

## Two Are Better Than One

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In my mind I thought Susan going to her mother's for a week would give me all sorts of free time to do some of the things I've been putting off—church maintenance projects, reading, napping in the afternoon, studying for a new series— that kind of stuff. However, here it is Thursday already and I find that nothing has changed. I still have the daily things that need to be done. So there has been little time for any extra.

In this I did realize a couple of things though. One, even though I am only accomplishing what I usually accomplish, I do it more slowly because I am doing it without Susan's help. Two, after all of our years together, I don't like being without her by me. The hardest part is not that I can't see her—she and I text pictures and call each other daily. It's not having her beside me as I sleep at night. We are rarely apart. We do almost everything together—we eat together, pray together, do our devotionals together, shop and cook together. It's not that I can't function alone, it just not as rewarding for me doing my day alone.

Solomon pauses in his book Ecclesiastes to insert four verses that seem out of place. They are almost like a parenthetical thought that just came to his mind while he was working on this book. It's a thought that has come to my mind several times this week—*"two are better than one."*

*<sup>9</sup> Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:*

*<sup>10</sup> If one falls down, his friend can help him up.*

*But pity the man who falls and has no-one to help him up!*

*<sup>11</sup> Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.*

*But how can one keep warm alone?*

*<sup>12</sup> Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.*

*A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."*

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, NIV.

From this I see things while being alone that I don't normally focus on when Susan is around:

- *"a good return for their work"* — How often Susan is there to offer her encouragement as I work. Her support is invaluable to me as I struggle through things to bring progress to the ministry. She seems impressed by my abilities and her admiration strengthens me. She is always the first to thank me for my efforts, even if they weren't directly done for her. She thanks me for serving God and others.
- *"his friend can help him up"* — There are simply things you can't do alone. I like working alone because of my slow pace. I am not quick to figure things out, so I don't like to be pushed. Susan knows my pace and doesn't get frustrated with me, even if I get frustrated with myself. When I reach an impasse, in thought or deed, she reminds me of the important things in life and we take a break.
- *"how can one keep warm alone?"* — It's not just the temperature Solomon is referring to (Susan is often too cold and I am too hot), it's the companionship of sleeping together. For her, I am protection through the night. For me, she makes it all worth it. Also, in verse 8, just before the verses I quoted, Solomon refers to the man who is all alone *"For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?"* As Susan lies beside me each night, I am reminded of why I do what I do. Marriage is an institution of God. He has used it as an example of Christ and his church. What better way to express love than to wake up each morning with Susan beside me. I sometimes kiss her while she sleeps.

• *"two can defend themselves"* — This doesn't mean Susan stands beside me with a baseball bat, ready to defend me (although she would), it means when someone has cut me to pieces and torn me down, I rest assured that I can go home to someone who will take my side and put me back together again.

• *"a cord of three strands"* — Of course the third strand is Jesus. He is my comfort and friend when Susan and I are apart. However, he made a woman for a man because it fulfills him. *"It is not good for man to be alone."*

The sadness and loneliness of parting is always dismissed with the gladness of being reunited. Since even a week brings all this to mind, can you imagine what it would be like to lose a spouse to death? No, we cannot. We can only trust that our *"third strand"* will see us through until we reunite on the other side of the grave. For me, I pray daily to see all my loved one saved and secure in their salvation. Yet, there will be no one in heaven more important for me to see than my lifetime partner, Susan.

*"Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives,  
and treat them with respect as the weaker partner  
and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life,  
so that nothing will hinder your prayers."*

1st Peter 3:7, NIV.

With all that she is or is not to others, she is everything to me. I fail to know how to tell her this, but in reality it is far more important to show her these things as we walk together through this life. God made her for me, prepared her for me, and then gave her to me. How can I ever thank him enough for such a precious gift as my wife. May I love her as he loved me and honor her with all my life. I am pretty sure I will pass into the next life before Susan. I am fully confident that my sons will honor their parents by ensuring her welfare. If this is the case, my hope is that Susan will be able to say to our sons, "Your father was a good man." Lord, help me to live out that phrase each day.

<sup>10</sup> *A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.*

<sup>11</sup> *Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.*

<sup>12</sup> *She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life."*

Proverbs 31:10-12, NIV.

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