

*Parable
of the
Candles*

A WEDDING CEREMONY

By Verna Kwiatkowski

PREFACE

From 1991 until I retired in 2000, I was the congregationally chosen pastor of The Community Church of Yorktown, in Yorktown Heights, New York. In this capacity I had the legal right to perform marriage ceremonies. The first one I conducted was for our daughter MaryBeth and her husband, Charles Dyer, in 1995. What a privilege that was! I wanted their ceremony to be special and to incorporate the truths I had come to believe through the years about husband and wife relationships. The result of my musings was a demonstration I called the Parable of the Candles.

Here is a picture of my church after a wedding had ended, showing the table where the parable was explained.



PREPARATION FOR CEREMONY

Place four candles in candle holders on a table. While the candles I used were all the same size, I used candle holders of different heights.

- Place the tallest holder in back. This is for the candle representing God.
- The side two holders should be smaller, but of equal height (although perhaps slightly different in design).
- Place the smallest holder front and center. This is for the candle representing marriage.

Light the candle representing God at the start of the ceremony.

After reading the Scripture passages and the Introduction to the Parable in the wedding ceremony, the bride, groom and I would **move over to the table and act out the parable.**

SCRIPTURE READINGS

I would like to read now some of the well-known Bible passages about love, beginning with Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 –

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.

And now from 1 John, chapter 4 –

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

We have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Those who live in love live in God, and God in them. There is no fear in love. Perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. We love because he first loved us.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PARABLE

Jesus did much of his teaching with parables, perhaps because simple stories or object lessons have a way of sticking in our minds. Once there, we can not only rehearse the original lesson, but keep learning new ones from the same parable. I have many things I would like to discuss with you concerning marriage and have chosen to do so around an object lesson called The Parable of the Candles. Please come with me now to the table with the candles.

[Move over to the table where one candle is already lit and three others are in place.]

PARABLE OF THE CANDLES

The Scriptures we have read speak of God as Love and the source of love. God is also Light and the source of light. The Bible says, "God is light and in him there is no darkness whatever." God created light with the words, "Let there be light" – and there was light. When the Son of God entered the world, he came, among other things, as light. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." So it is fitting that we use a candle to represent God in our parable. The one that stands for God is the most prominent one, the one already lit.

The candles on the sides represent the two of you, one for _____ and one for _____. All life has its source in God. We are all descendants of Adam and Eve, who were directly created by God. Like them, we are all made in the image of God. More than that, God is the only source of spiritual life. Each of you has become God's child by believing in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. To demonstrate that your physical and spiritual life comes from God, please take your candles and light them from the one already lit.

As you stand here with your candles lit, I want to say that your individuality is a precious thing, for it is the sum total of all that you were born with, all that you have learned and experienced, and all your dreams and aspirations. Although you share much in common, there are some things that you will always see differently. Do not be afraid of these differences, but rather nurture and enjoy each other's individuality. As you do, your own understanding of people, of God and of things will be enlarged. Don't ever lose your own or blow out each other's uniqueness.

Today you are entering into a new union called marriage. To demonstrate this union, please take your individual candles and together light the fourth candle, which represents marriage. [Continue holding the two candles.] Marriage is God's idea. It's been around as long as there have been two people, a male and a female. May the light of your marriage glow brightly for all to see, as long the two of you are living on this earth.

In marriage, besides being individuals, you also belong to each other. To demonstrate this point, please exchange candles with each other. God says much in his word about how he wants people to treat each other, and this certainly holds true in marriage. "Love one another," God says. Also "respect and honor each other. Bear one another's burdens. Serve one another. Be kind and compassionate to each other. And submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

"Submit to one another." Here is a big key to the equality God intends in marriage. There is no reason to jockey for position in marriage, nor for one to dominate the other. Work together as partners. Recognize your own and each other's strengths, weaknesses and desires when it comes to decision making. Follow God's "one another" principles and let your marriage be uniquely yours. No two marriages are exactly alike, just as no two individuals are exactly alike.

Please put the candles back in the holders now and let's look at the final arrangement. While each of you are special creations of God, you are committing yourselves to unity in Christ. Something new is beginning today that is well worth developing and needs to be developed for the glory of God.

I charge you both to always let Christ have the central, prominent place in your marriage. As you, _____ and _____, look at each other in the time to come, see each other through God and let this perspective soften the rough edges of the adjustment time that you will surely go through and heighten the times of pure enjoyment that are also in store for you.

Keep all four candles glowing in your marriage. "Let your lights so shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Amen.

REFERENCES to Scripture passages used in Parable:

Genesis 1:3; Matthew 5:16; John 8:12, 13:34; Romans 13:7; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Galations 5:13, 6:2; Ephesians 4:32, 5:21; 1 John 1:5, 4:7,9-11,14-16,18,19.