

## **MEN ARE FROM MARS, WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS**

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**St. Andrew's United Methodist Church**

**Omaha, Nebraska**

**February 10/11, 2017**

**NAN: We begin in a passage often read at weddings, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13--the Love Chapter.**

**If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am a resounding gong or clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge and if I have a faith that can move mountains but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.**

**Love is patient, love is kind; it does not envy; it does not boast; it is not proud; it is not rude; it is not self-seeking; it is not easily angered; it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.**

**NAN: The story is told of a woman who was walking along the beach one day when she saw Aladdin's lamp lying on the sand. Of course, she picked it up and rubbed it and, of course, out came a genie. Of course, the genie told her she could have three wishes as a reward for freeing him from the lamp. Her first wish was for 20 million dollars in gold. Poof! There was all that gold, lying on the sand at her feet.**

**For her second wish, she asked that be the most beautiful woman in the world. Poof! She turned into Angelina Jolie.**

For her third wish, she thought a long while and then she said, “I have always wanted to be able to drive across the ocean to Hawaii. So I would I you to build me a highway from California to Hawaii, so I can make that drive.” The genie thought a while and then said, “I don’t think I can do that. That would be very difficult and I am just not powerful enough or smart enough to do it. I am sorry, but could you please wish for something else.”

The woman, obviously disappointed, thought a long while and then said, “I have never been able to understand men; how they think or why they do the things they do. So for my third wish, I would like you to answer this question: "Why do men behave in the strange ways they do?" And the genie replied, “Was that a four-lane or a six-lane highway?”

Like this genie, I would probably do better building the California-Hawaii highway than I would explaining why men are the way they are. I know that all you guys were created by Almighty God and that are all his beloved sons, but I have to wonder now and then: why didn’t God in all His wisdom create you a little less—unusual?

It all begins when we are young. In the first grade, two boys in my class, Danny and Charley, used to fight over me. They got in trouble for doing it, but I thought it was kind of neat. That’s the way boys were, and I like it. But then, by the time we got to middle school, the same boys were always making obnoxious noises when my friends and I walked by or punching us on the arm or laughing at the way we played basketball.

I would tell my mother how crazy these boys were acting and she explained to me that they acted that way because they “liked us.” Wow. I know that if I liked someone, I would sure want to show it by punching them or laughing at them! What kind of logic is that, anyway?

So we grow up and we kiss a lot of frogs and eventually, if we're lucky, we meet our Prince Charming. The man of our dreams. And life is wonderful—sunshine, lollipops, and rainbows. But after a while, we realize that even Prince Charming can be pretty puzzling a lot of the time. Why does he do some of the strange things he does? It's almost like he's from another planet. Hey, maybe that's it! Maybe men really are from another planet...

BRD: Is it Prince Charming's turn....? Let's spin a little mood music...

*We're going to the chapel and we're gonna to get married  
Going to the chapel and we're gonna get married  
Gee I really love you and we're gonna get married  
Going to the Chapel of Love*

*Spring is here, the sky is blue  
Birds all sing as if they know  
Today's the day  
We'll say 'I Do'  
And we'll never be lonely anymore.*

It's been 23-plus years now since I played that song with one of my bands, then came out from behind a screen to take my proper place as you came walking down the aisle: January 1, 1995. You were so beautiful to me then. You are so beautiful to me now.

That said, both of us were grownups who'd known marital disappointment, painfully aware that "We'll say I do" is no guarantee that we'd "never be lonely anymore."

A picture of me and one of my first loves, Jackie Hamilton. You talked about Danny and Charley fighting over you in grade school, then turning misogynist in Junior High. I can honestly say there's not been a passage in my life when I haven't been fascinated by your kind. Do you think I ever made fun of Jane Halley? Oh no. My eyes adored her!

It has been a puzzlement that a man who appreciates women as much as do can have done so poorly when it comes to actual relationships with them. My adult self has sometimes identified with this scene from "Batman Returns." Catwoman is on the prowl. As adversaries go, she's certainly the equal of any male the Dark Knight has encountered. An equal-opportunity crime fighter, Bruce Wayne (I am always interested in other Bruces) dons the Bat suit and goes into the night to counter this latest threat to the peace of Gotham City.

"How could you? I'm a woman."

The confused look on Michael Keaton's face perfectly captures how I have often felt trying to negotiate relationships with your kind.

Another song from January 1, 1995:

*Now everyone dreams of  
Love lasting and true  
But you and I know what this world can do  
So let's make our steps clear  
That the other may see  
I'll wait for you  
And should I fall behind wait for me.*

Note Bishop Ann B. Sherer-Simpson in this photograph, one of five officiants that Sunday afternoon. I believe it was she who asked the big questions: Will you have and hold from this day forward, for better or worse, richer or poorer, et al? What she didn't ask, but perhaps should have: Will you work together?

Three years into the marriage, in a turn of events neither of us anticipated, the Reverend Davis and Davis were appointed to serve as co-pastors at Campbell United Methodist Church in Springfield, Missouri. Prior to that, Nancy had run her own shop and I ran mine. Now we were trying to co-manage a congregation by day, live together by night, not a waking moment passing without some opportunity to rub each other the wrong way.

**NAN:** There was a baptism scheduled our first Sunday in Springfield. At the appropriate place in the liturgy, I reached for the baby, Bruce reached for the baby, so that we wound up in a tug-of-war over the poor thing. In years to come, when we came to cross-purposes in ministry, we'd say, "We're fighting over the baby again."

**BRD:** That said, it took both of us to negotiate what turned out to be a most treacherous ministry setting. Our predecessor had been accused of sexually molesting the choir director. It was pure "He said/She said." The congregation was torn asunder, lots of folks quite certain the allegations were true, an equal number certain the pastor had been falsely accused.

I suspect a lot of clergy, thrown into that situation, would have folded under the pressure. But I had you and you had me and working together we served seven years under that cloud, holding the congregation together through sensational headlines and Court TV; Campbell not only surviving, but bringing in a whole lot of new and healthy souls who formed the core of what is, thirteen years later, a prospering congregation.

A big part in the equation: We had the wisdom to defer to each other's gender-based strengths. There are a whole lot of things Nancy does well that are not my bliss (staff work being at the top of the list); there are things I do well, including church finances, that are not hers. Say this for Bishop Ann B. Sherer-Simpson, she appreciated that and such surely played into her decision to bring us to St. Andrew's. Ann Sherer would have never asked you to go to Elkhorn Hills, leaving the Alpha male to fend for myself in the highly feminized church culture of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**NAN:** You poor thing.... The tragedy in Springfield kept piling up casualties; we didn't want our marriage added to the list.

**BRD:** True that. Back when we got married, someone had given us a copy of this book, "Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus, and" subtitled, "A Practical Guide for Improving Communication and Getting What You Want in a Relationship." I didn't read it, of course.

It sounded like self-help and I don't so self-help books, particularly when they've got the R word (relationship!) anywhere in the title.

In contrast, Nancy does relationships really well. She read "Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus" and at some point suggested I read it. (She may have *strongly* suggested I read it.) To my surprise, it turned out to be very interesting, challenging all sorts of assumptions I'd had about gender interaction.

**NAN:** Author Jon Gray makes the argument that there are profound differences in the way women and men experience reality. In fact, the genders "almost seem to be from different planets, speaking different languages and needing different nourishment."

**BRD:** Huh, here I'd operated all these years under the egalitarian premise that men and women are pretty much the same. We're all one in Christ Jesus, right? As there are no distinctions, it would seem simple: Just follow the Golden Rule--Do unto her as I would have her do unto me--and everything will be copacetic. Only to have Jon Gray saying that as well as that sounds, such reciprocity may get lost in translation...

**NAN:** The Biblical conversation about the relationship of women and men often begins with the third chapter of Paul's letter to the Colossians. A man who seems to have been a bachelor advises, "Wives be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly." In my experience, more attention is paid to the first part, "Wives obey your husbands," than to the second, "husbands love your wives." Men, if you did a better job of loving your women, your women would be more enthusiastic about the "obey" part.

**BRD:** Pause to consider how Paul's instruction matches up with the Mars/Venus thesis.

**NAN:** Gray says that men operate out of a basic motivational need to be respected. Women operate out of a basic motivational need to be cherished.

**BRD:** Words of wisdom from Otis Redding.

*Oh she may be weary  
And young girls they do get weary  
Wearing that same old shabby dress  
But when she gets weary  
Try a little tenderness.*

**BRD:** For a Biblical case study in a man cherishing a woman, let's look at the Song of Solomon:

How beautiful you are, my love, how very beautiful! Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats, moving down the slope of Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from washing (*it means she has white teeth*)... Your lips are like a crimson thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. Your neck is like the tower of David.

How do we suppose his “beloved” reacted to that? Did she respond, (Nan bats her eyes: “I bet you say that to all the girls”?) No! She appreciates the words of tenderness, singing, (NAN:) “The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills.”

**BRD:** Some of you guys may be thinking, “Yeah, if I had a woman like that, with cheeks of pomegranate and teeth like a flock of shorn ewes, I’d say nice things, too. Consider, however, verse 9, chapter 5: the effusive fellow asked by others, “What is your beloved more than another beloved that you adjure us?” In other words: What makes your gal so special? From which we may extrapolate: the beauty the lovers saw in each other was largely in the eye of the beholder. They weren’t in love because they were beautiful; they were beautiful because they were in love!

I don't know why you always bring up The Song Of Solomon. I think it sounds like of silly. I don't know how I'd feel if you suddenly looked at me and said, "Dear, your cheeks are like pomegranate halves and your neck is like the tower of David." I am pretty sure I would laugh out loud, which I know is not the response he would be hoping for.

BRD: See if I ever tell you your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from washing...but thank you for the segue. According to Gray, while women need to feel cherished, men need to feel respected. Having advised the male of the species to "try a little tenderness," Otis Redding wrote a reciprocal song about what men want from women:

*What you want, honey you got it  
And what you need, baby you got  
All I'm asking for is a little respect when I get home  
Hey, Hey Hey*

NAN: Wait. Otis Redding? I've known the song as Aretha Franklin's feminist anthem!

BRD: Yes, but before Aretha feminized it (the modern woman isn't content until she takes everything from the male of the species), Otis wrote it as a song about what MEN want and need.

I can hear King David singing R-E-S-P-E-C-T to his shrill wife, Michal. As a young man, he had asked her daddy, King Saul, for Michal's hand in marriage. Sure, said Saul. As long as you give me a wedding gift. Bring me the foreskins of a hundred Philistines and I'll give you my blessing!

I'm guessing Saul thought this would scare David off, but in fact, David brought him the foreskins of a hundred Philistines. I won't go into the details of harvesting the foreskins of a hundred Philistines, but suffice to say anybody who could do that—and David did—was a man to be respected.



Fast forward to what should have been one of the great days of David's life. Israel's new king is leading the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, and gets caught up in the moment. David's in a spiritual frenzy, dancing in the street, dressed only in a loincloth. Alas, when he gets home, instead of celebrating with him, Michal goes to disrespecting him, saying he's made a fool of himself in front of Israel. Downer! The relationship never recovered.

**NAN:** Michal is not one of my favorite women in the Bible, for some of the reasons you just mentioned, but I would like to say a word in her defense. She knew a lot more about this royalty business than David did. She was the daughter of a king. She understood that it was important for David to comport himself in a certain manner—it was what people expected of their king. And I have no doubt that she was not really crazy about her husband parading around half-naked and getting a lot of attention from the young maidens standing around. Some things about the marriage relationship may change, others don't.

But I read the part about David dancing around and he reminds me of you. You are so eccentric! But I try to be patient.

**BRD:** I like to think if you'd been in Michal's place, you might have recognized that David was just being David, doing the things that made him who he was, and in this instance, let it go; maybe even expressed some happiness about his happiness. We can be pretty sure of this: Mrs. David's disapproval did nothing for their marriage.

**NAN:** Surely you're not going to blame Michal for David's acting out with Bathsheba...

**BRD:** Of course not, though I would call your attention to the place in the book where Gray says, "Martians Give Penalty Points. Women don't realize that men give penalty points when they feel unloved and unsupported." This, he says, is very confusing to women and destructive to the relationship.

**NAN: So that's why you're prone to pout when I'm not gushing over you? Says Jon Gray: "Men should remember that penalty points are not fair and do not work." I read this book, too, you know. Gray has this advice for men in a snit: "At moments when you feel unloved, offended, or hurt, forgive her and remember all the good she has given rather than penalize her by negating it all. Instead of punishing her, ask her for the support you want, and she will give it."**

**BRD: Alas, instead of remembering the great good his wife had done for him over the years--and Michal had done a lot of good for David, saving his life, at one point--he went into "acting out" mode with Bathsheba, with tragic consequences for all concerned.**

**NAN: Speaking of points, plus and minus, Gray makes the important point that men and women keep score differently. Reading from the book:**

**A man thinks he scores high with a woman when he does something very big for her, like buying her a new car or taking her on a vacation. He assumes he scores less when he does something small, like opening the car door, buying her a flower, or giving her a hug. Based on this kind of score keeping, he believes he will fulfill her best by focusing his time, energy, and attention into doing something large for her. This formula, however, does not work because women keep score differently.**

**BRD: I'm still smarting from that ill-advised remark I made at one the Christmas services, about the waste of giving flowers, which are, after all, just going to wither and die, knowing the moment the words crossed my lips it was going to cost me....**

**Little things, says the author, make a big difference. He lists "101 Ways to Score Points with a Woman." Some are more reasonable than others.**

For instance, “Upon returning home find her first before doing anything else and give her a hug.” O.k. “Ask her specific questions about her day that indicate an awareness of what she was planning to do (e.g. ‘How did your appointment with the doctor go?’)” That’s doable. “Give her twenty minutes of unsolicited, quality attention (don’t read the newspaper or be distracted by anything else during this time.)” Oh, man....

Others strike me as even more questionable, “Don’t flick the remote control to different channels when she is watching TV with you”? “Laugh at her jokes and humor”?

NAN: “How many men does it take to change the toilet paper roll in the bathroom?” Answer: “No one knows; it’s never been tried.”

BRD: More from Gray’s list: “Keep the bathroom floor clean and dry after taking a shower”? That last one strikes me as particularly unreasonable. Happily, Nancy and I have separate bathrooms, so I can keep mine as messy as I want.

But others are VERY reasonable, particularly this one: “Compliment her on how she looks.” Hear me, guys: This is important. One of the primo things any man needs to understand about women is that this culture makes them feel very insecure about their appearance. Chances are your sweetheart, even your daughters (hence the scourge of anorexia) look into the mirror and do not like what they see. Every chance you get, tell them they’re pretty and give them a hug. Then do it again. And again. And understand, you can’t say it too often: “You are so beautiful to me...”

NAN: I’d tell you I don’t like it, but I do. That said, let’s move and talk about the cave. For this case study: Job.

BRD: The sad story of Job and his Mrs. is a classic example of the different ways men and women cope with stress.

**NAN:** Writes Gray, “Men become increasingly focused and withdrawn while women become increasingly overwhelmed and emotionally involved....

**BRD:** So, when the Jobs lose everything—their children, their property, his health—Job withdraws into what Gray images as his cave—in this instance, a garbage dump: a place where he can be by himself and lick his wounds.

**NAN:** Jon Gray writes, “When a Martian gets upset he never talks about what is bothering him... he will withdraw into the cave of his mind and focus on solving a problem.... The more stressed he is the more gripped by the problem he will be. At such times he is incapable of giving a woman the attention and feeling that she normally receives and certainly deserves.”

*(To Bruce)* Surely, you’ll concede Mrs. Job deserved some attention, herself. After all, she had lost everything, too.

**BRD:** If she’d just come out to the dump and sat beside him, that would have been one thing; maybe he could have eventually put his arm around her and they could have comforted each other; instead she has to talktalktalk, finally telling him to “curse God and die.” My guess is it translated like this: Husband, this is YOUR FAULT! I don’t think a lot of women understand this about men: We are programmed to assume, when something comes along we can’t handle/fix/solve, OF COURSE it’s our fault.

**NAN:** So what would you have us do?

**BRD:** Do what you’ve been doing so wonderfully in my recent convalescence from this herniated disc. Don’t press on me. Leave me alone to do my suffering downstairs. Bring me some food and drink (did you notice Mrs. Job shows up empty handed?). Let me talk about it on my own time (It was reassuring, somehow, after a couple of weeks of this, to admit to you I was a little scared). You have never looked more beautiful to me.

**NAN:** I'm know you're not suggesting Mrs. Job didn't have her own legitimate needs. But instead of projecting her anxieties on her suffering husband, it would have been better to have talked it through with a female friend, or writing in a journal. And if she did finally feel she needed to go see about him, she might have expressed herself this way: "Darling husband, there's something I feel the need to say. I know you're having a hard time right now, but I really want to say this."

**BRD:** And Job might have said, "Grrr..."

**NAN:** "I just want you to know that I know you're suffering. I'm suffering, too. I miss our children and our home and I'm worried I'm going to lose you. I sometimes wish *I* could just curse God and die. But I love you and as long as we have each other, you can count on my support."

**BRD:** Somehow, I don't think Job would have lashed out at her. They might even have been able to comfort each other. I'm not blaming her; I'm not blaming him. They were both suffering. But I've watched lots of couples suffer loss over the years. Sometimes the loss brings them closer together, but too often the loss tears the relationship apart.

Guys, if your Valentine does want to talk, try not to be threatened. Hear her out. She doesn't necessarily expect you to "fix" things. She likely just wants to know you care.

**NAN:** I want to end with a story I know you'll remember. Early in our marriage, we were visiting my family in Southeast Missouri. We were staying Cape Girardeau, and walking on the river front at night—holding hands as I recall. And this man comes up to us, literally out of the dark, and says "You're in love, aren't you?" And we say, "Well...yes."

**BRD:** Of course, I remember. He told us he'd come to the river that night with the intention of jumping in and drowning himself. But

he'd seen us walking along, decided we must be very much in love. And, I remember him saying that if love is, in fact, a possibility in this hard world, then life must be worth living after all. And seeing us had saved his life that night. That's what he said.

It's good to have moments like that to remember when we're out of soap.

**NAN:** That's where you want to finish?

**BRD:** "Love in the Time of Cholera," by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Like you and me, Dr. Juneval Urbino and his wife Fermina Daza, have very different sleep habits. Dr. Urbino is an early riser, his wife Fermina Daza, not so much. Unlike you and me, they have only one bathroom. If he insists on getting up so early, she expects him to bathe in the dark so as not to wake her.

What becomes a full-fledged marital crisis, "...began with routine simplicity. Dr. Juvenal Urbino had returned to the bedroom...and begun to dress without turning on the light.

**NAN:** As usual, she was in her warm fetal state, her eyes closed, her breathing shallow... But she was only half asleep, as usual, and he knew it. After a prolonged sound of starched linen in the darkness, Dr. Urbino said to himself,

**BRD:** "I've been bathing for almost a week without any soap."

**NAN:** Then, fully awake, she remembered and tossed and turned in fury with the world because she had indeed forgotten to replace the soap in the bathroom. She had noticed its absence three days earlier when she was already under the shower, and had planned to replace it afterward, but then she forgot until the next day, and on the third day the same thing happened again.

**BRD:** The truth was that a week had not gone by, as he said to make her feel more guilty, but three unpardonable days and her

anger at being found out in a mistake maddened her. As always, she defended herself by attacking,

**NAN:** “Well, I’ve bathed every day,’ she shouted with rage, and there’s always been soap.”

**BRD:** “Although he knew her battle tactics by heart, this time he could not abide them. On some professional pretext or other he went to live in the interns’ quarters at (the hospital), returning home only to change his clothes before making his evening house calls.

**NAN:** She headed for the kitchen when she heard him come in, pretending that she had something else to do, and stayed there until she heard his carriage in the street. For the next three months, each time they tried to resolve the conflict they only inflamed the feelings even more.

**BRD:** He was not ready to come back as long as she refused to admit there had been no soap in the bathroom....

**NAN:** And she was not prepared to have him back until he recognized that he had consciously lied to torment her... The incident, of course, gave them the opportunity to evoke many other trivial quarrels... Resentments stirred up other resentments, reopened old scars, turned them into fresh wounds.

**BRD:** Dr. Urbino proposes they go to the Archbishop, “so that God could decide once and for all whether or not there had been soap in the soap dish in the bathroom.”

**NAN:** She loses her temper, utters a blasphemy. No longer speaking to each other, he moves into the study. But there’s still the issue of the bathroom.

**BRD:** They would often arrive at the bathroom at the same time, and then they took turns brushing their teeth before going to sleep. After four months had gone by, he lay down on their double bed one night to read until she came out of the bathroom, as he often did, and he fell asleep

**NAN:** She lay down beside him in a rather careless way so he would wake up and leave.

**BRD:** And in fact he did stir, but instead of getting up he turned out the light and settled himself on the pillow.

**NAN:** She shook him by the shoulder to remind him that he was supposed to go the study, but it felt so comfortable...that he preferred to capitulate.

**BRD:** "Let me stay here," he said. "There was soap."

**BENEDICTION**  
**LIVE, LAUGH, LOVE GOD**