time.

In your love you see only your two selves in the world, but in marriage you are a link in the chain of the generations, which God causes to come and to pass away to God's glory, and calls into the kingdom. In your love you see only the heaven of your happiness, but in marriage you are placed at a post of responsibility toward the world and humanity. Your love is your own private possession, but marriage is more than something personal – it is a status, an office. Just as it is the crown, and not merely the will to rule, that makes one a king, so it is marriage, and not merely your love for each other, that joins you together in the sight of God and humanity.

As you first gave the ring to one another and have now received it a second time from the hand of the pastor, so love comes from you, but marriage from above, from God. As high as God is above humanity, so high are the sanctity, the rights, and the promise of marriage above the sanctity, the rights, and the promise of love.

It is not your love that sustains the marriage, but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love.

from: *Letters and Papers from Prison* 27 - 28

## Marriage for God

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

"Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7). In a word, live together in the forgiveness of your sins, for without it no human fellowship, least of all marriage, can survive.

Don't insist on your rights, don't blame each other, don't judge or condemn each other, don't find fault with each other, but accept each other as you are, and forgive each other every day from the bottom of your hearts.

From the first day of your wedding till the last the rule must be: "Welcome one another ... for the glory of God." That is God's word for your marriage. Thank God for it; thank God for leading you thus far; ask God to establish your marriage, to confirm it, to sanctify it, and to preserve it. So your marriage will be "for the praise of God's glory." Amen.

from: *Letters and Papers from Prison* 31 – 32

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Note: Although Bonhoeffer never married, most researchers think he was engaged in January 1943, at age 36, to Maria von Wedemeyer, only to be arrested by the Gestapo three months later. Most likely they would have married had he not been executed in the Flossenburg concentration camp on April 9, 1945, two weeks before the Allied armies reached the camp.

The two pieces above are from a sermon he wrote from prison to his close friend Eberhard Bethge, on the occasion of Eberhard's wedding.

In prison, Bonhoeffer wrote love letters to Maria. These are found in a book, ***Love Letters from Cell 92: The Correspondence Between Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Maria Von Wedemeyer, 1943-45***. Abingdon Press (April 1995).

