

There is nothing like a daily quiet time to refresh our mind and perspective... to prepare us with a Word of encouragement for others along our journey... to renew our minds... to restore and refresh our spirits...and to prepare us for the demands of our calling.

How are you doing in this area? What could help to improve your daily quiet time?

Praise

Praise is the Spiritual Discipline that brings you into the presence of God! It FILLS you with the Spirit!

Look at Ephesians 5: 18-21. What are some ways that you can praise God?

Speak God's Word! Sing! Praise! Be thankful for EVERYTHING! Yep! Everything...

...your husband JUST like HE IS!

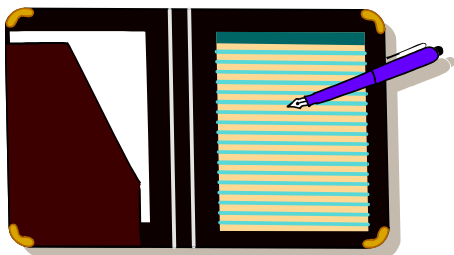
...your children JUST like they are!

...circumstances—TODAY—just as they are!

...everything others do—or do not do!

...every adjustment you must make!

Live a life of praise. Discipline yourself to PRAISE God in and for all things!



Special Note: On those days that you would like an idea of a Bible Study or if you would like a never-ending study to keep in your Bible Journal. Study praise! The fruit of praise. The power of praise. What God says about praise. You will be FILLED up and touch the hem of His garment as well!

Prayer

Prayer is our soul's daily link to God...we can pour out ALL to Him! We can pour out our fears...our frustrations...our concerns...our desires...our hopes ...our dreams! We can pour out our entire heart and soul to God anytime...anywhere. We can walk in communion with God. If we walk in communion with the Lord, NOTHING will be too difficult or overwhelming. This is exactly why prayer must

become a Daily Spiritual Discipline. But HOW? Here are some how-to's. See how you are doing and jot down some ideas for improving this area...

How to Pray...

- ♥ **Pray daily** in a quiet time of your own AND with others...
- ♥ **Pray honestly.** You may not be able to utter a word, but God knows! God wants for you to pour out your heart! He wants for you to get real before Him!
- ♥ **Pray about everything!** Pray when you need answers. Pray when you have something to be thankful for. Pray when you need someone to talk to. Pray when you are bored. Pray at all times! Trust God with ALL—big AND little! Watch Him work!
- ♥ **Pray God's Word.** You may not know HOW or WHAT to pray...but His Word is always His will...pray it! If you want a great Bible Study Project for your quiet time, you may want to begin a section in your Bible Journal with a list of Bible Prayers.
- ♥ **Keep a Prayer Journal...** Keep a record of your prayer requests and God's answers! Watch His faithfulness!

Bible Study

The Bible is God's personal letter to you with His *personal* instructions and answers to all your questions and needs that you face EACH and EVERY day! Read for your relationship...NOT for mere knowledge. Decide to meet at a certain time and place with God each and every day!

Devour His Word. It is His personal letter to you with instruction, direction, encouragement, and food for your hungry soul! Meditate on God's Word! Let it sink in! Let God write His Word on your heart! Be faithful. Listen—have ears to hear! Pray about how it is to affect your life. Pray about how it is to affect those around you that day. As you spend that time daily with God, you will have the right WORD to minister to others that day. (Isaiah 50:4-5) The Word is FRESH manna each day for you and those God brings along your path!

Don't know what to study?? Get a concordance and study a topic of interest. Here are some of my favorites (you see others sprinkled throughout this book)...

Education: instruct, train, disciple, command, learn, knowledge,
wisdom, understanding
Life of ----

Ministry

Mother

Names of God, Jesus, Holy Spirit

Plants: pruning, seeds, nurturing, gardener, gardens, gardening, sowing, harvest

Promises of God

Seasons of Life: Marriage, child-rearing, education, spiritual journey

Woman

Whole book of _____

Journeys of _____ (Paul, Moses, Abraham, Jesus...)

How to Pray

How to Praise

Names of God/Jesus

Fruits of the Spirit

Psalms

Proverbs

Plus MORE!

OR You could read through the Bible...

To read through the Bible in a year, read through 3 chapters each day Mon-Sat, 5 chapters on Sunday.

To read through the Bible in 2 years, read 2 chapters a day.

Just beginning??? Try Mark or John; Acts; Romans; Hebrews; Genesis; Psalms...

Ministry

People are weary, struggling, and looking for answers. YOU can have them! Take a look at Isaiah 50:4. How does this passage say that you can find the perfect encouragement and answers for others?

God is calling US, ALL of US, to sit at His feet so we will be equipped to teach those good things, that Word for them each day!

Live a LIFE of ministry...as you go along the way! Spread forth your tent! Tend your garden! Focus on ministering in the LITTLE THINGS! Be ready for every opportunity!

Walk in the Spirit!

I know, I know! This is the most difficult Spiritual Discipline for ME! Yet, I have found through the years that when the war is raging within me and the problems are about to overwhelm me, this is the key to survival! This is the key to abundant life. But, it takes dying to the flesh! OUCH! But, how?

First, **know what walking in the flesh looks like.** Take a look at Galatians 5: 16-24. List the works of the flesh. Look up the definitions. Ok, here is some meddlin...which do you see in your life? What is the result?

Secondly, **know what walking in the Spirit looks like.** Take another look at Galatians 5: 16-24. List the works of the Spirit. Look up the definitions. Which of these do you see in your life? What is the result?

Okay, finally go back to Galatians 5: 16-24. **List some practical ways to Walk In The Spirit...**

Romans 8:13...

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Live FOR Him!

Finally, the last Spiritual Discipline is actually a life discipline, a lifestyle. Live sold out! Depend on Him TOTALLY! Surrender all to Him! Walk in the Spirit. Abide In Christ (John 15) and get ready to bear MUCH fruit! (John 15) You are becoming more and more Virtuous each day!

Get to Know What God Thinks About You...

You are very, very precious to God. One of my greatest hindrances to becoming a Virtuous Woman has been my warped understanding of WHO I am and WHAT God thinks of me. It affects so much of my life. Because of this, I also think that many of you may need to know His view of YOU as well! Perhaps you need to get to know Your life purpose...His plan for your life (we will look at MANY verses, but KNOW that there are many other verses waiting for you to uncover. Do your OWN study! You will be better prepared for your calling)...your gifts...the fullness of your calling as a woman!

Dig into Scripture to see what God has designed you to be. Balance your life so you will have time to learn from Him and to USE your gifts and talents! Seek to know the fullness of your call as a godly woman.

Get rid of the world's view of a godly woman! Get rid of what YOU think makes a godly woman! (preconceived thoughts, ideas, and plans!) Get to KNOW what it means to BE a godly woman! Dig into the following Scriptures to find out WHO you are and WHAT you are called to be...

♥ **1 Peter 3**

What are the qualities of a godly woman?

What is the secret power of a godly woman?

What is meant by the "*Hidden Person of the Heart?*" Why is that so important?

What were some secrets that you can learn from Sarah about being a *Hidden Woman*?

♥ **Proverbs 31... See Amplified Version in here!**

What is the role of the woman in her home?

What are the benefits of being married to a Virtuous Woman?

What effect does the Virtuous Woman have on those around her?

What are some of the most outstanding qualities of the Virtuous Woman? Which do you want to emulate?

♥ **Isaiah 54: 2-3**

Where IS the greatest ministry of the godly woman?

How does a godly woman develop her ministry?

What effect does this have on the world?

♥ **1 Timothy 2: 9-15...**

List qualities of the Godly woman/define each...

Which do you need to develop now? What effect would that have on your home?

♥ **1 Corinthians 11**

What is the God-ordained order for the home?

What exceptions are listed here for submission to a man?

Who is ultimately in charge (and the One we are trusting)?

What is the life purpose of the wife?

Who ultimately gets the glory?

♥ **Titus 2: 3-5...**

What is our role as we mature in the Body of Christ?

What are some of the things that we need to develop in order to prepare to become teachers of good things?

What are we to teach to the younger women?

♥ **Genesis 2: 4-25...**

Why was woman created?

How was she created?

This Scripture calls a woman a "help meet." What is a helper? What qualities do you possess that you find are essential for your man?

Why do you think God used a rib? What could be the symbolism?

When God created woman, He took a part out of man, making man and woman very, very unique and different. What are the differences that you see in you and your spouse?

How has God created a *good thing* in placing you and your husband in a relationship together? How do you complete one another?

There are three keys in verse 24-25 to a successful marriage...**leave, cleave, and become one**. What do each of these mean?

Leave

Cleave

Become One

More on this in the next section of this study!

Marriage 101: Hey! What's This All About??

WHAT did YOU think marriage was ALL about??? WHY do we even have marriage?? In our society, in this day, of all of the areas of womanhood that we really need to address, this is probably the most vital area. The attacks mount from all directions.

If you are like me, growing up in school, you were probably encouraged to seek a career path. All studies and training worked toward that path, leaving a void in the area of marriage preparation. But, that is not all. It is not just what was NOT taught, it was the general prejudice against marriage and making a career of being a godly helpmeet.

Oh! There is more, much more. As I settled into my role as a godly wife and mother, there were some pretty crude remarks and attitudes toward my choice. One was in outrage that I would not work outside of my home during the years I was nursing and caring for my little ones. It cut to the core of my heart as the person, whom I do not even remember, asked a question that I will never forget, "How can you stand to leach off of your husband?" Others insinuated a great waste of ability and talent through their comments and questions. Others asked questions such as, "What do you do for a living?" and "What do you do all day?" that may have been very harmless, but the reaction to my answer was always heartbreaking, as if it was never enough.

If these seem as though I have merely taken offense when the comments, questions, and attitudes were not meant to offend me, there are other subtle arrows that have also flown my way. My parents divorced only 2 years before I actually married. My mother and I have always been best buddies. As her friend and daughter, I saw the loneliness...the crushing blow of her heart bursting into pieces... the journey through disillusion, anger and bitterness. I saw her weeping on her bed for hours while I stood by completely helpless to make it any better. I know that she did not want for her heartache to affect my marriage, but it just did.

You can imagine the concern she had for my life after the pain and heartache that she was still dealing with even the day of my wedding (and well into my marriage). It sure was not intended to undermine the foundation of my marriage, but it did...in big and little ways.

There are so many other things that our enemy used along the way in his attempt to keep us from building a good foundation in our marriage. How about you? Do you have your story as well? What have been some of the things that have affected your view of marriage? What are some of the prevailing attitudes you have seen firsthand?

Yes. We have all been affected by the plots and schemes of our enemy. We may have never given him credit for the battle he has waged and in many cases successfully won, but he is the culprit behind much of the shambles and ancient ruins that are left behind many lives.

I have great news about how God had a plan from the beginning to rebuild on the ancient ruins that had been laid for generations. In my family, He chose to begin with ME, so my family would have a new legacy. Well, really so my family would survive to be a family! A family that could step up to a great calling for our Lord.

Regardless of where you have come from...regardless of which lies have been bombarding you... regardless of the pain and devastation that has affected your view of marriage, God wants to use you too my dear friend! All of the arrows that have been flying your way have been a strategic plan to thwart the awesome plan of God. But, beloved, we are stepping up to the call, learning the plan, developing a strategy, and going forward for the prize before us.

Is it worth it? Yes! 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 join me? You will find the help and encouragement that you have been looking for!

Going Back to God's Design...

Wondering what is this all about? Why marriage? Why CAN'T we live our own lives...do what works for us...whose business is it anyway? Would God really care about marriage? Does He care about how we live in relationship with one another? Can't He just fix things if we mess up and it just does not work out? What on earth does God have in mind for us to BE??

Let's dig into the Bible and let God teach us Himself. There is no other way to truly see the beauty in His design for the marriage relationship or the hard-hitting truth of God's expectations for man and woman. Let's go back to Genesis. We are going to look at the very first marriage covenant. The very first marriage. The very first marriage ceremony.

Turn to Genesis 2: 18-25. I absolutely LOVE this passage. For background, you may want to begin with verse 7 where we see that God is in the process of Creation. He has created all we see before us today: night and day, the heavens and earth, the land and seas, the animals, and man. As we begin verse 18, we see **why God designed marriage, what He commands regarding the union, and some practical applications for building an awesome marriage.** Let's look very close at this passage...

In verse 18, we see a problem that developed for Adam. Now, imagine for a bit that God has created the world, there was NO sin in this world. If that did not seem more than perfect, God also prepared and freely gave Adam a garden, with all that he could ever need provided for him right there in the garden. Oh! There was more! God, Himself walked in the garden with Adam. Can you imagine the intimacy? The perfection? Well, except as God looked at all He had created, He noticed one more need! What is it? Oh, as you record your answer, spice it up!

Yep! You read right! Any translation will do! It was NOT GOOD! NOT SUFFICIENT! NOT SATISFACTORY! (Isn't this good?) Not good that man be *alone*!

The first reason Scripture records for the institution of marriage is plain and simply that without marriage man and woman are *lonely*. Marriage is first and foremost instituted for intimacy, companionship, unity. But how do you get that? Let's continue with that verse! God's answer to the loneliness for man was to create his very own help meet for him. Look up the words Help and Meet

and copy the definitions below...

Help:

Meet:

What is a Help Meet?

Help in its verb form means...

"to aid or supply that which the individual cannot provide for himself... conveying the idea of aiding someone in need...help, protect, or aid, succor or fence about...helper"

Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines **helper** as...

"one who helps (gives assistance, strength, promotes, delivers from difficulties or distress, advances a purpose, relief, to contribute strength or means,) aids or assists, furnishes or administers a remedy, one who supplies with anything wanted."

Meet is from the Hebrew word meaning...

"opposite...part opposite, counterpart, other side...according to opposite of him, meaning that she will complement and correspond to him, she is to be equal to and adequate for the man...means to surround (Jeremiah 31:22...revolve around, surround or border about on every side), protect, to relieve, to bring deliverance, to join together, to encourage, to lend strength, to assist, to help in time of need, adapts to, help out of prison."

God's plan was to provide a help meet for the man! To provide what is needed or lacking! One who is fit for him! One who is suitable for him! One who is adapted for him! One who is compatible to him. One who is complementary to him! His very own companion! What are some ways that a godly woman

can serve as a helpmeet for her man?

What are some practical things that YOU do for your man that no other person or thing can do?
Which roles do you fill in his life?

You are absolutely priceless! ONLY you can fill the role of helping your husband. Only you are created by God to completely minister to the heart of your husband. Only you can meet his deepest needs? Thinking about your husband and his greatest needs, which needs do you meet?



Over a cup of coffee: ask your husband what his greatest needs are. Ask which he takes for granted...which he cannot live without. Ask him specific ways that you can better meet his needs. Jot the ideas down below.

Isn't this beautiful? Do you know how special you are? You are created to be that special help meet! You are the other half of your husband, his Completer! You are the only one in the whole world created to meet and satisfy your husband's every need. Take a peek at the following verses. Below each list in the blanks some of the things that you can do to minister to your husband, to fill your role as his helpmeet...

♥ 1 Peter 3...

♥ Jeremiah 21: 22...

♥ Ephesians 5:33...

♥ Proverbs 31: 10-31...

♥ 1 Corinthians 11: 1-16...

♥ 1 Timothy 2: 9-15...

♥ Titus 2: 3-5...

♥ Esther 1: 20...

♥ Psalms 128: 3...

You are very, very precious! Can you see how special you are to God? He uses you as His special vessel to minister to your husband. He uses you to meet your husband's deepest needs. Your husband needs the very best YOU! All you have must be poured into him.

Nothing ministers to a man like the little things a woman, HIS WOMAN, does for him: encourages him, reverences him above all others, notices him, regards him and his opinions, preferences, and wishes, honors him, prefers him (to hobbies, your job, your ministry, your parents, your girl-friends, and even your children), venerates him, esteems him, defers to him, praises him, honors him, affirms him as a man and leader, admires him, responds to him, challenges him spiritually and intellectually, relieves him, prizes him, and serves him. Tough things, but things that make a difference in whether a marriage is sizzling, mediocre, or a failure.

You are vital to your man! You are the one that he depends upon to be his Prayer Warrior. You are his greatest Cheerleader. You are his Best Friend, his Lover, his Co-heir. You are the one he deepens upon to keep his home and make it home-sweet-home. You are his Faithful Follower. He depends upon you to be YOU. You bring him the satisfaction that he cannot find the rest of the world over.

Now, don't get me wrong, even with a spouse, we cannot find complete satisfaction, that Soul Satisfaction. This is because God wants to be our Soul Satisfaction. He created us with that vacuum that cannot be filled by anything or anyone else. But beloved, He also created us with a specific need for companionship. He knows of our need for a companion. He knows that we need our spouse during those lonely times. He has designed marriage as His means for you to have that special relationship that satisfies. He has designed marriage as His means for ministering to you. Marriage... Between man and woman...one man and one woman in a marriage relationship.

Bone of My Bones, Flesh of My Flesh...

God designed marriage. As He saw the void in Adam's life, He knew the immediate solution. But, how did He bring it to be? Again, let's go back to Genesis. Look at verses 19-20.

Is this not a HOOT??? Can you imagine the scene here? Or think of you and your spouse... What did God *do* to bring you and your spouse to the realization of the void that resulted outside of the marriage union? For Adam, the story is rather hilarious! Write it in your own words...

What was your story?

Do you know your husband's story? (If not, this is a great research project over a cup of coffee!)



I have to tell you that MY story began as long as I can remember. As a little girl, I remember our long trips to Texas to see my Grandparents. Now, this was BEFORE car seat-belt laws... I remember sitting on my knees in the seat, looking out the back window at the BIG TEXAS skies, dreaming about what MY husband would be like one day!

As I began dating (more on that in a minute!), I remember time and time again that those I dated simply did not match up to MY girlhood dreams! (I am POSITIVE that I did not match up to theirs either!) I was not being an unpleasant idealist, but they just did not match up!

I remember going to my pastor in desperation as a 17-year-old over the fact that I was about in despair looking high and low for my prince to come! (Can you just imagine how he must have laughed??) I poured out my heart about my desire to be a godly wife and mother, and about my disappointment in the *options* out there. I remember his exhortation as if it were yesterday. He exhorted me to be faithful to God and that I could REST knowing that God had a very good plan for

me. He challenged me to wait patiently because although he (Harold) may not come across my path that day or the next or even the next week or next month...that he COULD come across my path any day or week or month... AND HE DID!

Oh! Beloved! I was so in need of him! My heart was so empty and lonely without him. The moment my eyes met his I KNEW! Each moment I was with him, I KNEW again and again! I was finally complete! The rest is history...our history.

Well, I did not tell you HIS story. The long and short of it is that at the same exact time God was working in Harold's life to show him his need for a help meet for him. Our lives were so very parallel that at times we both just giggle over the sovereign work of God to bring together this covenant relationship. EVEN as we have been married, there have been times that our hearts were not ONE. Yet, even then God was working in both of our hearts to keep us together and bring us deeper into the intimacy that He designed for us to be enjoy.

Marriage is nothing short of a miracle! Marriage results from the hand of God at work in two separate lives. Separate lives that He mysteriously intertwines as one. A Covenant. Well, that is in the next two verses...

It's a Covenant Thing...

Back to verses 21-22. Here we see our Lord "cutting covenant." Stay with me here, this is probably one of the most crucial teachings in this whole book. Crucial? Yes, I think so because there is such a battle in the area of marriage. Roughly 80% of all court cases in our day feature a marriage dissolving. 50% of all marriages in our culture result in divorce. 60% of all marriages in the church break their vows as they end in divorce. The result is brokenness, ancient ruins, and true forfeiture of the BEST God has to offer by His design!

Just in case you are not familiar with Old Testament covenant, there are a few things that you need to know about covenant if you are to realize the sacredness of the marriage relationship. First, is that one of the very names of God means covenant. He, our Lord, is a Covenant God. What does that mean? It means that He is His Word. If He did not keep His Word, we have absolutely no hope! Without His never-ending, eternal commitment to His Word, there is no hope for today or eternity. You may take for granted some of the things in your life that give you peace as a result of His Word, but for a moment list some of them. List the things that you BELIEVE, things that you KNOW, simply because God says so...

Can you imagine if He "bailed out?" If He just quit? If He did not stick to His Word? What would we have then?

We have hope for everything in life and eternity simply because God is our Covenant God and as our Covenant God, He cannot lie, bail out, quit, or change His mind. He sticks completely to His commitments. In fact, if we were to look at the whole Bible, we are introduced through the whole plan of History to God as a Covenant God. There are examples all throughout History of God's commitment to mankind as He made Covenants that included all people throughout history (then and now).

An example of covenant can, of course, be found here in this passage as God instituted His commitment to be the Author and Finisher of marriage, as well as many others in the Bible. You may also remember the covenant that God "cut" for Abraham, committing Himself to His promises for Abraham ETERNALLY. Another covenant that you may be (or should be!) familiar with is the covenant that was "cut" when Jesus' blood was shed to seal God's covenant, committing Himself to the promise of eternal life for ALL who simply believe in the name of Jesus Christ. If the next little bit does not FIRE you up and EXCITE you, little else can!

Look at the passage and answer the next few questions...think about what they mean. (You may want

to think about the other two covenants mentioned here to see principles of Covenant.)

What "part" did Adam play? What did he "do" while the covenant was being made?

Did God provide ALL that Adam needed?

Was Adam pleased with the one God provided?

Did Adam and Eve have regrets for "waiting" or for "only" having the "first one?"

Did God prove Himself as trustworthy?

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 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!** Is this not 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 tingly 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!!