

## WEDDING SERMON

Name+Name, We have listened to the word of God that tells us something terribly important. It reminds us that no matter who we are, no matter what we do, no matter what we accomplish, if we don't learn how to love, we have missed what it means to be a human being.

That is pretty heavy. I think that it is true. If we don't learn how to love, nothing else really matters.

I believe that God calls you to be very close to each other. I also believe that God calls you to be very free. Both close and free. Now that's the trick.

There are some kinds of closeness that are not really free at all. The best example that I can think of is the closeness that comes from a sense of guilt.

If I am clever, I can use guilt and make some people close to me. This is how. Remember all the things I did for you. You wouldn't do that to me would you? I'd really hurt if you did that.

If I am clever I can use guilt and make some people be close to me. The problem is that at the same that we are close we smother and destroy each other. It's something like have chains around us that hold us down and hold us fast. I don't recommend that to you.

There is another kind of closeness that comes from a sense of duty or obligation. This has a place in our society but still it is not free. There is an outside voice that says: you ought to be close, come on, shape up, do your duty. Be close like you're supposed to. Because that is not coming from deep in my own soul, it still is not free.

The only kind of closeness that I know that at the same time allows us to be free is the closeness that comes from loving. The reason for this is that one of the qualities of love and I believe that the prime quality of love is acceptance, acceptance of a person in themselves, just as they are. And boy is that hard to do.

You see, I think that the way I think is the right way and you folks really ought to change. After you see things my way and are the way that I want you to be, then we will be wonderful friends.

Now that sounds pretty stupid, and it is, but isn't that in us? We want people to be the way we want them to be. And not what God made them to be.

Name. You will have a problem. I know that you have in your mind an image of what you want your husband to be. It is human and natural to have that. But Name is not always going to fit that image, nor should he. Because Name is a free individual person made by God and that comes before your coming together.

Also Name is not always going to be so lovable. He looks pretty good today. He is not always going to be so lovable. I know that because he is people. Like all of us people he has different kinds of qualities. Some of them pleasing and attractive and others that are not so good.

So Name you will have the temptation to say: Name when you have changed and there are 113 things that you really ought to change. After you have changed yourself around, become the way I like, and become just the way I want you to be, I will really love you.

Name. When you are tempted to do that-as you most surely will be-that does not come from your love but rather from your selfishness.

Name. You have a problem too. You have the same problem. You have in your mind an image of what you want your wife to be. That is just human and natural to have that. But Name is not always going to fit that image, nor should she. Because Name is a free individual person made by God and that comes before your coming together.

Also Name is not always going to be so lovable, as beautiful as she looks today. I know that because she is people. Like all of us people she has different kinds of qualities. Some are pleasing and attractive and some are not so good.

So Name you will have the temptation to say. Name when you have changed. And there are 113 things you really ought to change. After you have changed yourself around, become the way I like and become just the way I want you to be, then I will really love you.

Name. When you are tempted to that-as you most surely will be, that does not come from your love but rather from your selfishness.

Love is beautiful. But love is also tough. The reason that it is so hard is that we want people to be our way.

But Name as you begin to believe -- he loves me. He really does. Just for me. Not just for all my beautiful parts but for my funny and strange ones too. You will be able to tell him who you really are. Not because you have to or are

forced into it. You will tell him gladly and freely because you feel safe in being loved.

It takes a long time for this to happen. So many things you have to experience through the years: the good and the bad, the joys and the sorrows. Sometimes your hearts will sing and sometimes they will break. But if you face these things together, talk them through, work them through and suffer through them, at some point it will sink into you. He loves me for me. Name. When that happens, Name will become irreplaceable to you.

And Name, when you begin to believe --she loves me. She really does. Just for me. Not just for all my beautiful parts but for my funny ones and strange ones too. You will be able to tell her who you really are, not because you have to or are forced into it. You will tell her gladly and freely because you feel safe in being loved.

It takes a long time for this to happen. You will experience so many things through the years. The highs, the lows, the hills, the valleys, the fights, the making up. If you face these things together, talk them through, work them through and sometimes just endure them. At some point it will sink into you. She loves me for me. Name when this happens, Name will become irreplaceable to you.

Everybody cannot become that for everybody. I pray that you can become that for each other. If you find that, there is nothing better in this whole wide world. You will have found the pearl of great price, the beginning of the reign of God.

I encourage you to pray. As we are in contact with God, the way that God is, slowly and painfully seeps into us. And how does God love us? Just as we are. God knows our sins, our faults, our mistakes and our flaws. God knows that sometimes we are even kind of weird. God knows all these things about us and just loves us.

I encourage you to pray. Pray together sometimes. We are often embarrassed to do this. I understand because prayer is extremely intimate. A way you might do it- just be alone with each other; believe that God is there. You don't have to say a word out loud if you don't want to. Just be quiet and let the Love we name God into your hearts and your lives.

If you do that faithfully, you will change. Not by -- but you will change. I pray that when you have been married 50 years, you love each other a thousand times more than you do today.

God bless you both.

