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When Independence is Bad

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When Independence is Bad

Viola Walker was far from an avid angler, but she did go fishing with her husband, Louis, several times after they were married. Then, after three trips to the same trout stream and enduring her husband's complaints that she scared the fish away, Viola gave up the fishing business.

Viola's interest was community projects and current events. She became deeply involved in these activities. Then, after one fishing trip, Louis talked about a "genuine fisherwoman" who had been in their crowd, and Viola felt a pang of jealousy. And she was hurt when he said he couldn't stay home to watch her debate the new expressway route on television because he was meeting his fishing friends, including "Lady Walton."

Viola forgot her marital disappointment when the debate on TV waxed warm and the friendly argument continued over a pot of coffee in the studio lunchroom. She found it pleasant to be with men and women who kept their fingers on the day's pulse, not wasting time playing water tag with a fish.

Gradually the Walker home became a neutral meeting place for two people whose worlds had spun into separate orbits. Neither bothered the other with the details of their lives, and each said it was nice that way.

One night Viola accused Louis of paying more attention to the lady angler than to the fish. He vigorously denied it.

"I believe we were married for keeps," he said in our first interview. "But I do wish she'd take more interest in me."

It had not occurred to him that he gave her interests no thought.

Viola had no desire for divorce, either. She recognized that she had allowed her activities to cover the emptiness of her life. Marriage to the Walkers had become a democratic institution in which each member felt free to maintain his independence.

In time, Viola and Louis came to see that if their marriage was to continue they would have to lose their independence in a union bigger than either of them. They found ways to spend time together. It is the principle of Matthew 16:25 applied to

marriage: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.”

[Dr. Henry Brandt shares insights from various couples he counseled. The names and certain details in these true case histories have been changed to protect each person’s identity and privacy.]