

3 Tbsp. butter, melted
1 Tbsp. cinnamon
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp. honey

Slice apples about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick and place in a sprayed (Pam) treated deep-dish casserole. Mix the rest of the ingredients and pour over the apples. Spoon on topping (below). Cover with aluminum foil and bake at 425° for 45 minutes.* Remove foil for the last 10 minutes to brown, if necessary.

*Place casserole on a cookie sheet covered with aluminum foil AND spray treated (Pam) to catch any dripping and to keep casserole from sticking to the foil. This also makes for a very easy clean up!

Topping

$\frac{1}{4}$ c. honey
3 Tbsp white wheat flour (all purpose)
2 Tbsp. soft butter
 $\frac{1}{4}$ c. chopped pecans

Mix all the above. It will make a sticky ball. Take by teaspoons and dot over pie, above. Cook as directed.

From a Mother's Heart Enjoying the Journey By Cindy Rushton

Where are you?

Really! Where are you? This article is not for someone else... Not your husband. Not your mother. Not your best girlfriend. Not your Sunday School. Not your support group. Yes, it is JUST for you! Woman-to-woman. From my heart to yours!

Why? Well, as a woman, I hate to confess, but I see that we, as women, have a very strong tendency to get so wrapped up in all that we are to do each and every day—growing in godliness, nurturing our marriages, ministering to the hearts of our children, homemaking, ministering to those in our sphere of influence, homeschooling, working—that we FORGET to make every effort enjoy the journey! We get too busy to take those long walks...to snuggle up with great books...for an afternoon at the park--just playing together...for a game filled with giggles. Life goes by...and the word **enjoy** is the last word that we could use to describe our days.

Although this is our tendency, I have good news! In John 10:10 we read the words of Jesus, **"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it MORE ABUNDANTLY."** The Amplified Version says, **"I came that they may have and ENJOY life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows.)"**

Beloved, Jesus came, gave His whole life, not JUST to save your soul from eternity in Hell. He came with the purpose of giving us the gift of LIFE now, life more abundant! His plan is for us to seize each moment and enjoy every single bit of life!

Is this the description of your life today? Are you able to seize each day for all of the blessings that it holds for you? Are you even enjoying what you are doing? Are you doing all of the **right** things--baking homemade bread, making babies, wearing blue-jean dress jumpers, sewing all of your family's clothing, teaching the Bible at each service in your church--**everything**, yet coming up a bit frayed, tired, and empty? Read this letter from a beloved subscriber to my **Homeschooling the Easy Way** magazine...

"Please enter my subscription to HTEW. A friend forwarded hers to me...what a blessing! I have just begun my 13th year of homeschooling my oldest two sons, ages 17 and 15 1/2. I am also starting with our two daughters, ages 6 and 4 1/2 and have two toddler boys, 2 1/2 and 17 months. The youngest four were added to our family through adoption as newborns. When I read the part about your trip to Bath and Body Works, when your husband wouldn't let you buy anything for anyone but yourself, I started crying. I felt so silly sitting at my computer crying! But, you touched a place in my heart I guess, and I realized that I have felt so poured out, so emptied, for SOOO long. I have failed to allow Jesus to refill me, I have failed to allow others to minister to me, and I

have tried to push forward day after day after day even past the point of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual exhaustion. There have been some tough times in our life over the last year or two and it has taken a toll. I KNOW everything you mention, but I fail to put it into practice. After reading this, I plan to start. Thank you so much for being honest and for encouraging me to let Jesus have everything. I want to live in the freedom that only comes from abiding in Him. Your Sister In Christ."

How about you? Tough times? Poured out? Empty? Exhausted? I am absolutely sure that you feel like me. You say, "YES!! YES!! YES!!...But, oh, it is OK, because I love my family. I love my church. I love my friends." Beloved, this is exactly where I am coming from. God created a GOOD thing when He created women. There is nothing like the unending commitment of a woman or the preciousness of a mother "mothering." Chicken soup can fix anything when it is lovingly made by Mama. Boo-boo's are instantly healed with the gentle touch and compassion of Mommy. No one can make cookies like Mama. We love mothers. We love mothering!

I certainly do not want to ere on the side of feminism, but perhaps that is just the point. We have so reacted to the ideas of feminism that we often fail to let anyone close enough to mother and minister to us. We want to be godly. In doing so, we pour out to the point of personal starvation. From the world's eye, we have it all under control. We balance all of the demands quite beautifully, yet it is all a lie.

Yes. It is a big lie. A lie that is hurting all of the women who watch us from a distance, while beating themselves up for not being productive enough, together enough, strong enough.

I am coming to you woman-to-woman at the time that no one else has to see your tears. No one else has to even know that you are tired and weary. No one else has to know about your exhaustion. My dear one, take a moment to get bone-deep-honest. Give me all that you have! Honestly, how long has it been since you have really "let" others minister to and mother you? How long has it been since you have sat at the feet of Jesus until He was overflowing on you.

Oh! I know ALLLLLLL of the excuses. I have used them far too many times myself.

"I am TOO busy! I HAVE to..."
"If I don't do it, nobody else will..."
"They asked ME so it must be God's will..."
"I have gifts for...."
"How else will the WORLD learn about God???"
"I have died to MYSELF"

We all have our excuses. As a result, we grow steadily more and more weary...more exhausted... more frustrated... starving for joy... more parched...more lonely...needing satisfaction...looking for direction.

How about you? Do you know that you know that you KNOW your calling, but deep down you find yourself a bit tired of the push and pull? Wondering if what you are doing is really making a

difference? Are you finding yourself in a desert? A wilderness? Needing rest? Broken? In ruins? In Famine? Lonely? Parched? Needing Revival? Hungry for joy? Looking for direction? Needing satisfaction? Any of these describe you?

They have all described me at many of my weakest moments. Know those moments? When the whole world goes on while the crisis pounds away? When no one seemed to know OR care? Oh, yes... I have been there, but of course, as the queen of mommy martyrs, I would **never** have told anyone or asked for any help.

HELLO! Anybody relate?

Inevitably there is someone that this article is FOR YOU at this very moment. Although you enjoy and derive your greatest blessings from pouring your life out to those within your sphere of influence, you may wonder if what you are doing amounts to anything. You may be pouring out each and every day while your sacrifices receive very little if any appreciation. In fact, you may have adversity the whole time you are doing what you are called to do.

Want encouragement as you enjoy the journey? Take a look at Jeremiah 31: 1-22, 25 (especially verses 16-22, 25)

Find THE WAY!

This passage is key to enjoying the journey! If you are going to really enjoy the journey, God wants for you to know that what you are doing is exactly what He wants for you to do. He wants for you to know...really know that your work will be rewarded. Those seeds that you are sowing **will** reap a bountiful harvest. **KNOW** that there is hope for your future. The enemy's strategy is to convince you that there is no hope. If he can take your hope, he can work destruction in your life. **KNOW** that even in the darkest moment, there is hope. The morning will come and joy comes in the morning!

Made mistakes? Feel that your mistakes are beyond repair? Broken to the point that you cannot see any hope? God will restore you. God will restore your circumstances. God will restore all that you have lost along the way! Burdened? Tired? Weary? God will take away that yoke that is too hard for you to carry.

What does it take? Go back to this passage for God's answers...Return. Repent. Know that you are a darling child and beloved. He remembers you. Know that God yearns for you. God has great compassion—mercy, pity, and loving-kindness— for you.

So, what are you to do today? Take a look at verses 21-22...

"Set up for yourselves highway markers [back to Canaan], make for yourselves guideposts; turn your thoughts and attention to the way by which you went [into exile]. Retrace your steps, O Virgin Israel, return to these your cities. How long will you waver and hesitate [to return] O you backsliding daughter? For the Lord has created a new thing in the land [of Israel]; a female shall compass (woo, win, and protect) a

man.”

Look further down to verse 25...

“For I will fully satisfy the weary soul, and I will replenish every languishing and sorrowful person.”

Set up road signs, put up guideposts. Take note of the highway you took. Return. Stop wandering. Then! God will refresh you! God will bring that satisfaction you so desperately need. You will be ready to plant, ready to build (verse 28).

Jeremiah 6: 16 also talks about the WAY that we go, the roads...the paths in our lives...

“Thus saith the Lord: Stand by the roads and look; and ask for the eternal paths, where the good, old way is; then walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Want to enjoy the journey? Take the time along the way to stand, look, and ask for the OLD PATHS. Our culture has gotten off the old paths. Even though many SEE the good, old way; few will walk in it.

As godly women, we must search for it, seek for it. God, is our Good Shepherd. He will lead us in the good old paths. He will guide us to the way that brings rest! Want to enjoy the journey? Stand. Look. Ask for the old paths, the good old way. Then walk in it!

Surrender to His Work In Your Life

Easier said than done? Oh, yes! Our flesh gets in the way! We want to go our way, with our ideas, making ourselves feel good. Of course, instead of joy, we find strife, pain, and brokenness as we cater to SELF!

If we are ever to enjoy the journey, we must daily bring self to the cross in **surrender**. The path of self is a path of destruction. Oh, self can even seem **godly** at times. A while back I remember hearing a truth that brought more freedom to me as it demanded that I truly evaluate all that I do, not by **my** eyes, but through God's. It was said that if satan cannot get us to do the “bad” things, then he will settle for getting us busy doing good things rather than the best things that God has called us to do.

Blatant sin may never get us, but we are far from free of temptation. The “good” things are so much more alluring. They keep us too busy to ever get around to doing the very best things that we are designed to do.

If we want to enjoy the journey, we must become that vessel that God can use. We must to surrender to His work **in** our lives and His work **for** our lives. Oh, this is not easy! In fact, this is exactly where so many of us take side roads in our journey. This reminds me of the story of a tea cup...

Not Yet

Unknown...Slightly changed by ME!

There was a couple who used to go to England to shop in the beautiful stores. This was their 25th wedding anniversary. They both liked antiques and pottery and especially teacups. On this special day, they saw the most gorgeous teacup they had ever seen.

They asked the store clerk, "May we see that one? We've never seen one quite so beautiful." As the lady handed it to them, suddenly the teacup spoke!

"You don't understand," it said. "I have not always been a tea cup. I have QUITE a story! You see I was once just a blob of red clay. My master took me...rolled me...patted me...over and over and over. It hurt SO bad! I yelled out, 'Stop! Let me alone!' But he only smiled, 'NOT YET.'"

"Then I was placed on a spinning wheel," the teacup said, "and suddenly I was spun around and around and around. 'Stop it! I am getting dizzy!' I screamed. But the master only nodded and said, 'NOT YET.'"

"Then he put me in the oven. I never felt such heat. I wondered why he wanted to burn me, why he would not stop this! I yelled and knocked at the door. I could only see him through the opening as he shook his head and I read his lips saying, 'NOT YET.'"

"Finally the door was opened. He took me out of the oven and put me on a shelf to cool. 'There...that's better,' I said. And...then...he all the sudden began to brush and paint me all over. The fumes were horrible! I thought I would gag! 'Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!' I cried! He only nodded and said once again, 'NOT YET.'"

"Then, suddenly he put me back in the oven. Only not like the first one. This oven was twice as hot! I just KNEW I would suffocate! I begged. I pleaded. I screamed. I cried. All the time I could see him through the opening nodding his head, saying, 'NOT YET.'"

"I knew there was no hope. I would never make it now. I was ready to give up. But at that very moment the door opened and he took me out and placed me on the shelf. One hour later, he handed me a mirror and said, 'Look at yourself.' And I did. I said, 'That's not me! That could not be me! It's beautiful! I...I AM beautiful!'"

"Then he said, 'I want you to remember that I know it hurt to be rolled and patted, but if I had just left you, you would have dried up. I know it made you dizzy to spin around on the wheel, but if I had stopped, you would have crumbled. I know it hurt and it was hot and disagreeable in the oven, but if I hadn't put you there, you would have cracked. I know the fumes were bad when I brushed and painted you all over, but if I had not done that you never would have hardened OR had any color in your life. If I had not put you back into that second oven, you would never have been able to survive very long because the hardness would not have held. NOW, you are a finished product. You are what I had in mind for you when I first began!'"

Relate? My tendency has always been to pull away from the very things that are shaping me. If I never went through the fire, I would be happy. I simply detest change. I cannot stand letting go of things that have become a part of my life. The hardest struggles that I have moved through are simply my will colliding with God's perfect plan for my life. However, as I look back, my testimony is much like the tea cup's story. Oh, it is all so much better. I really do not miss those things that I laid down. In fact, all is so much better, that I cannot believe I was not more willing and surrendered.

Beloved, know that as you surrender to the work God wants to do in and through your life, all is working to prepare you to become that vessel that He can use mightily. It may mean that those things that are very good, may actually be just the things hindering us from enjoying the journey.

Re-fill Your Cup!

Now, again...this is another area that will make a difference in whether we do or do not enjoy the journey. Romans 2: 21 gets a little too personal if you ask me, "***Thou therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?***" Oops! What good Christian woman wants to be accountable to this passage? Isn't it "godly" to lay down your life for others? Lay down your life until DEATH...even death on a cross??? Would they ASK us to teach...or bake goodies...or sing in the choir IF we were not ABLE to do ALL things???

OK, buckle up...this is going to be hard! We have nothing to pour forth without lifting up our cup for a daily filling. Oh, don't take just this verse as a challenge, take a look back in Scripture to the book of Exodus. Do you remember the provisions for manna, that daily food in the wilderness? Take a look as a refresher:

Manna was to be gathered each and every day.

Manna was to be gathered first for the person, then for those within their tent, and then for those outside of their tent.

Only enough manna for that day was to be gathered. (It would mould by the next day!)

In the heat, more manna had to be gathered because it would melt in the heat!

Now, think about our tendencies. Our tendency is to give to the church and the world...then, if there is anything left over we give to our family...then, any remnants are left for ourselves. We think of ourselves as invincible, only gorging at a revival once a year and snacking on God each week during church. We starve ourselves and wonder where JOY could be hiding.

If we want to enjoy the journey, we must submit to God's way of ministering to others. Otherwise, we will not only find ourselves wiped out on a regular basis, but we will not be able to stay the course for the duration of the journey.

How do we fill our cup back up? First, we have to sit at the feet of Jesus. Remember Mary in Luke 10: 38-42? She **sat** when the temptation was there to get distracted, busy, anxious, and troubled. Not only did she sit at the feet of Jesus, but she also **listened** to His teaching. Listening is life-changing. Listening prepares us to become that vessel that God can use. Listening fills us up so we can pour forth to those that God brings our way.

Second, we must answer to Jesus' call. Matthew 11: 28-30 says...

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest, [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.] Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble (lowly) in heart, and you will find rest (relief and ease and refreshment and recreation and blessed quiet) for your souls. For my yoke is wholesome (useful, good—not harsh, hard, sharp, or pressing, but comfortable, gracious, and pleasant), and My burden is light and easy to be borne." Matthew 11: 28-30 (Amplified Bible)

If we want to be full to overflowing, we are only a breath away from the Source of our Living Water. He cries out for us to come to Him, learn of Him, take on His yoke, and find His way. He will refill us. He will renew us. He will do the work of renewing our heart, soul, and mind. He will gently bring us to the point that His commitments become our commitments. He will give us a heart for biblical womanhood. He will pour into us so we can pour into others from the overflow.

Pour Forth...

If we were in the Holy Land, we could go walking along side of the Sea of Galilee, following it into the Jordan River, and that on down to the Dead Sea. The most interesting thing is that while there is life in abundance in the Sea of Galilee and all along the Jordan River, the Dead Sea contains **no life**. In fact, all life placed in it soon dies.

As I have pondered this, I have naturally gone back to my tea-cup analogies. I can just imagine your face if we were sitting down to tea and I pulled out a beautiful tea cup that had been used day-after-day-after-day with re-fills, but no pouring forth. Just try your hand at this one. Gagging already? No one wants to drink from a dirty vessel...an empty vessel...or chipped vessel...or a full vessel that has tea from last week still in it.

The Dead Sea does not pour forth. One of the most interesting facts about the Dead Sea is that it is mostly sodium. AKA SALT! A little bit of salt is fine, but a sea full of it cannot sustain life. Notice the name **DEAD SEA???**

We can be filled to overflowing with the Word of God, but unless we are willing to be used by Him as a vessel to pour forth, we are just as ineffective as an unused tea cup or the Dead Sea. Want to enjoy the journey? Pour forth! Don't keep God ALL to yourself! Share!

Pour forth into your family! Isaiah 54 has the key for anyone wanting a ministry to our world. It is simple, but it is to **"enlarge the place of your tent."** Pour first at home.

Pour into your husband. He is your first and greatest ministry. Take care of him and you will find the rest of your life falling into place...your schedule, your relationship with your children, your outside activities, etc.

Pour into your children. It has been said that if you minister to the whole world, you **may** be remembered by your name. However, if you minister to the whole world and neglect your children, they will never forget your name OR what you have done. Oh, this is not a real great legacy. Far too many of us can remember our parents shortcomings while barely even knowing our parents.

God's plan, that plan that will undergird and strengthen us for the duration of the journey, is for us to pour forth into the lives of our families. He plans for us to pour into our family with all that we have. All that is excess flows to those that look into the family, not pouring into the world while leaving leftovers for our family.

Jesus ministered to the multitudes, yet only discipled a select few. We are called to the same call of discipleship. As we disciple our little ones, we can then minister to others as a family. Trust me, I have tried ministry as a lone-ranger and I have tried ministry with my family. The only way I can endure, much less enjoy the journey, is by combining our gifts, talents, and interests together for an effective ministry.

Pour into your home. Make your home a home! A shelter! A place of refuge! The key to your home is in your hand. Either you can build your home or you can tear it to pieces with your own

hands.

Cherish this time! Each and every moment! Make your home a place of sweet memories. Really evaluate what you are doing each day to see if it is eternal. How? Ask yourself the question, "IF this were the last day I had with my family, would I spend it like this? Would I read this book? Would I teach this lesson?" If it doesn't match up, then let it go. Life is just too short. The things that we do should undergird what we are training into our children, not undermine our values.

Take that time today for a good read aloud. Make time in your day for a game and giggles! Steal away for an afternoon at the park to JUST play! Learn together. Sit back and listen to those children as they share what they are learning...you might just get a new area of interest yourself! Talk together about their lessons. Minister together. Do the little things for others. Make the most of today to pour out all you have into the lives of those that will carry on the legacy after you.

So, What Do You Think?

So, what do you think? Right now where you are...what do you think? How are you doing? Really? I pray that you will take this moment to really think through what you are doing and why you are doing it. I pray that you will take a look at how you are doing along the way.

I find something within me that seems to naturally get so wrapped up in marriage, mothering, mentoring, homeschooling, and all of the other things that I **DO** that I forget to live and enjoy those closest to me. All of the pain that Jesus went through on my behalf goes down the drain because I get so wrapped up in **doing** that I forget to really enjoy life, much less experience abundant life!

I am not the only one here. As I finished out this past year on the road, I shared my heart with many of you only to find that this is **right** where you are as well. It just seems more "godly" to give, do, and work. We do what we do until it becomes monotonous, just a duty. We are at home in body, but our heart and mind is far, far away. I hate to say it but, much of what we do, we do and we have absolutely no idea why we are even doing it. We just assume that it is the only right thing to do.

My challenge to you, dear friend, is to take a good look at all of the paths before you. Take a look at those that simply lead to bondage. Take a look at those that lead to struggle and heavy burdens. Take a look at those that bring renewal and refreshment. Take a look at those that lead to life, abundant life. Find those paths that will bring you to surrender, renewal, and eventually a ministry of pouring forth. So, ready? The paths are there before you...will you enjoy the journey?

Lord, I Want To Know What Love Is!

By Cindy Rushton

Let's go back in time... Well, not that far...only to 1984! (No comments from the very young bunch here!) 1984 was a year that made history!

Do you know what the single greatest event of 1984 was? I met my prince charming—my Harold! I am sure that December 22, 1984 there was a huge tremble throughout the whole world... the stars shined more brightly than ever before...the flowers smelled more aromatic than ever... and I found my man!

In 1984, there was a new song that I have recently revisited. One of my favorite Christian Musicians, Kathy Troccoli, has re-made it as a love song to the Lord. (too cute!) I love this song. You see, it was our (Harold and me!) song. (Well, one of them!) Do you remember the song I Want To Know What Love Is? Here are the words, go back to 1984 with me for a moment...

I Want To Know What Love Is...

Mick Jones (© 1984 Somerset Songs Publishing, Inc./ASCAP)

Gotta take a little time
A little time to think things over
I better read between the lines
In case I need it when I'm older
This mountain I must climb
Feels like a world upon my shoulders
Through the clouds I see love shine
It keeps me warm as life grows colder
In my life, there's been heartache and pain
I don't know if I can face it again
Can't stop now I've traveled so far
To change this lonely life

CHORUS

I want to know what love is
I want You to show me
I want to feel what love is
I know You can show me

I'm gonna take a little time
A little time to look around me
I've got nowhere left to hide
Looks like Love has finally found me
In my life there's been heartache and pain

I don't know if I could face it again
Can't stop now I've traveled so far
To change this lonely life.

CHORUS

I want to know what love is
I want You to show me
I want to feel what love is
I know You can show me

Now, just in case you have not figured out by this point, I am a hopeless romantic. I love LOVE! However, this song was our song for several reasons other than just because it was a mushy love song. First, I really wanted to KNOW what love was so I could love Harold, my man, completely to death! Secondly, I loved this song because it carried my testimony of my quite short and unsuccessful track of love that I wanted to change—

In my life there's been heartache and pain
I don't know if I could face it again
Can't stop now I've traveled so far
To change this lonely life.

My pain was caused by many factors. First, my hardness of heart. I would not open my heart to anyone past a glimpse. I was truly "saving" my heart for the "perfect" guy. Little did I know that in boxing my heart off, I was really hardening it to a point that we (my prince and me!) would have years of undoing in order for me to find real trust, security, and complete abandonment. Bits of the hard heart I was "protecting" were chipped off, even though I thought my heart was "safe and secure" instead of vulnerable, open, and surrendered. Even when I found my darling Harold, my heart was safe and secure even through many years of our MARRIAGE! What I really wanted in our relationship, I could not have because I was protecting mySELF at all costs, even at the expense of KNOWING what love could be in the fullness of God's plan for me.

Love was also a tough thing for me because I had witnessed first-hand the break-up of my parent's marriage right in the middle of my dating years before I was ready to begin my own marriage. I assure you that my parents went to every extreme to protect me from any bad influence or possible ramification that could result from a divorce, it just did not work. Regardless of our high hopes, I have to warn that it seldom does! The heartache and pain of their lives naturally poured into the deep-dark recesses of my own heart. "Leaving my father and mother" and cleaving to this man of my dreams was a bit more difficult than anyone had ever cautioned. So, coming into marriage, my greatest need was perfectly described in this song, I Want To Know What Love Is.

What about you? Relate? Want to know what LOVE is? Just need for someone to show you? You are not alone. We all deep-down want to know what love, real love, is like. I think that it is safe to say that few of us just KNOW what love is like, much less how to love others. Perhaps that is why we find God commanding the older women to purpose to teach the younger women how to love their husbands and children (Titus 2: 3-5). We do not "*naturally*" know how to love. We must be

taught. If we are not taught and mentored in love, we will miss the mark. We, like the woman at the well, want to find that soul satisfaction that cannot be met anywhere, by anybody but our loving Bridegroom. But, how? So, what does this love look like? Let's go to (I am sure you know which passage!) 1 Corinthians 13, the Bible's Love Passage...

First Corinthians Love...

Now, let's get the context of this passage. It is sandwiched in between the precious teaching of Paul about spiritual gifts and their use in the Body of Christ. We are in such need of this complete teaching. Of course, I am not going to dig into the Spiritual Gifts and ideas for using them in the Church today in this article. Knowing what our gifts are and how we can effectively use them to minister to one another is vital. It is one of the most important studies we can do as we step up to the call of God for our lives. However, every single gift, every single ministry within the body of Christ, is for the purpose of ministering LOVE to others.

The bottom line is not in "ministering" or "doing" for others, it is in loving God and loving others. When we do this, the rest comes in naturally. When we love God and others, we naturally use our gifts without any special effort on our behalf. However, we need to learn what Love is FIRST. We need to learn how to love the way God wants for us to love Him, others, and ourselves. I hate to admit it, but I am just like the Corinthian Church. I tend to get so wrapped up in what I am called to do that I simply forget that the main thing is love. I think that we all do. We forget that the main thing of the main thing is all boiled down to one very big thing that challenges us all...love.

When we learn how to really LOVE others, we learn how to impact our culture. When we get back to love, we will have a revival in our land that will rival that of the early church. But, that is only when we get back to Love, when we learn what love is. So, now, take a step-by-step look at 1 Corinthians 13 from the Amplified Version (this is SO good!)...

If I [can] speak with the tongues of men and even of angels but have not love (that reasoning, intentional, spiritual devotion such as is inspired by God's love for an in us), I am only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers (the gift of interpretation of the divine will and purpose), and understand all of the secret truths and mysteries and possess all knowledge, and if I have [sufficient] faith so that I can remove mountains, but have not love (God's love in me) I am nothing (a useless nobody). Even if I dole out all that I have [to the poor in providing] food, and if I surrender my body to be burned or in order that I may glory, but have not love (God's love in me), I gain nothing.

Hummm...convicting? Oh, yea! You know we can be busy doing all of the right feeling stuff—wearing the "right" clothes, reading the "right" version of the Bible, speaking with all of the "churchee" words that "show" we read our Bible through in a year EVERY year, going to church every time the doors are open, working our fingers to the bone at church, passing out gospel tracts door-to-door every single week, wearing our "What Would Jesus Do?" shirts and lapel pins, listening to our Christian music ONLY, eating our "good" Old Testament foods—have I missed anything? WELL, I MEAN THAT TOO! Yes, we can do all of our big check-list of "good" things, yet we can fail to do what we are specifically called, by God, to *do*.

Wonder what you are "supposed to do?" Wonder what rule of thumb you could have for judging what you should be about doing from day-to-day? When the Pharisees and Saducees came to Jesus in order to try to trap Him, this was their very question. In fact, check out their entire conversation along these lines. They wanted a rule rather than a relationship. A list instead of love. You may have this same conversation with God yourself...

Then, one of them, which was a lawyer, asking Him a question, tempting him, and saying, "*Master, which is the great commandment (What is the main thing? The MOST important thing I am to do?) in the law? Jesus said unto him, "Thou shalt LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF. On these two commandments hang all the law and the proph-ets."* (Matthew 22: 34-40)

What IS the most important thing? Among all of the options of things that we *could* do, among all of the laws and commandments, which ONE THING is the most important? The greatest commandment of all? If we can get ONE thing down and cover all of the "bases," what is it? LOVE!

Lord, I Want To Know What Love Is!

Now, are you with me crying out, "Lord! I Want To Know What Love Is?" Feel that soul-deep cry bursting forth? Well, beloved, God is so absolutely precious! He wants for us to LEARN FROM HIM what love is. He wants for us to experience FROM HIM a love that is true, complete, unconditional and never-ending. Then, He wants for us to pour forth this love into the lives of others. But, WHAT IS LOVE??? Well, go back to 1 Corinthians 13 for perhaps the most specific description of God's love that you will find, dwell on this one, it should keep us ALL busy for a while!

Love endures long and is patient and kind; love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy, is not boastful or vainglorious, does not display itself haughtily. It is not conceited (arrogant and inflated with pride); it is not rude (unmannerly) and does not act unbecomingly. Love (God's love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; it is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it takes no account of the evil done to it [it pays no attention to a suffered wrong]. It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail. Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances, and it endures everything [without weakening]. Love never fails [never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end]...

Continue to the last verse that I am sure you already know by heart...

And so faith, hope, love abide [faith—conviction and belief respecting man's relation to God and divine things; hope—joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation; love—true affection for God and man, growing out of God's love for and in us], these three, but the greatest of these is love.

Does that cover it all or what? We could study this passage every day for the rest of our lives

and NEVER get it all "down." Don't you agree? In fact, if you want ONE passage to choose as your "goal" for this year, I suggest this one! It is mine! I want to KNOW this kind of love. I want for those that are closest to me to KNOW this kind of love coming from ME. I want for the stranger who meets me for a moment to KNOW this kind of love!

The High Mark of Love...

As I said earlier, I have re-visited our old love song I Want To Know What Love Is. Deep down, I know that I will always have a higher mark to reach for in the area of love.

As I think of the tremendous command by Jesus, the great command, I am, quite frankly, overwhelmed. Loving GOD with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength? That is all I have! Nothing is left to hold in reserve. This means loving God with complete abandonment! Having a "love story" with Him that began with coming as I was (In some pretty bad and sad shape here!). Growing more and more in love with Him every day throughout all eternity! Glory! (Of course, that is another article in this issue!) Then, carrying this command into my relationships with those around me. My husband, children, friends, and total strangers all qualify as my neighbors. They are the ones I pour forth into as God fills me up. However, if we were to look at the real love God desires that we truly KNOW, we would see that His command begins first with loving ourselves, so we can then love others as we love ourselves.

God has been working this one in me STRONGLY in the recent days. My pastor taught a message series a while back on "Loving God with all of Your Heart, Soul, Mind, and Body." The passage above from Matthew was one of the references. As I sat there listening intently, God whispered into the depths of my whole being that He knew of my love for Him and others. He knew of my passion for Him and others. Yet, that love and passion for Him and others would never be as full and abundant until I learned how to love MYSELF! Well! Ugh! Couldn't He make this a bit easier? Less convicting?

I don't know about you, but I cannot match up to 1 Corinthians love for MYSELF each and every day. I am my very worse enemy! I am so hard on myself! And, of all of the people in the whole wide world, can't I just take it? Love MYSELF!!! This is a REAL challenge. But, by the grace of God, I am trying to learn! Then, if that is not enough of a challenge, I have a VERY difficult time bringing that 1 Corinthians love into my marriage when I face conflicts and differences with this man that I would like to MAKE perfect TODAY! Just reading 1 Corinthians 13 while thinking of whether my love for Harold truly makes the mark, gives me complete hibby-jibbies (I do not think that word is EVEN in the English Language...it is that BAD of a feeling!) Oh, and then, the children...and my friends...and the whole world! Oh, so this is what love is, no wonder God said that ALL can be summed up in this great command! It affects every area of our lives!

Before you become dismayed, overwhelmed, and just plain quit, I want to share with you that God is so very faithful! He does not expect for us to do this great work in ourselves! He just asks that we humbly offer ourselves as vessels before Him. In turn, He will pour all of His love throughout every part of us. His great love will uproot the pain and heartache that could stifle us for life! His great love will surgically remove the bitterness while flushing us full of an abundance of miraculous love! His great love will give us hope on our most despairing of days! His great love

will give us a ministry of reconciliation toward those we hold most dearly and those we will not even remember their names or faces until eternity! His great love will pour on through us into all of those precious souls we are called to love! Hallelujah!

Need To Know What Love Is???

So, what about you? Do you really NEED to know what love is? Are you crying out in pain... heartache... bitterness for just another chance at real love? Are you sitting there searching for a glimmer of hope? Are you in deep need of reconciliation between you and God? You and your spouse? You and your child? You and a friend? Or even with your own self?

Oh! You CAN KNOW what love is! Seek to draw close to the Lord. Just ask Him one thing. Ask Him to show you one thing that you can KNOW before you even ask that He will show you from the very depths of your heart, soul, mind, and body. Ask Him, "Lord, I Want To Know What Love Is!"

Want to know ahead of time what He will do? He will show you what love is in a very real, very personal, and mighty way. He will speak His sweet words of love into your ear. He will write upon your heart His love song for you. He will give you a love for those in your life who are very unlovely. Oh, beloved, ask Him! I can tell you that the treasures of heaven are only waiting for your request! So, go ahead! Ask Him. OK! I will ask Him with you. Get ready for the adventure! Here goes...

"Lord, We Want To KNOW What Love Is!
We want for YOU to SHOW us!
We want to FEEL what Love is!
We KNOW that YOU can SHOW us!
Lord, We Want to KNOW What Love Is!"

The Great I AM: Everything We Will Ever Need! To Study Through The Names Of God Ishi...Our Husband!

*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

Day after day she came at the same time, the same place. Of course, she had to come then...no woman like her could come at the same time as the ladies. It just seemed that all of her life's ambitions were sold out. She had dreamed of being one of them. But, here she was alone...disappointed...bitter...and a bit disillusioned.

She was there for water. Yet, this water seemed to not satisfy her thirst past swallowing it. She had tried religion. Of course, she was not the "religious" type, didn't fit in there either, if you knew what she meant. She had tried men, one after another after another. In fact, so many that she was just recuperating from her fifth divorce and the man she lived with was not even her husband. When no one else was looking she would cry herself to sleep from the ache...the ache that went soul-deep for just a bit of satisfaction, soul satisfaction.

Then, just like her life had gone to shambles, there He was! Oh, it was not just helping her to get water. That water would not last a whole day. Oh, it was not sharing a kind word to her on behalf of His church. She would have seen through that exterior immediately. It was not even a typical conversation. He was interested in her; not the ways that other men had been interested all of her life. This Man brought her exactly what she was looking for ALL of her life! Nothing would be the same again! He knew everything about her...and yet, He wanted to offer her a new start...a new

life...that life she had always dreamed about!

I don't know about you, the details in my life may be a bit different from this beloved woman of God found in John 4, but deep down we are the same. I have tried almost everything under the sun to satisfy that deep longing in my soul. I think that we all have this tendency. Have you found yourself looking for that soul satisfaction on every corner, in everything, only to come up empty and in worse shape than before?

What are some of the things that you have "run" to in your quest?

Oh, beloved, I know that quest! I know that longing in my heart for the ONE thing that could satisfy. For me, I have looked at food, liquor (as a teen), and even COFFEE! I have tried to be godly, look godly, act godly, have godly friends, listen to godly music, cook godly foods...yes, none of them satisfied me any more than the religions that failed the women at the well. All were a shallow substitute for the soul satisfaction that could only come from One Source. Oh, and that Source was not even my husband and children. I wish I could count (or forget!!) the number of times that I sought for Harold to just make things better. As wonderful as he is, it was almost as if he could not fill that void...well, that void was just a bit too big for any human to fill. We all have a huge void. A deep longing that cannot be met by anyone or anything. Sure, we try. But, the end is the same for all of us. All is vanity. All is empty. All fails us...well, except for One.

Ishi...

From eternity, there is a theme all throughout Scripture that we will take a look at in this issue. That theme follows along with yet another Name of God that you have got to know! It is yet another Name that will show you even more about God than ever before! It is a Name that you can run to when you are empty, parched, weary, and needing that soul satisfaction! It is a Name that you can run to when you need intimacy and real companionship. Let's go to Hosea 2: 16 to find this Name...

"And it shall be in that day, says the Lord, that you will call Me Ishi [my husband], and you shall no more call Me Baali [my Baal (God)]."

Now, I have to let you know that this passage has become a precious passage to me in the last couple of years. One of the things that I have been studying (as I have told you in other issues) is a Huge Study on the Names of God. I have noted that we see so much as we look at the Names of God in the Bible. Probably the most important thing that we see is the character of God. As we look at His Names, we learn what we can count on and what we cannot count on as we encounter God. Another important thing that we see about God is His willingness to become all that we need for any given situation whether good or bad, blessing or trial, in sickness or in health. All throughout Scripture we see God revealing Himself and His Names to different people in real life situations. We see that He is truly all we need for any situation. Finally, we see that getting to

know Him through His Names helps us to also know what life is all about. It helps for us to see the real purpose behind the events in life. It helps us to have meaning. As we come to this Name of God, we see all of these things again.

Ishi...I have really come to love this Name. I think it may be because I have been able to see God in a new way. Let me explain. I think you will find this Name to be awesome too!

Lover of Our Souls...

First, God wants to be MORE in our lives than just our "God." Go back to Hosea 2: 16. Can you hear His heart crying out for more? Why do you think that He wants for us to know Him as Ishi, our Husband in contrast to God, Baali, Baal?

What do you think is significant about the Name Ishi? What do you think that God want for us to know about Him?

Do you remember other Scriptures that introduce God as our Husband, Bridegroom, Lover? (Hint! They are ALL throughout Scripture!) List a few below and what you find about God...

What do you think God wants for us to know about Him from these passages?

What do you think that God wants for us to know about His desires for US as you look at some of

these passages?

I have a couple of thoughts from my study...

God is...

Mushy...First, as we look at this Name of God, we are introduced to a really mushy God! Comfort of all comfort! He is not detached. He is not distant. He is here and He wants to be intimate with you! He loves the long talks (For guys, be comforted! He is the perfect spouse that IS silent at times!)...the long walks...to tell you the special "secrets" that only you can know...to hold you through the storms of life...and to watch you enjoy all of the beauty and abundance in life. He is just plain mushy!

Faithful...Oh, we may not be faithful to Him, but He is always faithful to us. His love for us is without limits. It is without any conditions. He is totally faithful, forever! Sure, His heart gets broken when we are not faithful (see Hosea), but He is always there with open arms, waiting for us to run to Him!

There...He is there! He will never leave us or forsake us. He is always ready to listen, comfort, and save His "damsel-in-distress!" He never has something else that is more important to do or somewhere more important to be. He is always there. He wants to hold us, comfort us, dream with us. He wants to talk—anywhere, anytime, about anything!

Hopelessly Romantic...Yep! Ishi! He is hopelessly (or HOPEFULLY) romantic! The little things are precious to Him. He loves the sweet intimacy with us as much as we do. In fact, one of the things that has meant so much to me is just knowing that as lovers just "die" to see, touch, be together, and tell their secrets; so, our Ishi is dying to "court" us. He looks forward to those moments each day spent just one-on-one speaking (prayer and Bible Study). He treasures just being there with you and you being there for Him. He longs just to tell you the mighty things that no one else can know! He wants intimacy with you!

Love, Love, Love!

I remember the moment my eyes first met Harold's. It seemed that the rest of the world went on around us, but my heart skipped beat and all of my life changed! In fact, I completely changed. When he would call me, Oh boy, everyone would know it! I have every letter he ever wrote me... every gift he ever gave me (except for the Blow-Pop—I do have the wrapper and the note he attached to it!). When he simply touched me, I felt good all over! I longed to simply be by his side, basking in his presence.

As we married, this love affair continued. I even got to have HIS NAME! I began to share all of

his life. He was (and is) the first person I see and feel when I wake up every morning and the last person I see and feel at night. On the coldest days, he is right there to snuggle up to. On the toughest of days, his big, strong arms comfort me. Few other things can bring the satisfaction that the marriage relationship can bring. Well, except that this relationship mirrors the relationship that God wants for us to have with Him. Do you see similarities? Jot them down below...

The Picture of Marriage...

Second, God has a good plan for a relationship with us...wanta be a bride??? Now, you have gotta know that I am TOTALLY fascinated with how symbolism in the Scripture coincides with real life lessons (I KNOW that God had a plan in it, it just amazes me when I see it again and again!). There is none in the whole Bible more precious than the symbolism of the marriage relationship between Christ and the Church. We can see so much of what God wants for us spiritually if we get a glimpse at His design for the marriage relationship. Dying to know what on earth I am talking about? Let's look at several Bible Passages that will help us to understand God's purpose, plan, and vision for marriage.

First, take a look at Genesis 2: 18-25... Read the passage through several times. Now, list below some of the reasons that you find here that God designed marriage (Need a little help? Glance at my article on It's A Covenant Thing, in this issue!) ...

Now, thinking of your relationship with God, how can He become your Husband? How can you become His Bride? What would this "look" like?

That is not the only picture of marriage in the Bible. Take a look at 1 Peter 3: 1-7. List below some of what you glean about the marriage relationship...

In what ways are you a "co-heir" with Ishi?

Now, take a look at Ephesians 5: 21-33. What does this passage say about marriage and the marriage relationship?

List some ways that Christ is "the perfect bridegroom" for you...

What are some ways that we minister to Him and help Him as His bride? (see the Amplified Version for some awesome descriptions)

One thing that I love about marriage is that two complete individuals are brought together as one entity, yet neither loses their identity. Both bring all their gifts, talents, strength, wisdom, experience, interests, abilities to contribute to the relationship. Neither loses themselves. Rather, the mystery of marriage is how God takes two individuals, makes them one, yet instead of simple addition, we find that 2 are expanded into something that is far beyond the reach of either individually. No one else could combine with each to equal this

awesome equation. Neither can reach the full potential without the other. It is simply awesome!

Now, take this into your "marriage" with Christ. Have you ever thought of the power that is unleashed as you become one with Christ? What do you see as some of the possibilities that you have as Christ joins to you to "expand" you?

Oh, that is not all. The benefits are not just yours. Jesus desires YOU too! How does He reach His fullest potential as you become one with Him?

Isn't this awesome? Too vast to even think about. Truly the mystery that Ephesians calls it! Now, take a look at 1 Corinthians 11. This passage discusses Godly authority. In verse 7, we see WHY there must be Godly authority. What does an orderly home do?

Yes, Godly authority in the marriage relationship brings glory to God. As we look at our relationship with Ishi, how can our relationship bring glory to God?

The Perfect Bridegroom...

Marriage is such an awesome gift from God. However, it can also be the culprit behind some of the yuckiest problems! Hate to admit that! Especially because I am one who simply LOVES love!

It did not take us long into our marriage before I began to realize that Harold was NOT God! Surprise! I knew he was not a god. But, deep down, my beliefs and my actions showed that I had a tendency that many of us have...to set them up on a pedestal as our "god" rather than walking with them in this journey as our "co-heir." (1 Peter 3) What was the result? Well, much strife and disappointment. Until I realized that Harold could not ever be my soul satisfaction, only Ishi could be that! In spite of how wonderfully satisfying my relationship has always been with Harold, he is not even created to fill that deepest need of my soul. Only God can have that place.

What difference does this make in my life? Well, during those nights when Harold has really

needed his rest, God has been the One to stay up "talking" with me. During those times that Harold really had no idea what to say or do to make me feel better, God knew just the Word to speak, just the touch I "needed!" Now the pressure has come off of my darling husband and transferred to my "perfect Bridegroom." Trust me, Harold is thankful for the transfer!

Want to know what I mean by the "perfect Bridegroom?" Well, let's do a sweep through the Bible taking a look at some of the grooms throughout Scripture that can give us a "type" of husband that God sees as a good "picture" of Him and His relationship with us. (Note! This may take more time. In fact, you may want to stop at this section and really dig into this study for a while! I only give you a few "husbands" from Scripture. You may want to do a complete study on "grooms" or "husbands" from Scripture.)

⇒ **Adam**...Yep, first of all, let's look at the very first groom. Do you see some similarities between "Adam" as a husband and "Ishi" as our Husband?

In what ways are the relationships similar?

I love looking at the "first" groom and our Groom. Just as she reflected the nature of him, so we are given the call to reflect the nature of Ishi. Just as she was provided for him as he "slept," so we were given to Christ as He "slept." Oh, that is not all! It is so precious to see Adam's loneliness and subsequent longing for a wife. It is even more precious to see that our Groom is lonely for us and longing for intimacy with us! I, also, love reading about Adam's first moment of actually seeing Eve. He was ecstatic when he saw her. Oh, that is nothing to compare with the excitement that God has as He looks forward to the completion of His holy bride and His union with us! It is just too awesome!

⇒ **Solomon**...Look at the Song of Solomon. Read this book of the Bible considering that this is the way that God sees you. You are so precious to Him. What do you learn about your groom?

What does He think about you?

What kind of a commitment does He have for you?

From this passage, what do you find as some "tips" that can help you become the "bride" that you want to be?

⇒ **Boaz**...Look at the whole book of Ruth. If Boaz is to be a "type" of groom like Ishi, then what can we learn about our Bridegroom as we look back over Boaz' life?

What do we learn about preparing for a great marriage from this Biblical picture?

What are some things that made this marriage sizzle?

⇒ **Hosea**...Look at the whole book of Hosea. This book has been tucked away in "hiding" in my Bible my whole life. It became a very special book of the Bible when I found out about my husband's "other woman." I had thought that we would be together forever... well, except "affair-do-us-part!" Well, God had another plan!

In this book of the Bible, Hosea is instructed by God to take Gomer, a harlot, as his wife.

During their marriage, Hosea endures the pain of her betrayal over and over and over. What was he to do? Yes, you know. Take her back again and again and again. Why? What was God thinking?

As Harold and I went through the re-building the rubbish that was left after the storm of adultery, we learned more about unconditional love and forgiveness than we could have learned in 50 years. We learned what it was like to truly Agape Love each other. Why did God keep us together? Well, I think it was for the same reason that God kept Hosea and Gomer together. What were some reasons that you see?

Real quick flip over to Malachi 2: 13-17. This passage was another sobering passage that God took me to as He convicted me to forgive Harold and restore the marriage covenant of our youth. I could not argue with His hatred of divorce. I also could not argue with His reasons. Do you see them? List them below...

Now, using this passage, go back to Hosea. What does God want for us to see in marriage, even the marriages that may be rubbish?

How can this impact our society? How does the high divorce rate among Christians impact it now?

How can a godly marriage communicate unconditional love? Forgiveness?
