



What's in an Anniversary?

Those that truly love have roots that grow towards each other underground. And when all the pretty blossoms have fallen from their branches, they find that they are one tree and not two.—Louis de Bernieres

“... a three-fold cord is not easily broken”—Ecclesiastes 4:12, KJV

Marriage is not just spiritual communion. It is also remembering to take out the trash.—Dr. Joyce Brothers

I had the joyous opportunity last summer to join in with my brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, and their significant others, to celebrate two landmark events: my mother's 80th birthday and my parent's 60th wedding anniversary. The two events, held as one celebration during a family reunion in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, were moments in life we could not imagine missing. As family memories go, the moments were some of the very best.

To focus in on the anniversary event of my parent's celebration, I was truly struck by the duration of *sixty years*. *Sixty years* of marriage together! *Sixty years* is a number hard for me to fully imagine. That is two, full-term, 30-year-mortgages, paid off back-to-back! I readily admit that I feel both deeply blessed and truly amazed by the many ways in which my mother and father's relationship has stood the test of time. Their marriage is a rare relationship by today's standards.

Within our *Plain Truth Ministries* family, my parents have much in common with a number of our team

members as it pertains to wedding anniversaries celebrated. Among our team, we have one couple who will soon celebrate an anniversary of fifty-five years. Three more team members will celebrate forty-nine years, forty-one years, and thirty-seven years of marriage, respectively. And then there is me, the newlywed of our team, who has been married now for nearly one full year.

Needless to say, I respect and appreciate those I am privileged to work alongside each day. The wedding anniversaries they celebrate serve as an inspiration to me.

Most dictionaries define “**anniversary**” as the date an event took place, or an institution was formed, in a previous year in history. Celebrating anniversaries of all types (not just wedding anniversaries) is one of the activities that brings context to our lives. Whether nationally, in celebrating Martin Luther King Jr, for example, his life and work, or the Fourth of July and our national independence (in the U.S.), we mark time each year by putting a focus on such moments.

In a similar way, we give honor and respect to the loved ones in our lives by celebrating the anniversaries of their birth. And certainly, as Christ-followers, we honor, remember, and celebrate our Lord Jesus Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection through the deeply meaningful seasons of Christmas and Easter.

I believe it is the anniversaries we celebrate around our love relationships that bring us the greatest meaning in life. That was certainly true as we celebrated our parent's anniversary together, and will be true for my own one-year

wedding anniversary celebration soon to come. As for my parents, so too for us, we give thanks for the imagery given to us in the book of Ecclesiastes. The imagery of the three-fold cord is a helpful one; with the couple and our Lord Jesus Christ intertwining as one, and serves as a poetic reminder that we are not alone. Our love relationship in, by and with Christ Jesus sets the context for our lives.

As Christ-followers, we trust in the fact that Jesus' roots grow deeply into all aspects of our lives. We know from the **Gospel of John** that Jesus is the vine, and we are his branches. As such, we are one in him and with him. His love indwells us. The love relationship we share and enjoy with him, and the anniversaries we celebrate because of him, sustain us. We learn of his love for us, and for all people, through our marriage to him.

Although the *pretty blossoms* may indeed fall from the *branches* of our lives, to continue the analogy, as we age physically and suffer loss, Christ Jesus never leaves us nor forsakes us. He is the one constant and context in our lives and for our lives, year-after-year. As we age spiritually and celebrate our anniversaries in him, he bears much good fruit in us, for his good pleasure.

Marriage is a spiritual communion. The wedding anniversaries we celebrate mark both time and the truth of that communion. Ultimately, we are the bride of Christ, one with him, and will share this love relationship with him for eternity. The beauty of that truth gives us much to celebrate each day of the year. □

—Ed Dunn