



THE "I OWN YOU" RELATIONSHIP

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How much are we willing to give and give up for love? Does loving someone entitle one person to have exclusive rights over another? Does love allow you to dictate how your loved one should live his life?

In marriage, we pledge our loyalty and fidelity to our spouse. We pledge to give the other our 'troth'. Honestly speaking, I heard this word for the first time while viewing the exchange of marriage vows between Prince William and Kate Middleton (Sigh!). I had to listen to that specific part of their vow about five times on YouTube; then, I looked for the meaning of the word online, searching for the word as I had heard it. Anyway, enough said about it; the word is simply an Archaic, Old English word which means "belief, faith, loyalty".

I also read somewhere that the elegant Kate Middleton had stricken out the word "obey" from her own vows, like her mother-in-law had done in her own marriage vows to Prince Charles. In Miss Middleton's vows, she had chosen to promise "to love, comfort, honor and keep" her husband instead. It was an appropriate choice, for in marriage, the woman should be an equal and not a loyal subject who will obey the husband, not even if he happens to be the heir to the throne. I greatly admire Kate Middleton for her strong, independent spirit.

Marriage is a partnership of souls, a relationship that takes the spouse as an equal. The oft-repeated cliché, "I own you and you own me" (Sounds better in Filipino, though) has become cheesy and smacks of simple ownership of a pet dog or cat. "I own a pet, it's a so-and-so dog specie" has a more justifiable ring to it. We can never "own a partner", unless we happen to keep our partner on a leash and feed her/him Whiskas or Pedigree.

Others might argue that saying the expression is just that, an expression, nothing literal. Why say something if you don't really mean it in the literal sense? Maybe, the relationship is just a figure of speech, after all.

When we are in a relationship, there are certain privileges that we are entitled to. Marriage, in particular, makes us privileged to have the other's complete fidelity. But it does not entitle us to dictate to our partner how they should live each and every aspect of his/her life. We don't have a right to change the other's wardrobe choices, for instance. Respect the partner's choices, make suggestions when asked, don't go about invading the others' privacy unless there is absolutely a reason to do so.

Unmarried couples have even less privileges; this makes undue jealousy and restrictions both unwarranted and uncalled for. Imposing on someone you are not bound to by virtue of marriage is nothing but plain selfishness. Doing so only signifies pet ownership, not love.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why is marriage a partnership and not an ownership?
2. What are the things that can make a spouse feel "suffocated" in marriage?
3. What are your views on marriage?
4. How can someone make sure of a partner's undying loyalty?
5. What would you do if you were married to a partner who feels he "owns" you? Why?