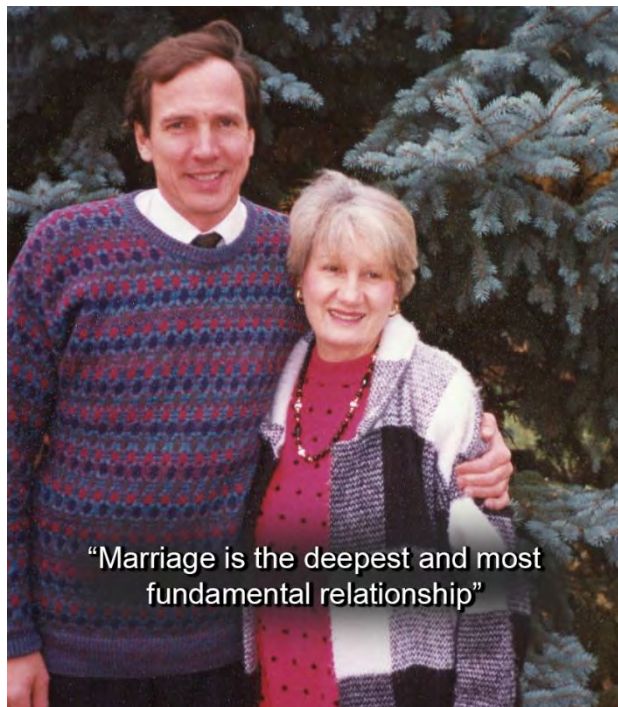


The worst and best gift ever - My husband's greatest gift was to love God, and to love me

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Early in our marriage when my husband was studying for a PhD in theology in Toronto and my birthday came around, this particular day he surprised me with a gift. He must have been thinking hard what to get me. and he was practical.

When I opened my present, it was AN UMBRELLA! Oh no! Not this! How unromantic! Not that I enjoy walking in pouring rain because it was October, my birthday month, but I can buy myself such a thing. I just wanted something else, even if students are poor, or in debt, could not make ends meet. I just wanted something else.

Like what? Perhaps a dress, a blouse, a perfume, a necklace, an expensive ring? Chosen thinking of me his beloved wife. Women never have enough of those. A night at a restaurant, a get away from it all.

Given our situation, I could have toned down my expectations. But did not Mark Gungor, a marriage expert, say that to please a woman, "You need to love her. Die for her. Take her for dinner. Miss the game for her. Buy her jewelry. Be interested in what she has to say." (I will let you guess his opinion on how to please a man.)

I love my husband to the moon and back, but choosing a gift was kind of hard for him. After that there were some improvements. One year I got an envelope with a card with loving words and 40 dollars. I have to confess then I got 40 dollars for my birthday every year for the next 30 years or more while he was alive.

Forty was a good number for him, because he loves numbers. He always said, "God loves numbers. God is a great mathematician."

My husband is a man who never changed. I also liked that he never changed. I was his only begotten wife. One man, one woman. No adultery. True love never changes.

Every year I knew what I would find in an envelope: a special card with loving words written with loving care in a most elegant handwriting and 40 dollars. More gifts to redeem came along, like a body massage, foot massage done by him, restaurant of my choice, and one get away to enjoy within the year.

It got even better for our thirty-year blessed marriage anniversary: We went to Europe by boat (the Queen Mary) to visit our relatives (my idea).

One Christmas I dragged him to a department store to show him where the rings with precious stones were displayed. Because there were on sale, I got one as blue as blue can be. I always feel God's love in precious stones. God made the beautiful creation for His children to enjoy. He wants everyone to appreciate the beauty He made for us. By now I knew how to talk to a theologian.

But my most precious gift was truly the undivided love.

Love between husband and wife does not fluctuate.

Love is a commitment.

Love is eternal.

My husband's greatest gift was to love God, and to love me.

Your friend, Elisabeth Seidel