

## My Marriage Blessing experience

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*Tanya Edwards and her husband, Bishop Jessie Edwards, received the Holy Marriage Blessing in 2001*

*What made you decide to receive the Marriage Blessing?*

After our youngest son left for college, my husband and I realized that it was now just the two of us, and that was boring! We had lost interest in each other as far as a husband and wife were concerned, and we just didn't appreciate each other any more. We were also both becoming more involved with our personal lives and other interests.

I initially had been reluctant to attend anything done by the Unification Church. My husband,

on the other hand, had been more involved with traveling and speaking for the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC), an integral part of the Unification Church.

Through our connections with ACLC, which consists of clergy from all religious denominations and backgrounds, we met Archbishop Milingo, a prominent priest in the Catholic Church, and Archbishop Stallings, also a Catholic priest. I had heard that both of these priests were planning to attend the Marriage Blessing Ceremony with their respective wives. Not knowing the terminology of the "Blessing," I thought these couples were simply getting married. My husband invited me to attend the Marriage Blessing Ceremony together with these couples.

*Thank you for sharing. How was your experience in the actual ceremony?*

At first, I was a bit confused by some things. For example, it was interesting that the women needed to wear all-white clothing. But I went along with my husband and got out my white outfit. My husband and I were running late for the ceremony, and as I entered the ceremony room, I saw all the couples lined up and dressed up. To my surprise, I realized that I was attending a "Mass Blessing." I just about went into a spasm! I kept trying to hide my face from the camera by putting the bridal bouquet over my face. We continued with the ceremony and I went along with everything. However, in my head I was reluctantly thinking, "I'm going to kill my husband when this is all over."

*What happened that changed your understand of the Marriage Blessing?*

About a week after the ceremony, I realized that my husband was acting totally different. He was telling me constantly that he loved me and how he was sorry for how he had been before. He would always hold my hand and hug me when we were alone together. He was always reassuring me that he felt different after the Blessing Ceremony and that he loved me even more. That is what changed me! I started to believe and question about the validity of the "Blessing." Through seeing my husband's actions and attitude, I began to reconsider the value of the Marriage Blessing. Later on, I became more knowledgeable of what the Marriage Blessing was all about through education, and I realized that there was indeed something powerful about it.

I learned about the five steps to become a Blessed Couple and I came to appreciate the preparation and education that other Blessed Couples went through to reach that point. Now I try to tell others about the Marriage Blessing, and share with them that through the education and preparation, I am now proud to say that we are a Blessed Couple.

I have realized that what is profound about the Marriage Blessing is that it is not just about you and your spouse. It is about bringing God into the center of your relationship and creating a marriage that has great value and absoluteness.

*How was your experience of receiving the Marriage Blessing with other couples of Christian and other religious backgrounds?*

The experience of receiving the Marriage Blessing with other Christian couples was very rich and pure. The Marriage Blessing is not only for the couple but also for the individual and the coming together to make one family under God. The Marriage Blessing is intended by God to be for all humankind, regardless of race, culture or religion.

*Thank you for sharing. How is your current relationship after becoming a Blessed Couple?*

We both have come to acknowledge that our relationship is centered on God, and that no matter what we go through in life, good or bad, we can work anything out with God in the center. As a result, the love, sex and nurturing in our marriage is wild and crazy. We've realized that we can create heaven right here on earth by inviting God into our marriage through the Marriage Blessing.