

There is a part of all of us that wants to step in and DO something, just anything to make things happen. At the minimum, we at least want to help OR give a little help! For example, we want to work for our salvation, instead of accepting the free gift of salvation that results from God's covenant sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ. God's covenant was His commitment to do all necessary to make salvation available and a FINISHED, completed gift. He does not need for us to do ANYTHING. It is all done, finished, completed and ready for us to access as a free gift!

Marriage is the same way. We want to shop around and comparison shop for the perfect guy, who holds the perfect life with the cute cottage and white picket fence so we can live happily ever after. Marriage sets in, we get to know more about our spouse than we cared to know, and as the differences mount, the irreconcilable differences become more than we can handle, divorce court statistic we become. Oh, there are many that will not go to the divorce courts...they just live boringly, empty ever after!

I told you earlier that I would come back to share about "dating." Let's look at what the Bible says here about the bringing together of a covenant marriage...

- ♥ **Adam had NOTHING to do with it!** Eve had nothing to do with it! Yep! You read right! There was no shopping around. No comparison shopping to find the best deal. No trying out a few models to see which would work best. God gave them a free gift. Talk about an awesome gift!
- ♥ **Adam SLEPT while God created and prepared Eve perfectly for him!** Asleep...totally resting with God. There was no insomnia...no fretting...no "helping" God! Can you imagine the trust that Adam had in God? He did not give God a list of eligibles to choose from. He did not set out to find someone in panic that God did not have a plan for Him or as if God would not do it. He laid back, went to sleep, and trusted God with the results. And, God was faithful!
- ♥ **God did it! He did it ALL!** Not only did God provide. He provided ALL that Adam needed! He KNEW exactly what Adam would need and He provided MORE than Adam could have ever wanted. In fact, in the next verse (23), Adam declared the perfection in God's provision. He declared that God's gift was SO HIM that she was the "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man." She was a part of him. The part that had been missing. He had rested, slept, while God did it...while God did ALL necessary to prepare and bring his wife, his helper, to him!
- ♥ **Adam had no complaints with God's choice!** Now mind you, Eve was a WOMAN. Do not think that she and Adam were anything special. Men and women are created with differences. Not to give them a nice reason for divorce court, but so they may come together blending their strengths and weaknesses into a complete entity—one flesh. As we travel with our ministry, I would say that the primary complaint that is expressed about discontentment and conflict in marriage results from simple male and female differences. I have seen it in my own marriage. When we "expect" one another to do things or see things the way we would do or see them, inevitably there is conflict. We each have strengths and we each have weaknesses. Usually, my greatest strengths are Harold's greatest weaknesses, talk about aggravating, especially when it is SO easy for ME! ☺ Well, it is aggravating until I realize that his greatest strengths are in the areas of my most blaring, annoying, and obnoxious weaknesses. We have differences, but those differences are designed to interlock

with one another for the glory of God. Adam saw this woman as his Completer, all that was lacking. There were no complaints with what God provided because he KNEW it was all that he needed!

- ♥ **Adam and Eve had NO regrets plaguing their marriage or marriage bed!** Now...think of the beauty here! The standards in our society are down, down low, down so low that very few experience God's best. Although this may be very, very difficult, I want for you to really look at what God did here. Our society rationalizes and ignores the plan God has designed for bringing couples together. Now, I have to preface this by saying that the moment my eyes met Harold's WAS NOT as he and I awoke in the midst of the Garden of Eden. I had stood a guy up for a date, then went out to "cruise" around town, there he was! Oh, there he was out "cruisin" around town with a car full of teenagers. We were BOTH on the prowl! Neither of us wanted to miss the other, so we both tried for years to find each other...just IN CASE God was asleep and expecting us to help ourselves!

Contrast this with what we are seeing in our children as they willingly embrace this passage. Our son actually brought it to our attention that Adam was asleep while God prepared his wife. There were no regrets because the relationship was totally pure and each of them totally trusted God. There were no regrets because their hearts were completely in tact, in contrast to the bits that are commonly torn off bit by bit by pre-marital and extra-marital relationships. Adam and Eve were able to give one another their WHOLE heart, with no regrets.

Inevitably someone out there is thinking, "But Cindy, there was only ONE option! There were no other men and women!" This is where I want to take you back to my testimony, there was only ONE option. No other men could satisfy me. Harold was created with a plan that was thought up from the very foundation of the world, by our Covenant God to be MY man. Ask him, his testimony is the same. He looked high and low. Trust me, he wanted to find options, but he was met by the same awesome truth. There was only ONE option. No other women could satisfy! In the meantime, we both had regrets! There is a better plan! Sleep...trust God...watch for His provision! It will bring true satisfaction with no regrets!

- ♥ **God's best was perfect, absolutely perfect!** Isn't this completely awesome? God DOES have something to say about marriage and our marriage partner. He has a perfect plan. His plan is not dependent upon us, well, except that we do have a choice of whether we listen, sleep, and embrace his perfect plan!
- ♥ **The covenant of marriage is forever, unbreakable.** Even in the following chapters when Adam and Eve made very poor choices resulting in much conflict in their marriage, their marriage was not dissolvable. One other aspect of a covenant is that as flesh was cut or broke, the blood sealed the covenant. The shedding of blood was symbolic in meaning, "If I do not keep my word, may the same thing happen to me as has happened to this animal." Hummm, what does that mean? Well, what happened to the animal? It had to die...it was cut into...burned up...lost its life...sounds like a few dissolved marriages, huh?

The only Biblical parting of the way is through death. In original manuscripts, the only cause for divorcement was if it was found upon the marriage union that the partner was guilty of fornication.

Modern translations have sadly changed the word from "fornication" to "immorality," which leaves us with a watered down excuse for divorce. Even the common belief that adultery is a valid reason for dissolving the union between man and wife is not completely correct. According to the Law in Scripture, the man and woman caught in adultery were to be put to DEATH...hummm...till death do us part??? The offended spouse in Scripture was offered one more solution, forgiveness, but never is divorce the option.

I believe that this is crucial for us to understand to the depths of our soul. Our society has rationalized sin. There is no dissolving of a union once two become one. This is the danger of pre-marital and extra-marital sex. The heart, soul, and body become intertwined. Covenant begins, whether it is God's best or not. God is a Covenant God. He has to allow the blessings of covenant AND the ramifications of breaking covenant. A breaking of that commitment brings the same curse as the breaking of any other covenant. If you want to know God's heart on divorce, read the sobering passage in Malachi 2: 13-17. Plain and simple, God HATES divorce. It is not His plan.

Now, JUST IN CASE, your mind is thinking through Scripture and thinking about the recording of men having multiple wives as a rationalization against a one man/one woman covenant relationship. You must know that God commanded in His Law against "multiplying of wives." In every case, Scripture records a legacy of sin, strife, and demise.

God's plan is one man/one woman...forever as one flesh. Not just any man or any woman, but the covenant partner created just for you!

Now...take a moment to think back over your marriage. Were you asleep while God did it all?

How did this affect your marriage?

• Do you have no regrets or, like many of us, many regrets?

• What would you do differently?

• Did God provide BEYOND your wildest dreams? Was He trustworthy?

• Have you found areas of contention that have resulted from not understanding God's covenant plan?

• Are there things you have never heard or realized about marriage until this study? What difference will this make in your marriage?

I have to tell you that as God placed on my heart the deep commitment that He expects for us to have in our marriage, I trembled. Even though God had brought me to the point that (although wide awake, suffering from insomnia while waiting for God to bring Harold across my path) He could bring Harold and I together, I still had no idea of the permanency, the eternal plan that I accepted at the altar. If I had, I probably would have chickened out!

Truly Paul was right in the New Testament that marriage is a very serious commitment. If we are not ready for COMMITMENT, it is better not to marry at all. Sure, it is spine tingling to think about how NEAT it is that God provides exactly what we need in our spouse and exactly what they need in us. But, beloved, there is another side to the marriage covenant. God hates divorce. He cannot bless our willfulness or our sin. He has a great plan for marriage. It is His will to bring great satisfaction and joy through marriage. Let's continue with this passage to see how to live out that plan and develop a marriage that sizzles!!



# 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. Living out this lesson requires 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 bond or 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 very difficult challenge for us. 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!" (Of course, I mean it! ☺) 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*. It cannot be an option. 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 25<sup>th</sup> 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. This is going to be good! ☺

Take a bit to look up the word, become, in your dictionary. Jot down the definition below...

Isn't that good? 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.

So, now beloved, 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.

Take a look at this 1 Peter 3. List the things that God commands for the woman to BE and 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, and his greatest 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, from Scripture, 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—s-u-b-m-i-s-s-i-o-n. 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 at his feet while he leaned back in the chair to hear all about 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, now I am sure he would say that he has **more than** noticed a few times during the last 20 years!) 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 is YOUR story?

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