employ some or all of those characteristics in relating to other people in his life space. But our Ephesians passage describes a very special relationship that can exist only between a husband and wife. Let us call it intimacy.

In Ephesians 5:31 we are reminded that a man will leave his father and mother and “be united” (NIV) or “be joined” (KJV) to his wife. Paul uses the same Greek word in Romans 12:9, where he admonishes Christians to “cling to what is good.” The idea comes from Genesis 2:24, the account of the first wedding service. Elsewhere in the Old Testament the Hebrew word is used in phrases such as “I hold fast to your statutes” (Ps. 119:31), “hold fast to the Lord your God” (Joshua 23:8), “Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you” (2 Kings 5:27), and “for as a belt is bound around a man’s waist, so I bound the whole house of Israel” (Jer. 13:11).

All of these portray something of the closeness of the relationship God intends husbands and wives to have. The culmination comes in the statement that “the two will become one flesh” (Eph. 5:31). While this phrase is often taken to refer to the sexual aspect of marriage, it implies much more. It refers to a oneness of the mind and spirit. Husbands and wives are to be able to share with each other on the deepest levels, exposing their innermost thoughts and feelings. They should be able to share their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, their aspirations and discouragements, their loves and hates. I can expect my mate to understand me in a way that no one else but God can. I can let her know me in a way that I would not dare let anyone else. Only my spouse can enter into my deepest self.

It is this intimacy of mind and spirit that lends meaning to the physical intimacy of marriage. God in His great wisdom sought for some way to symbolize and to celebrate the blending of two lives in the closest companionship possible between human beings. The almost unbelievably perfect answer was the sexual act. Here two individuals could truly merge into one with tenderness and caring. It was the Creator’s wedding gift to the father and mother of our race.

There is an ancient Greek myth to the effect that the earth was once populated by beings who were complete in themselves and deemed themselves perfect. In their pride they rebelled against the gods, whereupon the irate Zeus split each of them in half, scattering