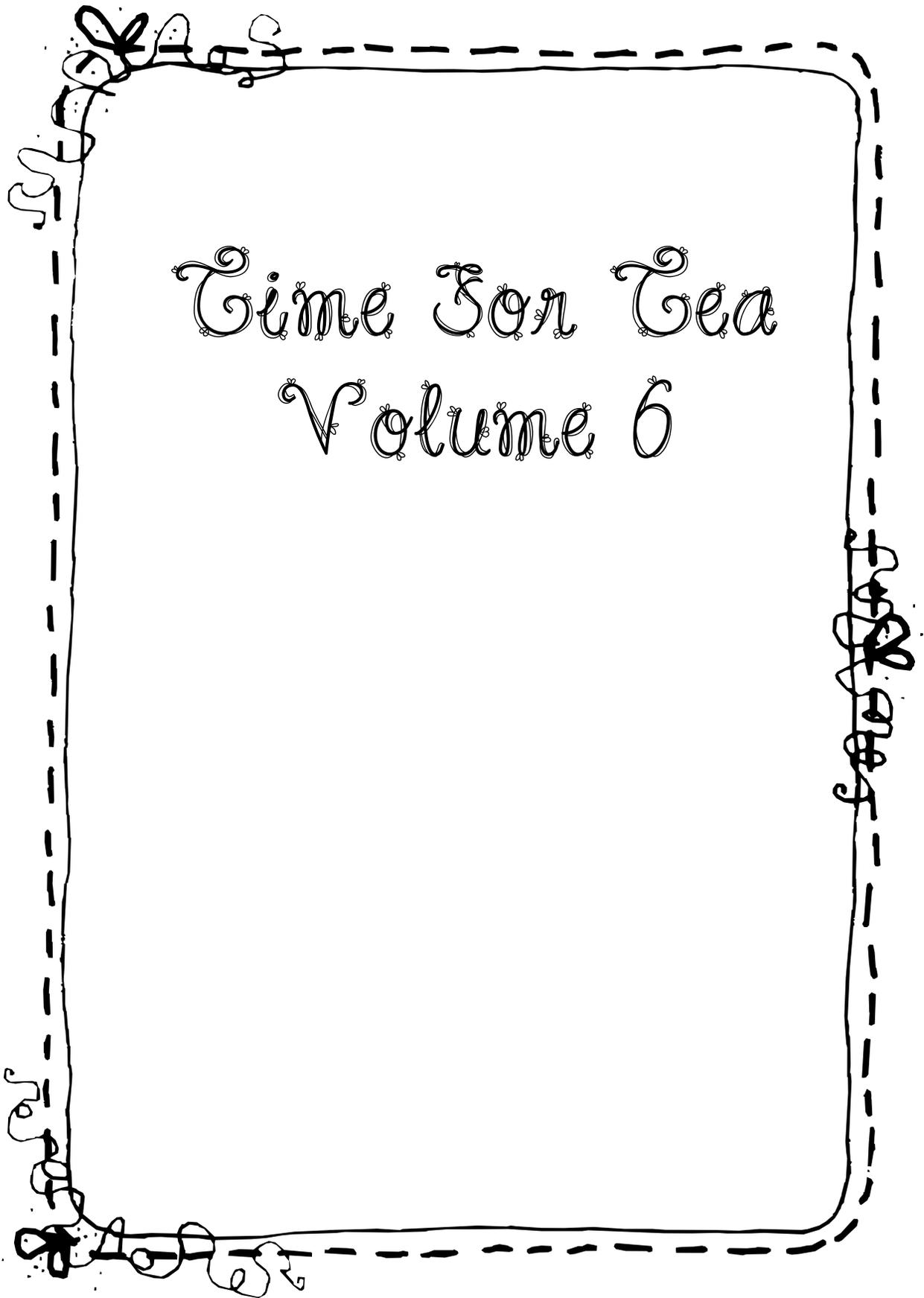


Time for Tea
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Articles From
Volume 6



By Cindy Rushton



Time For Tea
Volume 6

Time for Tea

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Our Email Discussion List... Time for Tea Online!

We welcome you to the parlor where it's always teatime - the sideboard is full of fresh pastry, the candles are lit to compliment the fire on the hearth and the hostess sits ready to pour. There is beautiful music from the CD player, original art upon the brocaded walls, fresh flowers upon each tea table. Sit down in a comfortable chair, relax a few minutes in your busy day, and chat with other Charlotte Mason families. Your hostess is the Cindy Rushton, noted Author and Editor of the popular magazine **Time For Tea**.

Conversation, companionship, and encouragement are the topics here. Questions on homeschooling with a lifestyle of learning are welcome at any time. You will also find us discussing articles from the magazine, or other beautiful thoughts - poetry, art, music, recipes and handiwork. We even plan to talk about how we apply the philosophy of Charlotte Mason to enrich our lives. Come join us for this little treat in each day...our Time for Tea!

To subscribe simply see our links on our website at www.cindyrushton.com

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Who? Me? A Virtuous Woman???

YES! YOU! A Vessel God CAN Use!

PLUS! Lots More Coming Soon!!!
Stay Tuned!

Welcome To Time for Tea!

Welcome to our new issue of *Time for Tea*! This year began our SIXTH year of this woman-to-woman, heart-to-heart TIME FOR TEA! *Time for Tea* is now divided into two magazines published by Rushton Family Ministries. *Time for Tea* will continue on a quarterly basis available through regular mail subscription or FREE by email. The focus of each issue will be Titus Two encouragement. Titus Two meaning that each issue will endeavor to step up to the call of encouraging each of you to, "...be sain and sober of mind (temperate, disciplined), and to love their husbands and their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, homemakers, good-natured (kindhearted), adapting and subordinating themselves to their husbands, that the word of God may not be exposed to reproach (blasphemed or discredited)." (Titus 2: 4-5 AMP)

Articles will range from topics covering developing a closer walk with the Heavenly Father to ministering to the heart of your husband to discipling our children with a Godly heritage to ideas for homemaking from the heart to becoming a vessel that God can use! Each issue will be jam-packed with timely articles that are designed to give you a time for renewing your mind and refreshing your spirit during your Time for Tea!

Homeschooling... The EASY Way is now in its second year. It is NOW available by regular mail and FREE by email. The focus of *Homeschooling...The Easy Way* is to encourage homeschooling with a lifestyle of real learning in the simple Charlotte Mason Style. Topics range from hearing God in your homeschool to balancing all of the many demands that the busy homeschool mom faces day-to-day to teaching lessons in a simple, EASY way.

Our goal in these publications, as with our books and tapes produced by our ministry, is to encourage and equip families to step to the calling before us as godly families. We began *Time for Tea* as a "long-distance" mom-to-mom time of mentoring and sharing. We are committed to continue this magazine with this same vision. This transition and growth for our ministry simply continues to allow God to use this simple little periodical to reach to the utter ends of the earth!

God has made us with a need for companionship... friendship... mentoring. God uses the means of companionship, friendship and mentoring to minister encouragement and biblical teaching. This is what we are here for!

Our prayer is that in each issue you will begin to see a glimpse of how special you are to the Lord. He loves you so very dearly. We also pray that you will find a friendship through the miles. A friendship that God can use to inspire you to keep on, on those days you are weary and worn, troubled and perplexed, broken and hurting. You are a vessel that God can use mightily. God planned from the foundation of the world to use YOU as a woman of immense influence. Yes, we each and every one can be used by our loving Heavenly Father, just as we are!

As you sit down to pour yourself a great big cup of tea, we pray that each issue will lead you to sit at the feet of the Lord for a special time of renewing your mind and refreshing your spirit. So, why not take a few moments, pour yourself a great big cup of tea. It is once again, TIME FOR TEA!

With Love, The Rushtons

From My Heart To Yours

Can you believe it? The Holidays! Another year has slipped right by! It is now time to welcome yet another year!

This year for our family and our ministry can only be described as tremendous!! We moved into our very first, real live warehouse! I remember the first time I walked in there, I was certain that we would NEVER need all of the space. However, not even a full 12 months later, it is FULL! We are currently making plans to purchase our own property and build our very own headquarters. Hard to believe that it is time to begin to build already!

The ministry/business has followed the building. One of my "life" passages is Isaiah 54. The only way to describe our ministry/business is ENLARGED, ENLARGING! Surely, this year we have seen even more tremendous growth than all other years combined. As we enter into a new year, we are stepping into new formats for all of our books, periodicals, and even our traveling equipment. I think you will like what you see as we continue to grow. Yep! Tremendous is the word again!

Oh, and need I say how much our family has grown this year. My son now towers over my head and looks eye-to-eye with his father. My daughter is growing and maturing daily into a real, live WOMAN! (she will gleam when she hears this news!) Harold and I continue to grow, well, I hopefully in wisdom and more in love each and every day!

As I reminisce over the past year and dream about the new year, I must say that this year I have seen God as never before. Of course, if you knew my personal "resolution" for the New Year, you would understand that this is EXACTLY what I asked for!

As I went into a New Year, I really would have loved to be better organized, more patient, more kind. If that is not simply beyond unreachable, I had other great ambitions. For one, I desperately wished I could take off the weight that had been plaguing me from all of my pregnancies. However, I also knew my deep LOVE for Strawberry-White Mocha Latte's and my even deeper hatred for exercise...my goodness JUST think of all the books you can read during the time it takes to burn just ONE mocha??? All kidding aside, I knew that there were many things externally that I would always want to change. I felt that the Lord was far more concerned for my heart than any other aspect of "me."

I sat before Him as the New Year rolled in with one mere heart cry. I did not want any new possessions (just more STUFF to clean and dust!). I could not think of one new skill that I wanted to develop. I knew that the planner I sat holding would soon be filled with junk that reveals that I am more sloppy each and every year. I could use that weight loss, but I did not ask Him for that. Instead, as I thought through my life and all that I had been blessed with, all I could resolve for my New Year was summed up in my Bible Reading...

"Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, show me now YOUR WAY, that I may KNOW YOU [progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with You, perceiving and recognizing and understanding more strongly and clearly] and that I may find favor in Your sight. And [Lord, do] consider that this nation is Your people. And the Lord said, My Presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest. And Moses said to the Lord, If Your Presence does not go with me, do not carry us up from here!"

I wanted so much to be like Moses! I wanted for MY only prayer to be, SHOW *ME* YOUR WAY! Let me KNOW YOU! Let YOUR PRESENCE go with me or don't let me go on! Of all that I could ask God for, this was one thing that I felt ANY Christian could never fully attain, but I really, really wanted just a taste of it! Not just a bit. I wanted this deeper than all else I could ask for. I also knew that of all the things that I could ask for, this was the ONE thing that God Himself craves most of all. Sure-fire way to attain a goal, huh?

So, as I look back over this year. This is the very first year in my whole life that I have actually found that my resolutions came true. AND, beloved...did it!

This year has become a year that God has showed me more specifically than ever WHO HE IS and that HE IS HERE! I have seen His presence over and over again in ways I have never in my life seen before. It all began with a Bible Study that God sent AHEAD of some really tough trials.

One day while Harold and I were meeting for our afternoon coffee break, I was pouring my heart out to him about a dilemma I was facing. As I sat there with tears streaming down my face, I shared with him how I felt just like Elijah and that just like Elijah, I needed MY cup filled back up. God spoke to my heart almost immediately and said, "Dear one, YES! You DO need your cup filled back up! AND I am HERE to fill it up!" For the next several hours, I sat there at that same table almost taking a dictation from God.

Not only did He minister to my soul that moment (I have to say that He did not just fill me up, but He was overflowing ALL over me!), but He gave me a Word that would brace me for the whole year of much change, struggle, and many, many of the hardest trials of my entire life.

Was His presence there? Oh, yes! This was the first overwhelming way that my resolution was answered. As I look back, God showed me that His presence is there not just right when I need Him...but, **long before I ever come to the point of needing Him.** Joy, oh joy, that we have His complete presence in the meadow as we frolick, on the mountain top, in the valley, or in the desert. Did He show me His presence? Yes! Before I even needed it for dear life!

The next few months began a series of trials that at times I was afraid would totally bring me to a point of despair. Every thing that meant anything to me was being shaken. Demands were hitting me on every angle (isn't that how it seems to hit?). I jokingly said that if Peter was sifted in the Bible, perhaps I was more experiencing a good case of being IN THE BLENDER!

Through each experience, each trial I found God there drawing me closer and closer to His side. He was drawing me into that same relationship that He had with Moses, **"the Lord would talk with Moses."** In little and big ways He was showing me HIS WAYS, HIS CHARACTER, and HIS

HEART. He was instilling the truth that He was ENOUGH. He was showing me that **His presence is ENOUGH as we go THROUGH the storms.**

I found that one of the hindrances in the past to really experiencing God's presence was my stubborn independence. If we could see my deepest struggles externally, what would have been seen would have resembled a toddler stomping my feet while saying, "**I* CAN DO IT MYSELF!*" or "*I CAN DO IT MYSELF!*"

Oh, but praise God He does not give us our way when we are dead wrong! I am so thankful that He continues to woo and draw us into His arms especially when we are willful and the storm is raging dangerously around us. Although there is a tendency for all of us to try to handle our trials, our feelings, our fears, and our needs all by ourselves; I am thankful that He does not let us go. He never leaves us alone. He stays right by our side filling our emptiness with that Living Water that brings strength and soul satisfaction.

God is the only true satisfaction. God is the only One Who has power for any and all trials. God is the only One Who knows exactly what we really need in the midst of our trials and periods of growth. Praise Him that He IS THERE and He does not leave us alone EVEN when we are the most unbearable!

He is completely faithful! There was not even one moment that He left me alone by myself in my trial. Just at the moment that I would begin to think that I was all by myself, He would gently speak a Word to my weary soul. At other moments when fear was attacking hot and heavy, He would remind me of His truth. When I would wrestle and fret in His arms, He would continue to listen and comfort me to the depths of my soul.

Have you ever thought back over a struggle in your life that was brought to a climax only to know that you know that you know that you would have never made it had God not carried you through each and every moment? This was exactly the point I found myself at so many, many moments. Did He show me His way? Did He show me more of WHO He was? Did He reveal to me His presence? Oh, yes! Without any time out...without one moment by myself...without one bit of condemnation for those plaguing fears and my much too disappointing reactions. He was there in the fullness of His presence each step of the way.

Need Him today? Beloved, cry out! He is there! He cares! He understands! Feel like you have failed just one time too many? The good news is that you can't! His tests are "rigged" so that you have to keep taking the test until you get 100%! No failures...no mediocre results! 100% and He is the One with the final say! HOOT! HOOT!

I have no idea what lies ahead in the New Year, but as I look back over this year, I have to tell you that if you want a great resolution for your upcoming new year, this is one for you! Oh! Don't be scared off because there "could" be struggles. I hate to tell you, but there will be struggles regardless! The difference for us comes through the lessons that we learn in the midst of the struggles. Are we learning in the midst of the struggles the difference between our way and God's way?? Are we *"progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted"* with God?? Are we moving along with God's presence??

You may experience many of the same struggles that are now part of my story in the chapter called "Year 2001." The aging parents, cancer in the family, miscarriages, infertility, death in the family, busyness, growth, job changes...these are all *opportunities* for you to press in closer to the Lord! To learn more intimately HIS WAY, HIS CHARACTER, and HIS HEART. However, you too will learn that **His presence is ENOUGH as we go THROUGH the storms.**

Since the last miscarriage (there were two this year that seem to serve as bookends for my trials), I have been experiencing a season of rest (kinda needed since we all get tired in the midst of battle). You know what? I am finding that not only does God go ahead of us preparing us for the storms of life. Not only is His presence enough as we go through the storms. But, **God is here in the midst of rest** too.

His presence is so very sweet. His encouragement is so fulfilling. His power is so overwhelming. He is constantly showing me the value of those intensely tough times. My only words are that once the storm is over, there may be much rubbish, but rebuilding is sweet. The calm is sweeter than before the storm. This time is yet another time that I am seeing in a great way that His presence is ENOUGH. His presence satisfies every need and every desire.

So, what is my goal as I plan for another big year? Well, hummm...I think I will resolve first to have the very same desire that Moses had one day in his life...

...Oh! And that weight loss? Well, I am not the size I was in High School...but, I have lost TWO jeans sizes and we have another whole year ahead!!

Happy New Year!

ABC's of Motherhood

By *Bulie Druck*

Attitude
Blessings
Compassion
Devotion
Enthusiasm
Friendship
God
Honor
Insight
Joy
Kindness
Listening
Maturity
Nurture
Open Arms
Praise
Quality
Respect
Sacrifice
Tender Heart
Unconditional Love
Vision
Wisdom
X-ray Vision
Young-At-Heart
Zeal

The Great I AM: Everything We Will Ever Need! A Study Through The Names Of God: Abba Father

*This section of **Time For Tea** began last year and will continue, Lord willing, through each issue of **Time For Tea**. We have had many, many requests for simple Bible Study materials that can be used personally, as a couple, or as a family. I pray that you will find this to meet that need. As you will notice, our goal is not to provide all of the answers, but rather to encourage you to dig in the Word of God for yourself. Don't know where to begin? Work through these questions day-by-day in a daily quiet time. If you are just beginning your daily quiet time, one question per day is more than plenty as you take the time to talk and listen to your Beloved Lord. God wants more than anything to reveal Himself to YOU! Nothing on earth can help you to get to know Him like getting in the Word, well except getting in the Word to study through His Names. This study is written so that prayerfully you will snuggle up closer to Him so He can do just that! Enjoy!*

"The Name of the Lord is a strong tower; the [consistently] righteous man [upright and in right standing with God] runs into it and is safe, high [above evil] and strong." Proverbs 18:10

Father, as a name of God is found all throughout the Bible. The Hebrew/Greek words for Father are Abba, meaning Daddy. Ab, means first in the Trinity. Think about verses/passages that tell you a little bit about what God is like as a Father? List below: (Drawing a blank? Look in a concordance or in your Bible dictionary for Abba, Father, children...list your favorites with a brief description.)

What are some qualities that you see about Him in these verses?

Of all of the names of God, this is the very first in the Trinity. The most significant name of God! Why do you think so?

Did you notice in your search through the Word that there are probably more verses that introduce us to God as our precious Heavenly Father than any other name of God? Why do you think

that is so?

My guess is because there are very real hindrances to knowing God as Father. Of all of the names of God that we need, I believe that this One is the most important and the most vital to see in its fullness. As a result, we can see much warfare from our enemy, satan, to thwart our view of God as our loving, intimate, and beloved Father. What do I mean as hindrances? Think through the following and jot down your thoughts...

Hindrances to Knowing God as Father

1. One hindrance to knowing God as our Father is **our relationships with our own fathers...** How would you rate your relationship with your father? What do you most enjoy about your relationship with your father? What does he do to make you feel cherished and beloved? What do you find most frustrating, painful, or difficult to forget?

How is your father "like" God? List the qualities that instantly come to mind?

How is God "different" from your father? How does God "father" perfectly? List the qualities that instantly come to mind?

Special Note: Need a little help? Try these verses: James 1: 17; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 6: 18, 8:12, 13:5b, 8; 1 Chronicles 28:20; Psalms 89:33-35, 103:8-12, 13, 56:3-4, 11; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:4-7; John 1:12, 10: 27-29; ; James 1:18; Ephesians 1:3; Isaiah 12:2, 40:11, 46:3-4; Joshua 1:5; 21:45, 23:14-15; 1 Kings 8:56-57; 1 Peter 1:4; Matthew 5:48, 6:8, 18:20; Deuteronomy 4:31, 31:6-8; 1 Samuel 12:22, 15:29; Numbers 23:19-20; Titus 1:2; Jeremiah 17:7-8; Zephaniah 3:17; so on!

When you think of God as Father, Abba, does your own father's face come to mind? How does this affect your relationship with God for good or bad?

Our view of God...His care and provision, His desire for relationship, His availability, His perfect love, and much, much more...is completely affected by our relationship with our own fathers. The way we view God determines how we approach Him. We easily accept that God is good in the ways that our own fathers were good. However, it becomes much more difficult to accept or even cry out to Him in areas that our own fathers failed. Sylvia Gunter, author of one of my favorite Bible Study and Prayer resources, *Prayer Portions*, wrote a truth that many of you may have never realized, but I think it will draw you closer to the Lord as your Abba Father...

"Many people do not have a positive association with the fact that God is Father because their relationship with their earthly father is damaged. Maybe their father abused them or abandoned them; or maybe he was emotionally aloof or unable to relate. People who had an unreliable earthly father will have difficulty trusting the Heavenly Father. There are other illustrations of how our understanding of God determines how you relate to Him and what you hear from Him. God created the family to reflect the heavenly reality that He is perfectly faithful, generous provider, loving and forgiving parent, a patient teacher, understanding counselor, wise and wonderfully communicating, strong yet intimate, affectionate and accepting, and much more. Unfortunately, but without exception, families and fathers are imperfect in living out this purpose of God. For my own life, the reality that God my Father is always there for me was life-changing revelation. Today many people have suffered the pain of having parents divorce, with the consequence that their father is separated from the family. This produces a traumatic sense of abandonment, which our Heavenly Father wants to fill. Our Heavenly Father is always there for us. This is a reality that every person can receive supernaturally by His Spirit. Abba-Father, Papa God, is there for me when I sin...when I fall...when I fail...when I hurt...when I feel abandoned...when somebody dies...when I am uprooted and have been moved into an uncomfortable new environment...when I am rejected...when I am hurting...when human love is conditional and performance-based...when life is not fair...when situations seem hopeless...when I feel dumb...when people are unfeeling and difficult...when a friend betrays me...when the kids leave holes in my heart as they go off to college one by one...when people are too busy and insensitive...when life's demands are too overwhelming."

Do you see other ways after reading this that your view of God has been hindered by your relationship with your father? Write them in a prayer of praise to God.

2. Another hindrance to knowing God as our Father is **our sin...**

Yes, every single one of us is hindered from knowing God in His fullness as our Father. Take a peek at Isaiah 53: 6. What does this passage say is another hindrance to really KNOWING God?

One of our greatest hindrances to knowing God as our good Father is our sin. Feel that pang in your heart at the thought? That pang is the guilt and condemnation that sin brings. Along with the heavy burden of guilt and condemnation, we all experience separation from God. What causes that separation? See Isaiah 59: 2.

Good news! Our Heavenly Father knew the problem we would have with sin and in His grace, unmerited favor for us, had a plan from eternity that would bring us into relationship with Him. Look up Romans 3:23-26. What an incredible plan! Beloved, you simply **MUST** know that God is not surprised by our sin. It does not matter what your sin may have been. Your sin is not too big for God's grace to cover! You may have carried the weight of your sin for years, but there is good news, actually **AWESOME** news! God, our Father, has made provision to pay the penalty for every single sin. You can **KNOW** God regardless of your sins!

Through our sin, we each have "earned" death, eternal separation, from God. However, a FREE provision has been made for not just eternal life, but eternal life in union with Jesus Christ. Look up Romans 6: 23. Who made this provision? Why do you think He did?

What does this "union" guarantee? (See Galatians 4: 4-7; Romans 8: 16-17; Galatians 3: 29)

What does "joint heirs" mean?

What is your heritage? Which verses describing your heritage as a child of God come to your mind?

Stumped? See verses such as 1 Peter 2: 9; Isaiah 59: 21; Romans 8: 14-17; so on. Oh, there are many, many more! Don't be limited by these verses, you have an incredible heritage as a child of God. You could study the Word of God each and every day for the rest of your life and never find ALL of the verses that describe your incredible inheritance. What a loving Father we have!

Special Note: You may want to keep a list of verses in your prayer journal as you read and study through the Bible that describe your heritage as a child of God.

3. A third hindrance to knowing God as our good Father is simply **not knowing what God says in His Word about His relationship with us.**

For the rest of this study, we will take a look at what the Bible says about God as our Father and US as His precious children. Buckle up, this is going to be good!

What God Says in His Word About His Relationship with YOU!

God wants deep fellowship with YOU! Think over the various saints from Scripture. God's story is one of relationship and fellowship with man. It is His delight! Think of David. What made Him a man after God's own heart? Think of Moses. What was his only request of God? Think of Abraham. What was he known as? In each of these lives (and many others), God intimately fellowshiped with these men. They walked with Him...they talked with Him...they listened to Him...they begged Him for His presence to be with them. How can you develop a true friendship with God? How can you become God's friend? Can He pour out His heart to you? Would you listen? Do you care? Do you cut Him off as soon as He begins to speak? How can your view of Him as a Father Who WANTS to fellowship with you change your circumstance today?

Special Note: *One of the things that God has been speaking to my heart lately is about His deep desire for me to WALK WITH HIM. In fact, my personal resolution for the past year has been taken from the life of Moses when he cried out to the Lord, "Show me Your Glory." I am a talker by nature, but I have been seeing that those who really pressed in to God were the ones who sat, listened, and got to KNOW God. They wanted to be considered more than a servant or a person with a big ministry, they wanted to be considered a FRIEND of God who walked with God! As an adult child, my relationship with my parents crossed a bridge many years ago. True intimacy only came as I pressed into the relationship with them, as I got to KNOW them. It was as though a light bulb went off in my head enlightening me to the fact that they were REALLY interesting and they really did treasure a relationship with me that went beyond meeting my mere physical and emotional needs. They wanted fellowship. The same is true with God. Will you press in? Can He pour out His heart to you? Will you listen? Do you care enough to listen and get to know Him?*

God wants you close to His heart. See Isaiah 40:11. He does not ever shoo you away. He is never too busy. He is always there, any day of the week and any moment of the day, always there! He wants us close by to Him. He wants for us to pour out our whole heart to Him AND to listen to Him so He can pour out His whole heart to us! He wants to meet each and every need that we may have...physically, spiritually, emotionally. He gathers us in His arms to love, cherish, and protect us. He carries us in His bosom. He leads those with young. Does this give you comfort? Does this make you want to run and jump up in His arms? Do you take advantage of His open arms? Just during the storm? Just when you are squeaky clean of sin? What are you waiting for? Don't want to bother Him?

You are NEVER too old to snuggle up to Him. See Isaiah 46: 3-4. Been pulling away? Why? Do you think you are "a big girl" now? Do you think that you can handle your life "by yourself" now that you are more mature? My dear one, He is waiting for you. He wants to carry you and bear your every burden. He is ready to deliver you today! What do you need to give to Abba Daddy to

carry? What situation are you facing that your Papa needs to deliver you from? Give it to Him!

No burden of yours is too much for your Abba Father! He is waiting and watching for you to cast your cares and burdens on Him. Your burden is not too much for Him. See Matthew 11: 28-30 (Especially the Amplified Version!); Deuteronomy 1: 30-32 (Also see the Amplified Version!). What does God want to do with your burden? Why is it hard to allow God to carry you? What hinders you from letting God carry you today in your circumstance? Are you even carrying the "right" burden?

You are a blessing to God. We have the ability to bless HIM! Take a peek at the following verses, listing below ways in which we can bless God: Psalm 16: 7; Psalm 103; Psalm 104: 1, 33-35; Psalm 134; Psalm 145: 2; so on! Think of other ways that you can be a blessing to God. List them below too.

Special Note: *Need a little help here? My dear friend, God is so very precious. May we see His NEED for us to seek to move deeper in relationship with Him! He is so willing to meet our very needs. Yet, there is more, much more, to a relationship with God than seeing Him as a Santa Claus bringing us all that we ask for when we ask for it. He simply treasures when we are thankful for HIM, when we just sit in His presence ENJOYING HIM, when we serve Him in the little things, when we bring glory to Him, when we passionately introduce others to Him, when we worship Him. These are just a few of the ways that WE minister to Him. Oh, that we will move past our lists of wants and desires so we can be in relationship with our Abba Father!*

God has deep love for you. How deep is God's love for you? What did God do to show His love for you? When did He first love you? See John 3: 16 and Romans 5:8 (especially in the Amplified version)

Special Note! *The whole passage of Romans 5 shows us the incredible love that God has for us EVEN in our sin and the awesome provision He has made so that sin does not have the power to have dominion over us. Incredible!*

God has adopted you as His child. What kind of relationship does that give you? See Romans 8:15

He wants for you to know the good news that we can call Him FATHER. See John 20:17. What difference does this make in our relationship as we can call Him God AND Father? How does that make Him different as a God? How does that make Him different as a Father?

You are God's BELOVED child. You may have never experienced the blessing of being totally, unconditionally, and permanently accepted by your earthly Father or anyone else in your life, but there is great news! You are completely beloved by Abba! No strings attached. No works essential for this love. No risk of losing His favor! This is your position forever! He has done it all because you are so precious to Him. Take a peek at the following passages to see how He thinks of you. Make a list from these passages of how God feels for you: Ephesians 1: 4-6; Romans 8: 14-17; Galatians 4: 4-7; John 1; 12; James 1; 17-18; Zephaniah 3:17 (Amplified); Isaiah 43: 4; Deuteronomy 4: 20, 7:6; Exodus 19: 5-6; Psalm 149: 4; 1 Samuel 12: 22;

Special Note: *Go back through the last few passages reading them in the Amplified Version. They are incredible!*

So beloved, how did you do?

My prayer is that this will be a study that will continue way past the last question. I pray that you will continue thinking upon God as your loving and good Heavenly Father for the rest of your life. When you are down and out, snuggle up in God's great big arms, go back through these passages, and dwell on how much He loves and cherishes you. Don't just let this be an assignment, let this make a difference in your walk with God! Let God minister His love to you and draw you into a deeper walk with Him. Ask God to help you to experience Him and to know what His presence is like. Make these passages ALL yours!

"The Name of the Lord is a strong tower; the [consistently] righteous man [upright and in right standing with God] runs into it and is safe, high [above evil] and strong."
Proverbs 18:10

More next time!

God is Our Portion

By Betty Dickerson

"You are my Lord; apart from You I have no good thing. Lord, You have assigned me my portion and my cup; You have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand."

Psalm 16:2, 5-6, 11

These verses have recently become very special to me. God has assigned to me my portion and my cup. These verses force me to see that my life, however crazy at times, is under God's control. In the book *A MOTHER'S HEART* by Jean Fleming, she states, "Whether the difficult circumstances we face are from God's hand or because of our own poor choices, He is able to produce from them something positive and glorifying to Himself."

The apostle Paul faced hard circumstances. He knew illness, beatings, prisons, stonings, hunger, and the weight of guilt. But whatever the circumstance, Paul strove to know Christ and make Him known. God didn't allow these circumstances in Paul's life in order to frustrate Paul's desire to experience Christ more fully, or to stifle the progress of the Gospel. Instead, God intended them to form boundaries for Paul's life. Paul did not kick down these boundaries so that he might get on with the job as he saw it. Rather, he accepted the boundaries and worked within them. He sang and praised God from a gloomy prison, used appearances before questioning officials to testify of his faith in Christ, gathered firewood and encouraged others after a shipwreck, and worked with his hands making tents amid a busy missionary schedule.

God has set boundaries around your life, too. Your children form part of the boundaries. But remember, God brings the circumstances to better define your life, not to restrict. We must be willing to surrender to God and live within these boundaries; this is where we will find our fulfillment and joy because we will be fulfilling God's plan for our lives. We need to "be all there" (in body, mind, and spirit!) wherever we are so that God can fully use us.

This is where these verses convicted me. If I recognize that it is God who engineers my circumstances, then there is no room for complaints, only unrestrained surrender to Christ and a heart of thankfulness. Wow! What's even more incredible is that this is true no matter your circumstance—God works out everything for the good of those who love Him and have been called according to His good purpose (Romans 8:28). But only God can work an attitude of gratitude while we are in difficult times; in order to do this, our job is to surrender and let Him work. I have had to surrender my plans for myself, my rights to myself and my time, but in exchange He has made known to me the path of true life and has filled me with joy in His presence.

It is when I take my eyes off the Lord and get distracted by my circumstances, that I find it the most difficult to see God's boundaries in my life as blessings. I need to be content and allow God to use me to the fullest right where I am. I will miss Divine opportunities to reach the hearts of

my children and family if I am spending a lot of time on wasteful thinking. I need to stop blaming the past or my circumstances for where I am and recognize that God is in control and I am in control of choosing my response.

These "limitations or hardships" that we face can become stepping stones to new depths with God. This "shadow" we are walking under, is actually the shadow of His outstretched hand lovingly over us. It's all a matter of perspective; or rather, it is all a matter of the condition of our hearts.

Eventually, I pray, that our circumstances will become more and more insignificant to us and God Himself will become our portion (Psalm 119:57). There can be no greater inheritance or legacy to leave our children and families. God bless you all as you seek God from where He has placed you!

Through the Seasons In Life...

By Banet Birkey

Fall brings a time of beautiful change. The leaves, the colors, the cooler air...the feeling about life in general. It just doesn't last long enough for me, because I tell you that I am NOT, I repeat, am NOT a winter person. I know that after this feeling of cool cozy comfort, some days come that can bring some sadness in it's shorter days and less light pattern. I know that the cold keeps us indoors to the point of feeling that we are part of the very walls that surround us. I know that we love the holiday season, but it can bring it's own problem with post-holiday let down.

It seems that after the "seasons in life" we truly enjoy, the season following is not only uncomfortable, but down-right hard! After times of being able to stay tuned in to God and His will, we often go into a dry spell. When we find ourselves in those dry spells, we tend to lose sight of the Living Water. We plead with God..."WHEN IS IT GOING TO RAIN???"

I am becoming more and more inclined to believe that God allows those dry spells for many different reasons, but the main one is for the purpose of making us search out Him and making Him the priority in our life.

When we go through rough, dry patches, we will try many things to bring some sense of thirst quenching to our raggedy, dry bones, but we are only satisfied when we quench that thirst with the Living Water and let it plump up our spiritual selves.

Do you ever go through times in your life where you feel everything is changing, and yet, you are stuck in a holding pattern? Those are dry spells. I once told a friend that I was going to write a book and call it *"Holding Patterns: Going Through Life With Your Car in Neutral and Your Foot on the Accelerator!"* Okay, so much for my ability to title a book, but the thought was about things going haywire around you and you feel like you can't move. It's a whole lot of "hurry up and wait."

Sometimes we are so stuck in such a holding/waiting pattern that we don't feel we can even breathe. We need to have a plan to fall back on when things are not clear and we can't breathe or find our way. This is when we do what we KNOW to do, not what we FEEL like doing. Sometimes we need to just sit until God shows us what to do.

Do you remember when Naomi told Ruth (3:18) to **"sit still my daughter until you know how the matter will fall?"** The Hebrew word for "know" used here is "yada" (yaw-dah') which means to "ascertain by seeing". Wow! How many times do we determine our actions/reactions by judging circumstances, feeling, or reasoning? God gives us these emotions, but they ~**must**~ be used in compatibility and agreement with other Scripture. I know that I am all too quick to jump to conclusions because I "just know" that a certain matter will turn out a certain way. I "just know" that people will react in a certain way. I don't sit still. I don't wait until I know...until I can ascertain, determine, pinpoint by seeing the matter for what it is.

We see Ruth in this point of the story as a young woman whose heart has been broken by the death of her husband, but it appears that Boaz will redeem her and her widowed estate. The conflict in this little part of the story comes when Boaz tells Ruth that while yes, he is a relative, there is a relative closer to her than Boaz who could marry her if he wanted (kinsman redeemer). Can you picture this young woman who has for all purposes given up her own desires to care for her mother-in-law and now finds out that the man she really wants might not be the one that she will wed?

But Naomi, bless her soul, tells Ruth to wait... don't rush around and try to manipulate the circumstances yourself...be still...wait until you can see the truth.

Are we willing to wait? When life rocks and rolls and all we can do is sit there, be very careful to do just that...sit there. We tend to forget that the Lover of our Soul will not rest until the matter is settled. While it may appear that God is not taking aggressive steps on our behalf, He works behind the scenes of our life so that when the curtain is pulled back, all of the players are in place, and our life becomes a masterpiece from the Author of The Book of Life.

How hard it is to wait. It hurts and it challenges our faith. Remember though that if we are not challenged, it can be very difficult to get to the bottom of Truth...finding out that Truth for ourselves. It's all in the waiting.

When you find yourself in a holding pattern...hold on to Him...the One who will not let you go!

Tea Time???

By Beth Holland

Winter rolls around and brings cold crisp air, sweaters and the smell of wood smoke. It also tends to keep people inside more than the other seasons and so, life slows down more so than at any other time of the year. With all the usual running at a minimum, winter is a great season to concentrate on time with your family. One way to do this is to set aside a tea time. Tea time is a wonderful way to slow life down, de-stress, to build relationships and memories with the ones you love. If you've never done this, I highly recommend it! It can be as simple as a cup of tea and anything you have on hand for a snack, or it can be as elaborate as you can imagine: silver tea service, fine china, sterling silver and a butler in white gloves. But, the beauty of tea is that it has now become available to the masses and not just those with the silver, china and butlers!

Years ago, a home schooling friend, who grew up in England, introduced us to the tradition of tea, its history and rituals. We have been partaking tea ever since. As my girls have gotten older, they have become more enthusiastic about this time set aside for fun and fellowship, knowing that Mom is totally devoted to time with them, puts everything else aside, and is exclusively "theirs". We giggle and talk and they get the privilege of feeling "grown up" as they begin to bridge the world from adolescence to adulthood.

It's also a good time for learning nice manners as the children focus on the traditions of tea, and how to do things properly. They may not use the things they learn on a regular basis, but it is always helpful to know the correct thing to do so that in the future, they won't feel out of place or at a disadvantage. Invest in a volume of the "Blue Book" by Emily Post. (Real title: *Etiquette "The Blue Book of Social Usage"*) It can be found online from used booksellers. It contains the best information of any etiquette book I've ever seen for all possible situations. It covers ALL possible pieces of silverware and proper place settings.

If you like, you can begin with a study of tea as a tradition, and something about England (from which it came), the different kinds of teas, (High Tea, Cream Tea, etc.) following this topic until you are satisfied or ready to stop!

The custom of tea is making a resurgence in the U.S. at present. Tea rooms are opening up everywhere. In Columbus, Georgia, there is a place which teaches people how to open tea rooms. You can get more information at www.magnoliaivy.com

However you do tea, **don't lose the heart of it**: time with your loved ones, time to sow into them by listening, by laughing together, by being exclusively available to them.

The recipes below come from my cookbooks, *Bread For Life Volumes 1 and 2* (see end of the article for how to order these! ~editor). These recipes are a place to get started. You can take just one and use it, or you can do the entire menu. You can use this as a kickoff to the study or practice of tea, or you can use it as a culminating event. Let the children help with the baking, making,

setting the table, lighting the candles (if you choose to use them!), etc.

We have a dining room table that always has a lace tablecloth on it. (covered in plastic for protection. You can get plastic by the yard at Walmart or any fabric store. You can find it on a 60-inch wide bolt and in varying thicknesses.) Then, when we are ready to have tea, we set the table, put our candles on (my children love using candles!), get the food ready and sit down for some Mother-Daughter time. We linger as long as we want and make memories for tomorrow. This is a tradition I hope to pass onto my grandchildren (if the Lord tarries) through their mothers. If God is willing, I'll get to share a cup of tea over the tea table with my daughters and their children.

In the English tradition of tea, it is actually a meal. I'll let you do the research to find out how it began and who's idea it was, and how they fit tea in with their other meals! However elaborate or simply you do your tea, it is best to have something sweet and something savory. If all you have is sweet with sweetened tea, it gets to be a bit too much. So, have something, (even if it's just one thing) to counteract all the sweet things.

Winter Tea Table:

Tea Scones (BFL V1)

Jam

Clotted Cream (or substitute)(BFL V1)

Pesto Chicken Sandwiches (BFL V2)

Cheese

Oatmeal Spice Cookies (BFL V2)

Raspberry Chocolate Chip Muffins (BFL V2)

Fruit

English Tea Time with lemon or milk

Optional: Cake (BFL V 1 & 2) or Trifle (BFL V1)

Tea Scones

3 c. white wheat flour (I use soft wheat)
1 Tbsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp. salt
1/8 c. (2 Tbsp) honey
1 stick butter, cut into ¼ ' slices
1 c. dried currants [worth using!](or raisins)
1 c. buttermilk
1 egg, beaten

Combine dry ingredients, cut in butter with a food processor, knives or pastry blender until it resembles coarse cornmeal. Add currants. Make a well in the center and add buttermilk and honey. Stir until moistened. The dough will be somewhat dry and shaggy. Add more buttermilk a drop at a time if the dough won't pick up all the dry ingredients in the bowl. Once dough incorporates into a ball, turn onto a lightly floured board and knead 5-10 times. Press out with your hands to desired thickness (3/4-1 inch). Cut with a 2 inch biscuit cutter. Place on a non-stick sprayed baking sheet. Brush with beaten egg. Bake at 400° for 12- 15 minutes. Scones should be browned and firm to