

## **Your Marriage: Today**

### ***Exercise #1: Dag Hammarskjold***

Many years ago (at least 30) I remember reading about an American missionary (not A/G) who went overseas, spending 17 years laboring to bring the Gospel to those in darkness. His exploits and the obvious blessings of the Lord on his work were truly extraordinary. I was quite taken by the story and marveled at all he'd accomplished.

THEN ... I learned that he'd left his wife behind for all of those 17 years, not seeing her again until his return. The account I'd read was quite laudatory, recognizing and praising him as a great pioneer in the Faith.

At the time Doris and I had just passed our 25th. year. I couldn't exactly put my finger on it at the time ... but I just knew *something* wasn't right in what I'd read.

A few years thereafter while preparing for a men's retreat I stumbled upon the quote below, penned in the late 1940s by Dag Hammarskjold, a man from Sweden (and obviously a Christian), the first Secretary-General for the United Nations:

***“It is more noble to give yourself completely to one individual than to labor diligently for the salvation of the masses.”***

Now after 56 years of marriage I understand. Hammarskjold recognized something that many ministers (today and in times past) have missed. This brilliant God of ours so constructed the institution of marriage such that if a person gives himself/herself to it “completely” (in the “oneness” so intended by God in marriage), that process alone will do more than anything else to cause that man/woman to become all that God intended *in their ministry*.

[Over the years possibly the greatest human “resurrection” to arise out of these retreats has been the healing of marriages ... that of helping many ministers to get a better handle on the important relationship between their marriages and their ministry.]

Many ministers today fail to recognize that it is “in their marriages” that God intends to make them fit for their ministry.

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***In my journal I reflect upon the following ...***

1. I rate my own marriage at present:

*Degree to which I give myself “completely” to my spouse vs. to my ministry or (for that matter), to myself ... or to anything else:*

**Unacceptable** **Acceptable**  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. What are the most important evidences I recognize of my “unacceptable” situation above? (Not generalities ... in my journal I try to note at least 5 specifics.)
3. With a “determination” to change my situation I list in my journal the following things I can consciously begin to do in the next year (before the 2021 retreat) to “give myself more completely” to my spouse. (Again specifics ... not generalities.)

## **Exercise #2: “Acts of worship”**

Some years ago, while meditating in Hebrews, something really grabbed me:

*“God takes particular pleasure in acts of worship - a different kind of “sacrifice” - that take place **in kitchen** and workplace and on the streets”* (The Message, Hebrews 13:16).

I remember returning from my prayer time so excited to share with Doris what I’d never seen before. (Now I understand that this is a paraphrase but nonetheless it spoke volumes to me that day ... and continues to up to the present.)

Then this past winter I stumbled upon the following verse in Psalms:

*“I’m doing the very best I can, and I’m doing it **at home** where it counts.”*

Now, I’m one who often faults himself for not spending enough time in worship unto the Lord (as we traditionally think of worship). Well, years back *this* just gave me such a lift ... and then again this past winter. To think that all of my “acts” of loving Doris (whether they be words, thoughts, prayers or actions) are considered by the Lord to be “acts of worship”. What a lift! I found myself thinking, *I worship You a lot more than I thought I did Lord!*

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***In your journal reflect upon the following ...***

1. Make your own list of the most prevalent “acts of worship” on your part as routinely offered and directed towards your spouse.
2. Make a complimentary list of some added “acts of worship” you’d like to incorporate into your own process of better “giving yourself completely” to your spouse prior to the 2021 retreat.