

A LETTER TO MY WIFE

It hardly seems as if our 37 years together have come and gone so quickly, but sifting through old pictures this past week convinces me that they have. My hair was once black, but what few locks that age and stress have permitted to remain are now decidedly gray.

We were young and in the carefree days of youth, oblivious to the difficulties soon to confront us. But in an instant on December 21, 1972, Jenny's traumatic birth brought the first change to dramatically alter our futures and respective outlooks on life. And unseen to us, other mountains of crisis loomed just over the horizon.

Could we have foreseen the difficulties ahead, we might have decided that the path of pain best be avoided--and then have done so. But the grace of God conceals the future so we might not be fearful and learn to depend on Him to rise to whatever occasion He permits to enter our lives. And He has been faithful to do that, even when we haven't always been faithful to respond properly.

Surprisingly, though, each pain that's been delivered to our door has been balanced by a corresponding joy that would arrive later. If I could just learn to wait for the joy without growing discouraged....

My mother gave us nicknames 37 years ago: Sunshine and Thundercloud. Even a casual observer can tell which is which today! But despite our differences, you have been a faithful mother and wife, one who had endured hardship with a persistent optimism that continues to encourage me. I thank you for that.

You have loved--and continue to love--your children to the fullest. Though Jenny is now gone from us, tonight we'll go to eat at Jasmine's, where Barrett has planned a special treat for our anniversary dinner. He is an extremely diligent worker, one who endeavors to make his employers successful. He learned that from you.

What does the future hold for us? We can't know, but we do have some anticipations for this next phase of life. We look forward together to Barrett's graduation from college, his career, his marriage, his family....

Seven years ago on our 30th anniversary, I had two specific prayers for you. I repeat them here as my continued desire:

1. That the beauty of the Lord our God would be upon you and that He would establish the work of your hands (Psalm 90:17).

2. That He would clothe you with strength and dignity (Proverbs 31:25).

May God bless you--and I love you!

Why would I share such personal details? Perhaps to encourage those who think long-term relationships are a steady stream of carefree days and then abandon each other when their idealism doesn't materialize.

In looking back, one thing is clear. Having our lives flexed by the opposing forces of joy and sorrow--even triumph and failure--builds strength and unity that come in no other way.