

Like a Woman in Love

By Meg Hunter-Kilmer (Article found at www.piercedhands.com)



This weekend, I had the honor of singing at the wedding of a former student and his lovely bride. It was a profoundly moving ceremony and the most beautiful wedding reception I've ever been to, but what made the day so marvelous was knowing the happy couple. Andy and Suzy love each other deeply (though they love God more). They are kind and joyful and loving towards everyone they meet and watching the way they love each other – Andy so filled with joy as he watched Suzy walk towards him that he actually laughed out loud and Suzy even more radiant than usual when she gazed on her beloved – has reminded me once again what it means to be in love with Love himself.

Remember when you first fell in love?¹ How thoughts of the beloved would push their way into your mind unsolicited? How every decision was made with him in mind – what you'd wear, what you'd read, how you'd walk to class? Remember spending the day filing things away to tell him about? Longing to be with him? Aching over the distance that still had to separate you?

Remember when you were first engaged? How all you could think about was becoming a woman who deserved him? How you could hardly bear to keep your distance? How you were almost consumed by a desire to be his, to bring more of his life into the world?

Remember when you were first married? How you couldn't wait to get home to him? How the world was more beautiful because he was in it, more beautiful because you were his? Remember looking in the mirror and rejoicing at the gift your body was to him? Knowing you were beautiful because you saw yourself through his eyes?

¹ Guys, I'm going to direct this at the women since I have no idea what it's like for a man to fall in love and I don't know how to talk about men being in love with a God who primarily reveals himself as masculine. Do what you will with it.

My friends, that is the love God desires from you. When he speaks of his love in Scripture, he calls himself our bridegroom² and our lover³. He describes our relationship with him not as a contract but as a covenant, a marriage, a love affair.

God calls you his darling: Is 44:2; Dt 32:15; Dt 33:5, 26

You are the beloved of God: Jer 11:15; Jer 12:7

God is the lover of souls: Wis 11:26

<i>Is 49:13-16</i>	<i>Hos 2:21-22</i>	<i>Dt 10:14-15</i>	<i>Mt 11:28-30</i>	<i>Rom 8:28-39</i>	<i>1 Jn 3:1, 16</i>
<i>Is 54:10</i>	<i>Hos 11:1</i>	<i>Jn 14:1-3</i>	<i>Lk 15</i>	<i>Gal 4:4-7</i>	<i>1 Jn 4:7-12</i>
<i>Is 62:4-5</i>	<i>Jn 3:16</i>	<i>Jn 14:18</i>	<i>Mt 25:34</i>	<i>Eph 2:4-7</i>	<i>1 Jn 4:15</i>
<i>Is 43:4</i>	<i>Is 25:7-9</i>	<i>Jer 31:3</i>	<i>Jn 15:9, 11</i>	<i>Eph 3:14-19</i>	<i>1 Jn 4:18-19</i>
<i>Sgs 4:9-10</i>	<i>Ex 14:14</i>	<i>Mt 10:29-31</i>	<i>Jn 17:23</i>	<i>Eph 5:2</i>	<i>Rom 5:6-8</i>

This isn't the unique realm of consecrated women—or even of women, as St. John of the Cross would be quick to point out. Every person is called to a wild, passionate, being-in-love with the Lord. What if your relationship with Christ were less a series of obligations and more an enthrallment? Oh, you can't manufacture feelings like that. But you can do your best to view Jesus as your beloved and not just some God-man who wants you to be good. What if you made every decision with him in mind? Stopped to talk to him about the things that excite or upset you? What if you asked him to make you long for him? If you looked at him in the Eucharist and tried to imagine what it would mean to be in love with him?

What if your purpose in life was to try to deserve him? What if you asked him to let a desire for him consume you? If you saw yourself through his eyes and knew that your life was a gift to him? If you made every decision because you are his, holding nothing back?



[This mosaic from the St. Louis Cathedral shows the Cross as a marriage bed. I got so excited! But then the picture was dim and so I tried to fix it and kind of failed. But you get the picture.]

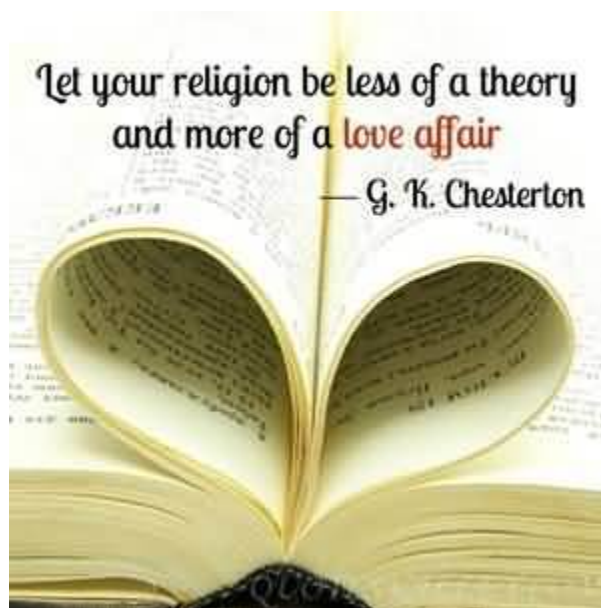
² Isaiah 62:4-5

³ All of Song of Songs.

The only reason romantic love exists at all is to teach us the way God loves us and the way he wants us to love him. Scripture is saturated with this imagery of God as lover.⁴ Jesus tells us again and again that he is the bridegroom.⁵ When he handed himself over for us on the marriage bed of the Cross, his body cried out in the language of marital love, “I give myself completely to you forever.” At each Mass, he speaks again through the priest, “This is my body which will be given up for you.” “I give myself completely to you forever,” he says, and we walk down the aisle to receive our groom.

What if we just tried to view the Eucharist like it was the supreme act of love, the consummation of our union with Christ? What if we approached the Mass like it was our wedding—or at least a date? Like it was more than just a box to check but an opportunity for communion with the Lord? Like it was the most important moment of our week?

Of course, love isn’t always pleasant and it isn’t always easy. Remember when it all started to fade, when you lost the love you had at first?⁶ When it was hard to find things to talk about? When he began to seem too demanding? Remember how you stopped thrilling at the sight of him? That’s part of love, too. It’s the part, I think, when love becomes real. It’s no longer about us. It’s not about feelings or fun. It’s a choice made for the beloved. We choose to love, choose to spend time together. We work at love not because of what our lover can give us but because of who he is.



Maybe this is where you are. Maybe you’ve had the butterflies and the longing for heaven and now you’re just trudging through. Maybe prayer is boring and living for Christ just seems too

⁴Song of Songs, Ezekiel 16, all the above passages from Isaiah, etc.

⁵ For more on this, read Brant Pitre’s book [Jesus the Bridegroom](#). I haven’t read it, but his [Lighthouse Catholic Media talk](#) by the same name was INCREDIBLE.

⁶ Rev 2:4

hard. That's when it's time to double down. Just like you wouldn't quit on your marriage,⁷ don't quit on this love. Don't settle for mediocrity. Fight for this love. Read up on some strategies for prayer or just commit to doing it without any strategies. Start talking to God, even if you have nothing to say. Spend more time with him, not less. It's okay that it's not fun – it's still good. And it's worth fighting for.

I guess I'm just saying that if you've been settling for doctrines and pious practices and rules, know that there is more. All those things are designed by God to lead you to what really matters: being in love with him. So many of us are pushing through the day-to-day without any attention to God beyond the obligatory grace before meals – or going to daily Mass and praying the Office and the Rosary without a spirit of love. The Lord is offering you more than a membership card with the occasional obligation attached; he's offering you a love affair of the most passionate sort, a relationship that shakes your world, that defines you, that fills your heart and still leaves you longing. You may never thrill to the thought of a holy hour, but your life can be so much more than just the things of this world with a side of Jesus. It can be beautiful, intense, amazing, terrifying, and real. But he's a gentleman. He won't force you. He'll keep chasing you, but eventually you have to stop running and draw near to the God who is closer to you than you are to yourself.

It's a choice, just like love is a choice. It's a choice to spend time with him every day, a choice to pay attention when you're there. It's a choice to see the world through his eyes, a choice to make him more than just an obligation. It's a choice to live like a woman in love and I've found that the more you make that choice, the more you find that's exactly what you are: a woman in love with Love himself. What a gift.



⁷ Especially in this analogy, where your spouse is without fault.

Unconditional Love

By Meg Hunter-Kilmer (Article found at www.piercedhands.com)

Lately, I've been pulling my darling nephew onto my lap and snuggling him.

"Guess what," I say.

"I love you," he responds, because that is how this game goes.

"How much do I love you?"

"A dillion." This is, apparently, an enormous number. It's bigger than a trillion. A dillion squared is a sillion. That's all we know.

"Will I love you forever?"

"Yes." He's smiling.

"No matter what?"

"Yes."

"What if you do something really bad? What if you kick Cecilia *hard*? Will I still love you then?"

The first time I asked a question like this, he wasn't quite sure. He just looked distressed. But now he knows. "Yes."

"What if you're really mad at me and you hate me? Will I still love you?"

"Yes."

"What if you hate Jesus and you never go to church?"

"Yes."

It goes on with different questions each time. He smiles the whole time, giggles sometimes – not because anything's funny, just because he's happy. I tell him over and over that I love him and he knows it but he still needs to hear it.

If you need to hear it today, let me tell you. God loves you. Forever and for always, to the moon and back. He loves you more than you could ever imagine and he will never stop loving you. Not

if you are cruel to the people who love you, not if you reject him and hate him and nail him to the cross over and over. He will still love you. No matter what.



And since you maybe don't hear him when he sings it in symphonies and paints it in wildflowers and suspends it in a monstrance, I'll say it again.

Whatever you've done, wherever you've been, whoever you are, whatever the cost. Deeply, madly, desperately he loves you.

Hallelujah.

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord, on this day when we celebrate romantic love, I thank you for this gift. It does indeed enrich our lives. Yet you call us to so much more than what romantic love entails. You call us to love, not just our friends, but also our enemies. You challenge us to love those who do not return our love.

Lord, help me to be attentive to all the big and many small ways I am called to love You and others. Help me, especially, to look for the smallest of opportunities to show this love and thus fulfill Your law. Jesus, I trust in You. I ask that you help me to love as you loved, to broadcast your love, even to those who cannot or will not reciprocate. Teach me to love even those I don't like, the people I'd rather avoid. May I love as you love, Lord. I pray in your name, *Amen*.