

## CouplesInBloom.com – Fire, Soap and Intimacy

June 2011

Our honeymoon was in a four room colonial cottage. The living room was nicely decorated and had a fireplace. The bedroom had a canopy bed and all the trimmings. Off the bathroom was an elegantly mirrored, softly carpeted room with a sunken Jacuzzi. We enjoyed being there and went back there for our fifteenth wedding anniversary. The romantic fire, the soap and bubble bath of the hot tub and the unlimited intimacy we shared there didn't just happen; much thorough work prepared the way for our intimacy.

Malachi 3:1-4 ⇨ says to prepare the way of the Lord. Read these verses in your Bible. They also speak of fire, soap and intimacy... in a different way than our honeymoon twenty-eight years ago. **God's goal is intimacy with us**, and these verses let us know how to be prepared for our upcoming wonderful and eternal honeymoon with Him.

First, the Holy Spirit sits down with us, and settles in. His goal in doing so is to work with us so that our offerings to God will be the kind that God likes. When Kathy was getting ready for our honeymoon, her motivation and subsequent actions were all based on blessing Loren. To do this, she needed to listen, learn and own what Loren would like. With God, the Holy Spirit brings out old fashioned soap (the kind with *lye*; check your Bible dictionary!) and starts scrubbing (literally *trampling*) our heart. Then, He uses the fire of holiness to burn impurities from us. Both of these preparations cause us great pain.

Our humanness prefers soft soap with Aloe and moisturizers, not alkaline cleansers and friction, and heat from a warm shower, not relentless and hurtful flames. **Why all this pain?** God is holy and requires a clean bride, His church. Knowing she is only human, He sent Jesus Christ to pay for her sin, followed up by the Holy Spirit who works with her so she lives a life that will now bless both her and her Bridegroom, the Son of God.

Sin feels good at first but leads to death ⇨ James 1:14-15. God, in His mercy, His grace, and our submission, sanctifies us while it is merely painful now... versus eternally fatal later. In contrast, the work of the Holy Spirit starts out painful but leads to ecstasy. In that perspective, all this pain becomes well worth it. This is extremely kind on God's behalf, considering we deserved no blessings at all. Appreciating God's love with the heartfelt commitment of our entire life is a ridiculously small price to pay in comparison.

This process enables us, the bride of Christ, to become sweet pleasure (literally) to God ⇨ Malachi 3:4. If there were ever words to describe what a honeymoon should be, the Biblical description of *sweet pleasure* sure sounds right. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is good news, and that good news is intimacy with God; mutual *sweet pleasure* both ways.

Marriage on earth is a copy-paste of relationship with God. Christian spouses with God as their role model have the best potential for an excellent marriage relationship, but where does the pain fit in? There will be no pain in Heaven because sin will be done with. **God's pain** paid for our sin; **our pain** is used to help us away from sin and towards servanthood. Marital pains are ministry opportunities, just as with the Holy Spirit and the bride of Christ. We sit on our bed and search our painful heart now ⇨ Psalm 4:4-5; then we enjoy wonderful intimacy with our Lover afterwards. ♥ Loren & Kathy Falzone