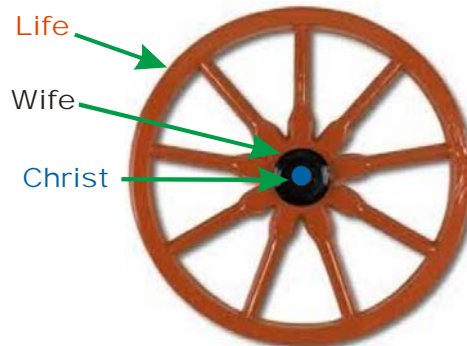


Wheel of Love

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In my book, *Monogamous Sex in Heaven*, I made the statement: “I have come to the point in my marriage where I can offer a simple definition for abundant life as having a Christian wife and say, ‘Jesus loves me this I know for Dianne shows me so’....the greatest tangible expression that I currently have of the Lord’s love for me in my day-by-day experience is found in the arms of my mate, in a God-loving-God union....I am not idolizing my wife or marital love in making such an assertion. I am simply recognizing that God’s love is being given through her and to her in our relationship” (pp. 29-30). Indeed, even stronger statements could be made: (1) *My wife is my life*; (2) *my life revolves around my wife*; (3) *my wife is the focus of my life*; or (4) *my wife energizes my life*. Are such statements guilty of making an idol of my wife? Not necessarily, at least not in the context in which such statements are intended.



Consider the image of a wagon wheel describing three rings of love. These rings form three concentric circles. The outer ring or circle is my love for *my life*. Granted, Jesus said, “He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal” (Jn 12:25). Does this mean that I am supposed to hate my life? No, the Bible is clear that God wants us to enjoy life: “*Enjoy life* with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun” (Ecc 9:9). Our God-given reward in life is to enjoy life with our mate. God wants us to love our lives and tells us how: “Whoever desires to *love life* and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit” (1Pet 3:10). Reconciliation between these texts and Jesus’ statement in John is not difficult. Love for our physical life is biblically commendable, but not if we love it more than eternal life. We should love eternal life more than our physical life, but this does not mean that we should not love our physical life. God gives us both, and we are to love both. We are to love the gifts and rewards that God gives to us. Yet our love for such gifts and rewards should lead us to love God as the giver of such blessings. Our love for the benefits is not to supplant our love for the Benefactor.

Moving from the outside to the inside, the next ring or circle of love in the illustration is my love for *my wife*. God commands us to love our wives. “Husbands, *love your wives*, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). “So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself” (Eph 5:28). We are expected to love our lives, but we are commanded to love our wives even more, even to the point of giving up our lives for the sake of our wives. The secular arena concurs. We would despise an unloving, cowardly husband who is not willing to die for his wife if she were in danger. We expect a husband to love his wife more than himself, even to the point of dying for her. Spokes connect the outer ring and inner ring. Love for *my life* is the outermost ring and is supported by my love for *my wife*, which is the inner ring, holding the spokes in place. This inner ring is a deeper ring in terms of my depth of love. Just as the outer ring revolves around the inner ring, so my love for my life revolves around my love for my wife. As the spokes focus on the inner ring, so my life focuses on my wife.

Even so, my wife is not the innermost ring. Deeper still is my love for *Christ*. Anyone who loves his life or his wife more than Christ is not worthy of Christ (Mt 10:37-38; Lk 14:26). My wife is the love of my life, but she is not the supreme love of my life; my Lord Jesus Christ is. Furthermore, I recognize that the love flowing through my wife, and that thereby energizes my life, is ultimately the love of Christ. I love my wife because of the God who loves me through her. My love for my wife spills over into love for God, who is the fountainhead from which her love springs. Even though my life revolves around my wife as my hub, I am her hubby. Yet this hub revolves around the axle—Christ. His love is axillary. We should not confuse the rim with the hub, nor the hub with the axle. Truly, love for my life is ultimately love for myself, as Paul points out. Accordingly, love for Christ is, in turn, love for my wife and ultimately love for myself. Axiomatically, love for an inner circle radiates outward. If Paul can refer to Onesimus as his *very heart* (Phlm 1:12), then surely I can say that *my wife is my life*, without nullifying that *Christ is my life* at a deeper source level (Col 3:4).