

The Parable of the Four Wives

Once upon a time there was a rich King who had four wives.

He loved the **4th** wife the most and adorned her with rich robes and treated her to the finest of delicacies. He gave her nothing but the best.

He also loved the **3rd** wife very much and was always showing her off to neighbouring kingdoms. However, he feared that one day she would leave him for another.

He also loved his **2nd** wife. She was his confidant and was always kind, considerate and patient with him. Whenever the King faced a problem, he could confide in her, and she would help him get through the difficult times.

The King's **1st** wife was a very loyal partner and had made great contributions in maintaining his wealth and kingdom. However, he did not love the first wife. Although she loved him deeply, he hardly took notice of her!

One day, the King fell ill and he knew his time was short. He thought of his luxurious life and feared, "I now have four wives with me, but when I die, I'll be all alone."

Thus, he asked the **4th** wife, "I loved you the most, endowed you with the finest clothing, and showered great care over you. Now that I'm dying, will you follow me and keep me company?" "No way!" replied the 4th wife, and she walked away without another word. Her answer cut like a sharp knife right into his heart.

The sad King then asked the **3rd** wife, "I loved you all my life. Now that I'm dying, will you follow me and keep me company?" "No!", replied the 3rd wife. "Life is too good! When you die, I'm going to remarry!" His heart sank and turned cold.

He then asked the **2nd** wife, "I have always turned to you for help and you've always been there for me. When I die, will you follow me and keep me company?" "I'm sorry, I can't help you out this time!", replied the 2nd wife. "At the very most, I can only walk with you to your grave." Her answer struck him like a bolt of lightning. The King was devastated.

Then a voice called out: "I'll go with you. I'll follow you no matter where you go." The King looked up, and there was his **1st** wife. She was emaciated and unkempt from malnutrition and neglect. Greatly grieved, the King admitted, "I should have taken much better care of you when I had the chance!"

In truth, we all have the 4 wives in our lives:

Our 4th wife is our **body**. No matter how much time and effort we lavish in making it look good, it will leave us when we die.

Our 3rd wife is our **possessions**, status and wealth. When we die, it will all go to others.

Our 2nd wife is our **family** and **friends**. No matter how much they have been there for us, the furthest they can stay by us is up to the grave.

And our 1st wife is our **soul**, often neglected in pursuit of wealth, power and pleasures of the world. However, our soul is the only thing that will follow us wherever we go. Cultivate, strengthen and cherish it now, for it is the only part of us that will follow us to the throne of God and continue with us throughout Eternity.

This parable is attributed to Gautama Buddha (~2500 B.C.), who said the 1st wife is one's karma. (See <http://www.sinc.sunysb.edu/Clubs/buddhism/story/fourwives.html>.) Note, however, that this comes from someone who does not believe in God and who left his wife and child to go on a spiritual quest. <http://buddhism.kalachakranet.org/buddha.html>. (Beware profanity on that page.)