

The Dream

Rarely are my dreams meaningful or memorable, but some years ago I had a dream that has stuck with me.

The dream came in the early years of our marriage and featured my wife, Gloria, and me. We had switched personalities. She acted and reacted as I do, and I saw as she must see and felt as she must feel. Not only did I get to see myself from her perspective, but I ended up reacting to myself as she does, both inwardly and outwardly.

In the dream, Gloria was self-confident and busy with her work, caught up in her own life. I was much less certain of myself. Life seemed bigger than me, and the handles that others grasp so confidently eluded me. I was like a non-swimmer in water just a bit too deep – I probably wouldn't drown, but to feel comfortable and stable, I needed someone to help me a bit.

I craved time to talk, an opportunity to express what was on my mind and share my feelings. I needed my wife to take time to listen and talk with me. Relaxed and open conversation with her gave me the support I needed. It helped me feel secure and ready to tackle life. But Gloria often had something else to do or had something else on her mind. When that happened, I not only felt very uneasy about myself and about life, but I was incredibly, painfully lonely.

In fact, I remember the loneliness most. Though the dream seemed short, the feelings were so vivid that they made a lasting impact on me. No, I'm far from the perfect husband, and yes, I still get busy and preoccupied. But when I realize I've been too caught up in my own life, the memory of that dream helps me. I don't just mentally understand that she needs time with me, but I remember how she feels; I taste that loneliness and pain.

The dream makes me wonder how often I have reacted negatively and insensitively to another person, coming from my limited emotional perspective. How would my attitude, values, and life-style change if I actually felt others' motivations and needs, their inner struggles and scars?

The dream also reminds me that I am surrounded by people with constant needs. Just as I need God every day, so they need and depend on me. I couldn't survive if God cared for me sporadically or only when convenient to Him. And sporadic isn't good enough for them either.

It may be to talk or to listen, to encourage or to give practical help, or to reassure them that I love them and enjoy sharing life with them. They may not even verbalize their needs. But when I fail them and shrink into self-centeredness, they suffer. Many of them

are the dearest people in the world to me; yet if I'm not careful, I make them survive on the "leftovers" of my time and attention.

God's presence is so wonderful because it is personal and constant. Our care for each other is to follow this pattern. In both relationships, all the sweetest fruits grow from the daily touches of love. "Constantly" is the way love works best.

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth
(1 John 3:18, NIV).

Hymn: [Love One Another](#)

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