

Therefore *SHALL* a Man *LEAVE* His Father and Mother...

If you are like me, you are feeling a bit relieved to get past some of the tough stuff and come to the next few verses. In Genesis 2: 24-25, we see a command that makes a world of difference in whether the marriage has struggles or moves toward becoming all that God has designed for it to be. What is the first command in verse 24?

Why do you think that God specifically addresses this when Adam and Eve did not have parents?

Why do you think it is necessary to address this at all?

Why do you think this command was addressed to the man?

What problems could develop with a spouse that does not *leave* his or her parents?

One of the hardest things for a person to do is to *leave, cut the cord*, and unite with his/her spouse. This is probably because until that time most rely on parents to meet their needs and to

provide for them. Marriage is usually the very first time that most people learn to rely and depend totally on God for all that they need. For the wife, she must learn to transfer her dependence and reliance from her parents, usually more so her father, to her husband. At the same time, her husband is actually learning to lean totally upon God to lead, provide, and protect them instead of depending and relying upon his own parents to help him when times get tough. This is a crash course on marriage that simply cannot be learned until you are in the thick of the life lessons. However, this is a pivotal time in the marriage as each leaves their parents and joins together as one new entity. Without leaving, the couple is not able to seal together as one.

I think that this is kinda funny, but the first real struggle that Harold and I had as we began our marriage was the difficulty of leaving our parents, our homes, and becoming our own family. I remember having to practice writing "Cindy Rushton" instead of "Cindy Gunter." It was as strange then to write "Cindy Rushton" as it is now to write "Cindy Gunter." It was also very difficult to figure out how we were going to blend together to become one when we were clearly two separate people from two completely different families. But, even more difficult was the strong pull toward our families before we had fully become our own family. We never struggled with running to them for financial assistance or any personal problems, but we did find that it was really hard NOT to want to run to them when decisions had to be made. It was VERY hard not to allow them to interfere. It was almost impossible NOT to allow for them to control and run our home when we were so accustomed to obeying them. To balance honoring and obeying as we crossed into marriage, was a challenge. It was hard!

It was hard for our parents too. I think that this may be one reason that this passage includes this command for Adam and Eve. I see this time as the very first wedding ceremony. It is probably the most precious of all ceremonies since the whole institution began during this particular wedding. In this ceremony, God performed the ceremony giving a clear picture of what marriage would be for them AND for all of their descendents, which includes us.

Nothing is harder for a parent than letting their child go, cutting the cord. Few things are more difficult for the child than letting go. But, if a marriage is to succeed, all involved must guard the union by obeying God's command and offering others the support needed to make marriage great!

Cleave Unto His Wife...

Cleave...become one...this is where it gets simply awesome! This is the single greatest key to a satisfying, passionate, life-long love affair between husband and wife. But...WHAT is cleaving and HOW do you do it? Buckle up, you are going to enjoy this part!

Look up the word *cleave*, record the definition below...

According to the *Vine's Dictionary*, the word *cleave* comes from the Hebrew word *dabaq* meaning, "to cling, cleave, keep close, to stick to, to adhere to."

As a noun the translation means "glue, loyalty, devotion, affection." *Vine's Dictionary* further describes the word's translation into the words "loyalty, devotion, affection" as the following, "The figurative use of *dabaq* in the sense of "loyalty" and "affection" is based on the physical closeness of the persons involved, such as a husband's closeness to his wife..."

In Greek, *cleave* comes from the word *kollao* which means *to join fast together, to glue, to cement, joined.*

Going back to Genesis, armed with this definition, what is God's desire for the man and woman as He commands for the man to *cleave* to his wife?

I don't know about you, but I love the picture that comes to my mind of marriage as a relationship in which God commands the man and woman to *cleave* to one another.

As a newlywed, I hate to admit it, but my faults and my temptation has never been to commit adultery. I was completely sickened by its ramifications as I saw the devastation of my parent's marriage. I have always sought to be giving, loyal, and a real helper to my husband. Submission has also been a priority from the beginning of my marriage, so much so, that I joke that with me EVERYTHING is a submission issue! I have always wanted to be a pleasing wife, a blessing to my husband, so the temptation to run the show has not ever been something that I have desired.

So, where has satan found a weakness in my resolve and commitment to the covenant of marriage? You guessed right, of course, unless you thought that I was just chasing a rabbit and added in a point

on **HOMEMAKING** in this section! ☺ Yes! My temptation has been to bail out, run away, just take Harold out of his misery and **LEAVE!**

Leaving is great IF it is in connection with our parents...remember the last section? But, IF we are to have the marriage that God has planned from the foundation of the world, we simply cannot have anywhere in our vocabulary the words leave, divorce, quit. Our resolve must be to *cling* to one another when the tough times hit. Those are the times that we must stick together **CLOSE, like glue or cement**. Even in the good times, if we are to make it in the bad times, we must have *a pattern of intimacy* that is what we are! Our everyday life must never be allowed to crowd out the intimacy, affection, devotion, and loyalty of our relationship. Instead, each day should grow us a little (or a lot!) bit closer together.

What do you think is the tendency in most marriages?

How about your marriage? What are you doing to build intimacy? To stick closer together?

What are some ways that you could add a bit of super-glue to your marriage?

When Harold and I married, it was only 4 months into our marriage that I conceived Matthew. A couple of months after our first anniversary, we had a permanent three-some, well until we added Elisabeth to our little clan only 3 years later. As we look back over our marriage, we would definitely have the children soon into our marriage. The benefits are awesome at this age since they are old enough now for US to date (note that they are now teens and **ASLEEP!!**)!

We have no regrets with beginning our family young, except that I do wish that I had known in the very early years that the greatest gift we can give our children, the one that they want the most in life, is for their parents to stick together and stay passionately in love forever. I knew this from the devastation of my parents' divorce. But, there have been times that I have not known how to carry it out. This is where we come to the rest of this passage.

Become One Flesh...

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife and they were not ashamed. Genesis 2: 24-25

Take a look at the last phrase in verse 24 through the 25th verse.

Becoming ONE... Remember as you began your marriage? Maybe you are beginning it now. There are so many changes that occur as we crash into our roles as husband and wife. We come from two different families, with two different lives however parallel we find them, with two different personalities, and to top that off, we are male and female as God created us to be. WHEW! No wonder God had to command man and woman to BECOME one flesh.

The word *become* is a word we commonly THINK we understand, but its meaning in this passage is simply wonderful, much deeper than at first glance. The word means, *"to be conspicuous among a number, to be eminent, DISTINGUISHED BY A THING, to be becoming, seemly, fit."*

Becoming is not instant. In fact, *becoming* is a very long process. The picture here is not becoming uniform, but uniting. There is no loss of individuality, if anything, there is incredible growth as an individual that has depth in this new identity with their covenant partner. There are still two individuals, mutually accepting one another, giving to one another, listening and supporting one another, forgiving any and all offenses and rough edges, belonging to one another, building one another. Yet! Also, *becoming*, or being known for and distinguished as *one* entity, incomplete without the other. Two parts as one indissoluble union. One author likens the relationship to a pair of scissors. Each individually moves in different directions, yet when they come together attain a goal and complete the work set aside for them.

What are we becoming? This passage specifically states, *"one flesh."* In this word, we get several meanings... *flesh, flesh and bone, blood, blood relative, near of kin, male sex organ, the substance of the body, the totality of all that is essential to manhood (i.e. spirit, soul, and body), natural relationship.*

Now, with those definitions in mind, what do you think is meant in this passage?

Becoming one flesh is also described in Matthew 19: 4-6 and Ephesians 5: 25-33. Using these verses, further define the meaning of becoming one flesh... (You may want to look these up in the Amplified

Version, they are GREAT!)

Getting a game-plan? Seeing why so many marriages fail? See the reason that few marriages are full of a fiery passion for life?

Many marriages are failing out of pure selfishness. A man and a woman enter into marriage. The flowers fade and the new wears off. He steals the covers. She talks in her sleep. He never calls from work. She would rather sleep than spend time with him. Each expects the other to meet their needs. The union that was intended to bring the greatest joy and satisfaction, actually becomes a "stand-off." Even those that go into marriage with a heart to pour their whole lives out for the other often find themselves in a marriage with a real-live-kicking-and-breathin (OK! Breathe) With bad-breath-in-the-morning-very-selfish partner (as least this is the viewpoint in the heat of disagreement!). What begins as a joy and delight in the courtship, dwindles away into resentment, and ultimately bitterness and complete isolation. This certainly does not lead to unity or becoming one-flesh. As matter of fact, what we have in the best cases are lots of fights, strife, or cold-shoulder treatments and in the worse cases, abuse or a case in the local divorce court.

Been there? Now, I am not asking if you have been in divorce court, but have you wanted so much to have a "perfect" marriage that you have tried **too hard**? You have gotten tired and weary...past the point of wanting to try anymore. Maybe you have been like me in the past. I remember God confronting me lovingly about my hard-to-please standards. Being a LOVER of the Bible and wanting to do everything *just right*, I found that my husband just did not seem to know ENOUGH about the Bible and seemed a little brain-dead on hearing and doing what *I thought* God would want for him and our family to do. I decided to give God a little help, person-to-person, as Harold's personal *holy spirit*. Before I confess ALL...have you been there? You know, helping them out a bit? Confronting them with their sin? Bringing guilt before their eyes? Exhorting them to recommit to the Lord? Hehe!

I remember one day that I was riding down the road by myself. We were building our home at that time so I often had errands to run for him AND I had plenty of complaints about his pre-occupation with the house and his job and lack of focus on *me* and *what I wanted*. If God could have been more verbal, I would only have a tape recording of His words to me that day. I was grumbling my head off to God about what Harold was doing (wrong) and what he wasn't doing (right). Being "*in touch*" with God so clearly myself (hehe!), I pled my case before Him. First, He began His gentle, but to the point correction by showing me a picture of Him trying to get to Harold to have a relationship with him, but I was in the way. He said, "*Cindy, I cannot say a word to him for you being in the way...I do not need you as his 'holy spirit' for his life...if you will take care of seeking me YOURSELF in the areas that YOU need to grow, I will take care of Harold. When you match up to 1 Peter 3, COMPLETELY, we can discuss this again.*"

I went home and dug into the passage. Take a look at it yourself now. This is going to be GOOD!

I have written in my Bible that this passage includes "*Essentials for Developing the Hidden Woman of the Heart.*" There is much, much more to who we are than what is on the outside. In fact, God shares all throughout Scripture and in all areas of our lives that HE looks at the inside of US. When we get the Hidden Person right with Him, all else falls into place, including our intimacy and passion in marriage.

List the things that God commands for the woman to BE and DO...

BE	DO

How do you think your husband would respond if you attained ALL of these things?

How do you think that these things could *cement* or *glue* your marriage together?

This passage also says clearly that as a woman lives this kind of a godly life, her husband EVEN if he lives in sin, will be WON by the manner of her life. How do you think that these areas being developed in a wife would contribute to winning a husband's heart for you? For God?

One for Life...

As I shared above, one of the greatest gifts that we can give our children, the culture, or even one another is a relationship that *becomes* more and more passionately in love each day. This is that mystery described in Ephesians 5: 32.

We decided a long time ago that we wanted what my little girl describes as a "Mamaw and Papaw" relationship. As a family, we all know what she means because we could never imagine Mamaw and Papaw without each other. None of us can even envision what they were like or how they felt before they became one flesh. It is just too farfetched of an idea. They were each other's life. They were each other's best friend. Their relationship was *exclusive* with one another for over 60 years, but the overflow was felt by all they knew.

Mamaw and Papaw gave us a picture of two people in a covenant relationship with a passionate marriage until the day that death parted them. Why...I would even bet (if I were a betting person!!) that they are in heaven right now holding hands, talking their heads off, occasionally stealing a big smooch! Their sixty-plus years yielded all of the fruits of a godly home. They grew in Christ together. They grew in age, but never lost that physical and spiritual attraction for one another. They grew together with sweet memories that have since become a legacy for their entire family. When I think of them, I think of a woman who laid down her life for her husband. He WAS her priority, her only one. Everything else in life had to revolve around her commitment and ministry to him. He laid down his life for her. She was his true helper: his completer, his best friend, his cheerleader, his lover, the mother of his children, the keeper of his home, his credentials for leadership at home, church, and in the public.

I personally cannot imagine Mamaw and Papaw BEFORE marriage. Even at her funeral, the Lord spoke to me as I watched Papaw weep bitterly over his loss and heaven's gain. In one breath, he once again knew loneliness. He was no longer complete. He no longer had his helpmeet by his side. The fullness of his life was now punctured by a void that seemed to grow greater until his death...and their blessed reunion.

As a young married wife, I purposed to have a "Mamaw and Papaw" relationship. You will enjoy this one. The other day my little girl told me that when Harold and I look at each other, "it is like a Mamaw/Papaw thing!" I knew exactly what she was talking about and it was the greatest compliment I have ever gotten!

How about you? How have you "*become one flesh*" since your marriage?

Which areas seem to be blaring out, needing attention, as you read the definition and the description of Mamaw and Papaw?

What are some things you can do TODAY to add a little spark of passion to your relationship so you can show your husband anew how precious it is to be ONE with him?

As the years have gone by, we have had times that we have both failed miserably in this area and drifted apart into our own little worlds. There have been times that we have gotten too busy for one another. There have been other times when one of us has craved just a bit of attention from the other while the other has been consumed with the tares of life. It has taken a concentrated game plan for us to become one. It has not all happened in a day, in fact, it seems to undo a bit unless we decide each and every day to become more and more one, more and more open.

I think that Harold and I have both gotten better and better at this. We have made romance and developing a "Super-glue" marriage a priority for each day. He has learned how to nourish, carefully protect, cherish, and challenge me spiritually. He has learned how to take the "girl" stuff that he will NEVER understand. I have learned how to respond, protect, encourage, respect, and romance him! I have learned and I am continuing to learn how the "guy brain" thinks and at times, doesn't think! We have learned together how to leave our parents as two separate pieces, join in union together, and stick like glue as our Covenant God molds us into one flesh.

We make a priority each day to do little things that let each other know that if we were at the altar all over again, our answer would be, "WE STILL DO!"

A Call for Me and for You...

Harold and I were married only 4 months when God did one of the most pivotal things in my entire life. I had been raised about as "in the church" as any human being could be, except for maybe Samuel who lived there from the time he was three. Actually if you count that my parents were saved when I was two, maybe there was MORE church influence in my life than even Samuel had!

My parents sought to give me ALL as they raised me and my two siblings. One of the things that they wanted to give me was a happy home. And...they were a success. I have precious memories of the little things that made my family very, very special while giving me an identity as a "Gunter."

I have already shared that only 2 years before I married my parents divorced. It was as much a surprise to me as it was to those in my hometown and our little country church. They had so much going for them. They were absolutely adorable as a couple. Yet...as we get honest, brutally honest, we find that there were some bad seeds that had been planted that grew into a relationship with so many weeds that it smothered in the midst of the heat that hit. The home fell apart. The security of all that I had known as FAMILY and MARRIAGE disintegrated before my very eyes.

The two years following their divorce were some of the toughest and loneliest times of my life. Even though neither of them ever wanted for me or my siblings to suffer at all because of their decisions, I still did. I felt a constant pull between them. You have to understand how close we were as a family to comprehend the full devastation and the subsequent strain on all of us. My mother was always my best friend in life. I knew that I was her best friend (well, my sister and brother would beg to differ). As her daughter, I had to watch first-hand much heartache that she walked through as her marriage crashed before her. If that is not incredibly tough for a young woman preparing to be a godly wife and mother, I was also "born and bred" to be my Daddy's girl.

I know some girls seem to feel a distance from their fathers during the teen years, but it seemed as though these were the very best years of our relationship. I no longer spit-up or pottied in my pants. It made me quite a delight in my Daddy's eyes! ☺ Not to mention, we spent my teen years having some of the most life-changing conversations of my life. Our only struggle in our whole relationship of a whole bunch of years (guess you thought I would slip here! Hehe!) centered around the 6-month period after the divorce. Dad left me with enough room to let God teach me and bring me to a point of forgiveness and willingness for restoration, then embraced me as his precious darling once again.

I don't know what it was, but I guess I assumed because my relationship with my parents was the same, if not better, that the ramifications of the divorce were over and would not affect *me*. Well, if the things that caused the divorce were not an issue in *my* marriage. Funny? Oh, I made my list of all they had done and not done, checked it twice, and implemented it as insurance against adultery or divorce ever plaguing my home. The fruit of divorce in *my* home would be my determination to be the perfect wife and mother.

Do you relate? What was your idea of how to become a godly wife?

How is your perspective different now?

I have no idea where you are coming from...if you relate and are clinging for *the rest of the story* or if you are thinking that this is the craziest thing you have ever heard. I CAN guarantee that none of you began your marriage wanting to be one of the divorce statistics or one of the cases that funded the Christmas celebration for an entire family of a good divorce lawyer. Divorces do not happen overnight. Adultery does not just happen. Miserable marriages are not accidental. It all takes work. Just as a great marriage does. What things have you done that have "worked" against your marriage?

Likewise, I am sure you have found some great ways to build a good marriage. List a few of them below...

Divorces do not happen overnight. Adultery does not just happen. Miserable marriages are not an accident. It ALL takes work. Just as a great marriage does! That brings me back to God's miracle that was pivotal in my life.

We had been married only four months when some of my friends at church invited Harold and I to join them in a trip to a marriage seminar. I had never even heard of marriage seminars, much less gone. I was in store for the biggest treat of my life AND a call to the ministry that you now see all of these years later.

As I sat in the seminar, I felt as though the whole world had stopped. I had thought I understood the commitment that I made at the altar on my wedding day. My pastor had sure explained it to me in the weeks of pre-marital counseling. I had read EVERY wedding planner. But, beloved, I heard things in that seminar that I had NEVER heard taught in my life.

I know I was clear to explain above that I was brought up in church. I was brought up in a Christian home. But, I had never in my entire life EVER heard that God had a plan for marriage! As I sat there, it must have been a scene! I remember the first time the teacher mentioned the "s" word. I was not too offended. I had NO idea what SUBMISSION meant, so I was OK until she began to define the word! My response was, "SUBMISSION! Do What?!" There was more! She shared what the Bible had to say about communication and about how my husband needed for *me* to listen to him, really listen! Oops! I thought she was REALLY getting personal...and then! Bam! I heard the part that really took me to my knees! She took us through Scripture to look at the role of a godly helpmeet! I remember little else...except how my heart was racing to just get home to talk with Harold.

He was such a great guy! He was *everything* I could ever want in a man, a husband, and the father of my children (even though we did not have any yet!). I was a bit more of a handful! He had never complained one bit. We did not argue. I pouted a bit when I wanted something, but we never argued because we were just "*soooo in love!*" I had no idea that HE had needs or desires that I needed to nurture and provide. I had no idea that marriage was so much work!

That evening I remember sitting on the floor while he leaned back in the chair to hear my night's lesson. I began to pour out all I learned, then I began weeping as I confessed to him the sin that God convicted me of during the teaching. In his gentle manner, he pulled me close and assured me that *he had NOT noticed!* (Well, he more than has noticed a few times the last 16 years! The lesson and my heart to keep stepping heavenward has been needed more than he would think during those honeymoon months.) Encouraged, instead of overwhelmed, I went back the next day to absorb all I could.

As I look back, that weekend was a pivotal moment in my life. I am almost positive that even with my great intentions, our marriage was at risk to become a statistic. Had God not seized my heart, that *hidden part of my heart*, that weekend, I am not sure I would have had any conscience about my role as a helpmeet for Harold. In fact, the way I was going, blinded to all of my faults and all of the damage I was doing in little and big ways, I am not sure ANY human could have tolerated me for even a year!

That is not all, at that seminar the next day, I sat in between sessions in the sanctuary of that little country church. I was going through my notes while I spoke to God in my heart. I told Him that I was so sorry for failing. I asked Him WHY I had never heard some of this. I tried to recall the sermons that I had heard all of my life, but for the life of me, I could not remember ANY that got down to the nitty-gritty of a woman's role based on Scripture. I cried out to God for more information, for more help. I begged Him to raise up teachers of these good things. It was then that it all happened. I heard Him gently speak back. "*WHY don't YOU study My Word to see what I have to say about Biblical Womanhood. Make it your quiet time each day.*" Now, I thought that was

EASY...certainly more than OK! Then, He spoke the vision to me, *"I want for YOU to be one of those teachers to teach what you learn...Will you?"* Having no idea what it would entail later, that you would be reading these very life lessons, I said *"YES! Lord. Use me! BUT! Teach me first!"*

Beloved, I have to tell you that there is nothing like God's plan for women! It is so very awesome! It is so very fulfilling! How has God worked in YOUR life to bring you to this point of learning HIS plan for you as a wife, a mother, a godly woman?

What are you going to do with all that you have learned? Will you make changes? What will be different now?

I have no idea where your marriage is at this time. You may be completely content. Bliss is THE WORD! Your husband may be in heaven from the moment he opens his eyes with you at his side each day until the moment he contentedly drifts off to sleep all snuggled up with you. OR, you may be face-down on the ground weeping at this moment in a huge pile of rubbish that has resulted from your efforts up-to-date. Beloved, I have been on both ends. I assure you that it is never too early or late for you to begin building a great marriage. The only difference in a great marriage and one that fails is when you quit. When you settle for second best.

I beg of you now to step up to the call. Commit to the call that has been crying out to you from the foundation of the earth. If there are changes to be made, even tough changes, KNOW you can do it with God! Seek God! Seek God's Holy Spirit to show you step-by-step how HE wants for you to change and what He sees as best for your marriage. Let Him do the work in your spouse. Oh! It is ALL worth it! The intimacy is worth it. The oneness is worth it. The strength is worth it. The legacy is more than worth it. So, won't you go for it?

Ministering To The Heart of Your Child...

My earliest memories in life go way back (don't laugh!) to sitting in church next to my mother, all snuggled up close to her. There was nothing quite like sitting close to Mama. As I look back over my school years, there was never a day just like any other. Yet, one thing that always stayed the same was that I could count on coming home to a surprise treat from my Mama. Now, as an adult, there are fewer luxuries on earth as grand as going home and smelling Mama's busy kitchen and devouring the goodies that she lovingly prepares just for me! Is there anything quite like a Mother? No, well... except a Daddy!

Take a look at Proverbs 14: 1. Which do you want to be: wise or foolish? Building your home? Or tearing your home down?

I suppose you choose wise...and to be a builder? True? ____

I would venture to guess that there has never been a woman who set forth to tear her home down. I would assume (and probably be correct!) that there is not a woman who has looked into the eyes of her child and decisively chosen to destroy her child. So, where do we go wrong? I believe that this is an area in which Satan chooses to wage relentless war. Felt it?

Of course. From the foundation of the world, a battle has been waging. Take a peek at Genesis 3:14-15. As a part of the curse, what do you see as satan's foe? As satan's target?

Yes, beloved, Satan's greatest foe will be your seed, your children. As a result, take him serious. He KNOWS his foe and they ARE his ultimate target. Likewise, take a peek at Malachi 2: 13-17. In this passage we find that one of the reasons that God's people were struggling was that they were disobedient. When God was asked why, He gave many reasons here. One of which was that they had

betrayed their marriage covenant and were separating and divorcing. Take a closer look at this passage to see why this was so serious with God. What is His desire from marriage?

Yes! Godly offspring! But! Beloved Godly offspring do not just happen. We must build our children. As Hidden Women our hearts must be set upon the call to minister to the hearts of our children.

Have no idea where to begin? That is what this section of the study is all about!

"He will feed His flock like a shepherd: He will gather the lambs in His arm, He will carry them in His bosom and will gently lead those that have their young."

Isaiah 40: 11 Amplified

Lord, Begin With Me...

"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings...Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Malachi 4: 2, 5-6

Where are you as a mother? Where is your heart?

Are you in NEED of this precious healing in your family? What are some trouble areas that you are struggling with today?

Maybe your children are just little ones... Maybe your children are teens and you have made a few mistakes along the way... Maybe your children are grown, with children of their own... It is never too late. Your situation is never too far gone. God is calling out to you today to come to Him for healing. He wants to teach you how to LOVE your children. He wants for you to learn how to minister to their hearts! Commit now to learn of Him. Your family will never be the same!

Where is Your Heart??

Is your heart HOME? How do we know if our heart is turned toward our husbands, children, and homes? One of the greatest tests will be our focus.

If our heart is turned homeward, our primary focus will be upon our ministry *to our family*. Ministry to *our own family* is the main thing! Ministry to *our own family* is the one thing that is eternal!

Take a look 1 Corinthians 3: 13-15. Time is so short here on earth. What we do *must* count for eternity. What we do *must* be able to withstand the fire. Can you imagine this day that we will be standing before our Lord? Write your thoughts as you look at this passage...

Let's go there together. Imagine for a moment the scene: *All* that you have ever done... good and bad ...excellent and half-hearted ...seen and unseen ...*all* being brought with you and piled in a great big bonfire!

...Your precious service at church

...Your hours of meals that you have lovingly prepared

...Those precious moments at home with your little ones sharing loving words about God

...All that you have written

...All that you have said

...All those moments reading to our children

...All of the words read to them

...Moments playing

...Moments working

...Attitudes

...Desires

...*All* on the altar!

Then, imagine a great fire with all of your precious life up in flames.

Those things that you were *sure* God had led you to do frizzling away to nothing. Those little things turning into pure stones to present before your Father. Those precious lives that we touched becoming crowns full of jewels that we may present before our Lord.

The fire rages as you see the value of *all* in your life. What remains? What is left to present to the Father?

This life is *so* short!

Look up James 4: 14. How short is life?

For this reason, we need to evaluate *all* that we do based upon God's call for our life. Are the things that you are doing *really* your own call? Are you tending someone else's garden? Is what you are doing *really* counting?

One thing will not pass away! One thing will stand through the fire! That precious call of womanhood! The effort will not be wasted! It will not bring loss! Yes, motherhood will lay aside TRUE TREASURES! Want to be a Hidden Woman? Focus your heart on the ETERNAL!

Know YOUR Value...Would the PERFECT Mother Please Step Forward???

Do you ever feel overwhelmed as you look at this awesome call of womanhood? Do you ever question your qualifications and abilities? Do you ever wonder how others get things to just work out fine while you are still struggling over the most mundane areas of life?

How about the great women in Scripture... Do you think they really *knew* the power of motherhood? Do you think they ever felt that their calling was too great of a burden or did they just step up to the call with confidence and absolute perfection? Do you think they had any idea *how great* their children would one day be when they were in the midst of those **temper tantrums** and **character building lessons** or did they ever find themselves wanting to *choke* their little darlings?

Think about it...

- ♥ **Eve...** Do you think that Eve had any idea of the fruit of her womb? Do you think she knew that she was the Mother of *all* living? Do you think she had a big enough vision to envision the heritage that was before her? Would it have made a difference in her choices when she faced temptation?
- ♥ **Jochebed...** We know that she treasured her little Moses...But do you think that she had *any* idea that she was nursing the "*deliverer*" of her people? The one her people had asked of the Lord? Do you think she *knew* how powerful her calling as a mother would be as it affected the life of this young man?
- ♥ **Sarah...** In those lonely, desperate years of infertility and waiting for the appointed time of promise, do you think that she had any idea that her little boy would be the first child of an *entire* nation? The mighty nation of Israel? The beginning of the lineage of Christ? A man known for centuries as a man of great faith? Do you think that she really believed that God could go beyond the impossible to the incredible?
- ♥ **Ruth...** Do you think that in the midst of her grief as she mourned the loss of her dear husband and kept a commitment to his family to stay and care for his mother come-what-may that she could fathom the plan of God? Do you think that she could have ever imagined that *she* would be chosen to continue to lineage of Christ?
- ♥ **Hannah...** Do you think those childless days full of torment would have been easier if she had known how God would answer her heart-cry to Him? Would she have rested easier if she had known that she was just waiting on the perfect time and perfect situation for the little baby that God would one-day use as the prophet of Israel? Yes, her little baby would be...the same prophet whose **prayers** were *heard* by God in a day that "*the word of the Lord was precious*" because "*there was no open vision.*" Actually that was an understatement. Scripture says that, "*NONE of his words fell to the ground,*" "*the Lord was WITH him,*" and "*the Lord REVEALED HIMSELF to Samuel.*" Do you think Hannah knew that she was being brought to the point of complete surrender so that her son could become a man who had power in prayer and power in his relationship with God? In those tender things that she did (staying home with him enjoying every minute with him until it was time to give him back to the Lord...consistently visiting him while he was at the temple...bringing him a little coat each and every

year), do you think she had any idea that she was nurturing the **mentor** of a mighty king?? Do you think that she had a vision for the power of a mother's influence that not only affects the lives of one person, but continues to affect many, many more that are never seen or known?

- ♥ **Bathsheba**... Talk about scandal! The King's mistress. A co-conspirator in the murder of her husband. Do you think in the embarrassment and humiliation that Bathsheba could even imagine that *even* she could be used by God? Can you just imagine the heartache as this young girl found herself with child, the child of an affair? Can you imagine the pain as the child's life was taken leaving this woman with a pain that words cannot express? Do you think she had any idea that God could and would *still* use her to become a godly wife and mother? Do you think she could imagine the splendor that awaited her son as he ruled in wisdom for the glory of God?
- ♥ **Mary**... Do you think she had any idea of what God was doing in her life? That she would be the mother of the Messiah? Our Saviour? Our Lord? The Great I AM? Do you think she saw the great privilege, the great power, the holy moments that were all part of her calling when she began to endure the stares...the whispers...the quiet giggles? Do you think she had any idea of what God would be doing through the life of her child to bring hope, peace, and true salvation to the entire world?

Do you think that these women had any idea that their children would shape the world...be used mightily by God...and still teach and minister to the lives of others centuries after they lived?

Did they have a vision for all God could do through them? Why do you think this?

Did they know the power of motherhood? Do you think they knew it all of the time? Why do you say this?

My thoughts... Hummm...I think that they were moms just like you and me. They battled with day-to-day demands that often blurred their vision. They had moments that were lost, never to return again. They had no idea of the way God would work in the lives of their children. In fact, I would imagine that they all have quite a **list of regrets** and **things that they would do differently**. I am sure that they struggled with the tremendous call of motherhood just as much as we do today. How about you? Do you miss it at times?

Do you have a list of regrets? What are some of them?

What are some things you would do differently?

What are some things you would like to do different now?

Think about it...We are given such a tremendous calling. We are loaned a soul! A soul to teach. A soul to train. A soul to lead. A soul to guide. A soul to love. A soul to nurture. A soul to care for. A soul to enjoy. A soul to mother!

The task gets overwhelming! The vast importance of motherhood looks too tough! Nurturing and encouraging the children to become all that God has planned for them, with their gifts, talents, bents, and capabilities, is too tremendous of a calling! There is so much power in our influence. And... are we worthy of this call? Are we qualified? Overwhelmed??? There is GREAT News! God already knows who we are! He already knows that we, like our dear Bible friends, are the perfect Mothers for our children. He knows our past. He knows our present. He knows our future. He knows our strengths. He knows our weaknesses. He knows every single thing that we have done right...and He knows every mistake along the way. He STILL chooses us! Our ideas of the perfect mother may not be His!

Yep! You Too!

Want REAL encouragement??? Turn to Matthew 1: 1-17. Take a look at the women listed there in the geneology of Jesus Christ. Let me help by giving you a little background on each of them:

- ♥ **Tamar**...widow (2 times); childless; incestuous background BY HER CHOICE!
- ♥ **Rahab**...prostitute (known prostitute...EVEN God documents it in His Word SEVERAL times!); bad upbringing; bad family!
- ♥ **Ruth**...widow left without children; bad upbringing; bad family; idolator
- ♥ **"Uriah's Wife"**...committed adultery WITH the King; conceived a child in the midst of her adulterous relationship; assisted in murdering her own husband to cover it up!
- ♥ **Mary**...young, little insignificant girl from an insignificant place...a virgin with child (need I say more???) !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

God NOT ONLY used them...but He called them faithful and listed them specifically in the lineage of Jesus!

What about you? Where have you been? What is your secret? What have you done? Who has stared at you in disgust and judgment? Do you find that you would really rather not have your story written because you are not quite sure you want others to know that you came from a family such as yours? Would you rather hide away in obscurity not sharing your deepest, darkest secrets? Would you rather forget those moments when you made those mistakes that still send shivers all over your body as you feel the pang of humiliation and disappointment in the depths of your heart? Do you think that God surely can't use you...that He has made a mistake choosing you as a mother of your precious children...and that you are not sure you are up for the call even now?

There is one great thing about our great God...He can use any of us! There is no one with a past that is too bad for God's grace to redeem. There is no one so insignificant that God can't make great! **Actually**, God specializes in taking the smallest, most insignificant little people to the greatest, most spectacular heights! What do you think that God wants to do with YOU?

Do you believe He can? Why or why not?

There is no sin so great that God's grace is not greater. **Actually**, God specializes in taking the greatest of sinners and turning them into the greatest of all saints! Yes, if you are a woman with a questionable past, **know** that God can use women of questionable pasts for His plan...and He has chosen you! Has this been your excuse? How will you respond today?

God can use any of us!

Running away from your calling because of your load of excuses? Beloved, KNOW! God already knows and He still wants you! Nothing you have done. Nowhere you have been. Nothing, **absolutely nothing**, can hinder you from being used by God. He can make you into the perfect vessel for His purpose!

Why this focus in a section on mothering? I believe that it is crucial that we know that of all of the ministry opportunities in the whole world, only YOU can be the mother to your child. You are the only one God can use for this position. If you run from it, it will not get done. If you neglect it, your child's soul is in the balance. I KNOW beloved how overwhelming it is to be a mother and have this deep responsibility upon me. I also know all of the excuses that I have made in my own life. If God can use me, I want for you to know that **HE will** make you into the perfect vessel for His purpose.

You may think "*I am DEFINITELY not the perfect mother!*" Yet beloved, God sees you much more differently than you see yourself. He sees you **IN Christ**...complete...covered by the blood of Christ...perfect! He does not expect for you to do anything by yourself!

How does this change your view? Have you been making excuses just to keep away from your calling?

How does this comfort you?

What do you think God wants to do in and through you? Will you say yes with no excuses?

Great comfort!

- ♥ We can go to God, JUST as we are!
- ♥ He is willing to take us in just as we are.
- ♥ He loves to be our Teacher to give us the foundation we need to become a Biblical woman.
- ♥ He loves to unfold His wonderful plan for us through a step-by-step walk of faith.
- ♥ He loves to take insignificant people, the least of these, and make them great by using their gifts and talents in a mighty way.
- ♥ He loves to take those from "bad" families or "questionable" pasts to set them upon the high-places, in ministry for Him!

It is all grace, grace, wonderful grace!

Lead Little Ones to the Heavenly Father... Instill a Passion for God!

Take a look at Genesis 18: 18-19. Why does God say that he choose Abraham?

Take a look at Deuteronomy 6: 6-9. What does this passage say is the main thing? What is the most important thing we are to do??

The number one priority is to lead our children to the Lord. Of all the things we can do in life, the number one thing we are called to do is to instill a passion, a heart passion, for our Heavenly Father. Of course, we cannot do this unless this is what is on our hearts...unless we know Him well enough to introduce Him to our children day-by-day as we go along the way.

Knowing God makes the difference in our lives of...

...how we live

...how we respond to situations

...how we respond to people

...and whether our life is depressing, mundane or abundant!

It is crucial that we get to know **Him** and that we introduce our children to our Lord!