

Back to the Garden
The Marriage, The Purpose

Hope D. Blackwell

Copyright © 2004

Back to the Garden, The Marriage, The Purpose
by Hope D. Blackwell

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved solely by the author. The author guarantees all contents are original and do not infringe upon the legal rights of any other person or work. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without the permission of the author. The views expressed in this book are not necessarily those of the publisher.

Unless otherwise indicated, scripture quotations are taken from THE HEBREW – GREEK KEY WORD STUDY BIBLE, KING JAMES VERSION “KJV” Copyright © 1984, 1991 by AMG International Inc. Revised Edition © 1991.

Scripture quotations identified as “*NIV*” are taken from the New International Version of the Bible. Copyright © 1996 by Zondervan Corporation. The “*NIV*” trademark is registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by International Bible Society. Use of this trademark requires the permission of International Bible Society.

www.xulonpress.com

Dedication

This book is dedicated to people everywhere who desire to walk as one in the promises of God for marriage, while loving, learning, and growing together into an anointed *tag team* for His glory.

I also dedicate this book to all the God appointed and anointed couples, true overcomers, *keeping it real*, yet determined to operate in sync with God's plan for marriage.

Acknowledgements

Thank You, my most precious and beloved Holy Spirit. Thank You for being my Daddy, Husband, Big Brother, Best Friend, Keeper, Comforter, Fortress, Shield, and my Peace in the midst of it all. Thank You, Father, for the awesome threesome, the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. I worship You because of who You are. Your awesomeness is overwhelming, and I could sing of Your love forever. My ears had heard of You, but now my eyes have seen You. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

Thank You, Father, for my enemies. They pushed me closer to You, deeper in Your Word, and deeper in Your presence. Thank You, Father, for every trial, every test, and every time You brought me through. In the midst of it all, I am becoming who You want me to be.

Thank you, my anointed, appointed, and supportive children, mother, sisters, brothers, friends, and mentors. Last but not least, my home church pastors. The wisdom and examples of godliness, holiness, and integrity you deposited in me set a standard for excellence in my lifestyle and ministry. Thanks guys! You watched me repeatedly go through the fire and you had the faith to believe I was always in the capable hands of God. Thanks be to God, Satan loses again! *Now let's kick some devil butt!*

THANK YOU READERS! OUR BEST IS YET TO COME.

Preface

We are entering into a season of a greater release of wisdom, power, and resources to the people of God. Although the enemy is waging war on the people and things of God, there is a move of God, by which greater evangelistic and teaching ministries are being established, ineffective traditions of men are being broken, and more lives are being transformed. A remnant of end time, radical for Christ, saints are winning souls to Christ like never before. There is no more room for church as usual. God is pressing on the hearts of His elect to minister to the unbelievers with love and compassion. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the community of believers are working in unity to break racial, social, political, and denominational barriers. God is taking the wealth of the wicked and releasing it into the hand of His people who will do His will, and accomplish His mission of reaching the lost, throughout the Earth.

I challenge you to walk as one in the purpose, the power, and the predestined places that God has appointed for you.

Table of Contents

Introduction: Marriage for the Glory of God

Chapter 1 What to Leave and How to Cleave, *for Couples*

Chapter 2 Naked and Unashamed

Chapter 3 Understanding Your Spouse

Chapter 4The Power of Agreement and Serving

Chapter 5From Genesis to Revelation

Chapter 6 Sex in Marriage

Introduction

Marriage for the Glory of God

In today's society, there is a tremendous decay in the moral fiber of the family. The divorce rates among Christians have exceeded those of Non-Christians. This is a staggering truth. The increase in failed marriages is caused by some of the following issues:

- 1) Individuals who lack emotional and spiritual stability.
- 2) Unrealistic expectations of and in marriage.
- 3) The absence of adequate counseling, teaching, and understanding about marriage and its purpose.
- 4) A deficiency of Godly examples of successful marriage.
- 5) Poor and ineffective communication.
- 6) The absence of earnest prayer and agreement in marriage.
- 7) The unwillingness to make sacrifices in marriage.

Through this book, God will expose the root cause of these issues and instruct us toward how we can walk effectively and victoriously in marriage. As believers, we know the word of God, but often fail to apply its truths in our daily life. Too often, we voice our opinions about the issues and inadequacies of others, while failing to live in accordance with God's word. In Hosea 4: 6 God warns us that people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. When we study God's word, seeking His wisdom and understanding, we will grasp the awesome principles and promises that guarantee our success as believers, both single individuals and married couples.

To have a fulfilling and prosperous marriage, you must understand God's purpose and instructions for marriage. You must know that God requires honesty, communication, understanding, agreement, and sacrifice in marriage. As you read this book and prayerfully study the scriptures contained herein, you will explore deep truths that will

not only reveal God's purpose for marriage, but will also equip you to experience marriage the way God ordained it to be.

In your journey back to the garden, you will learn how to operate in the principles necessary to have a healthy and fulfilling relationship with God and your spouse. You will further learn how these powerful relationships can be a blessing to others in your family, ministry, and business. As you continue reading, God will reveal marriage His way for His glory.

People marry for many reasons, most have little to do with God's purpose for marriage. Some marry due to reasons such as; financial stability, intimidation, security or insecurity, low self-esteem, children, loneliness, or lust - all of which become a weak foundation. Such a foundation is inapt to support a relationship, much less a healthy marriage. These marriages are anything but holy matrimonies. They often end in turmoil, damaging us as well as our relationships with Christ, our spouse, and our family. Consequently, we retreat and separate from our God ordained purpose as believers. We fail to realize these decisions lead to circumstances which permit the enemy's access into our lives. There is one consolation to bad circumstances; whether societal or self-imposed, there is always hope. Because of the love of our most merciful and gracious God, every possible situation that we could face or imagine has a solution with healing and deliverance provided by Jesus Christ. We must nurture our spirit by embracing, developing, and strengthening our relationship with Him through worship, praise, prayer, and study. There is no situation too great for God to restore if we are prayerful and obedient.

In examining the accounts of the first recorded marriage; that of Adam and Eve, it is obvious that even their marriage faced difficulty. Adam and Eve lived in the very presence of God Almighty, with direct access to Him and everything they needed. They didn't have to struggle with the issues that many marriages face today. Apparently, it was difficult to crucify the flesh and keep Satan out of their marriage, considering they quickly failed in doing so. How much more difficult is it in current times? We must go

back to the garden and determine where Adam and Eve were sidetracked from the fulfillment of God's purpose for their marriage. We must then examine ourselves to insure that we don't follow the same course.

As we journey back to the garden, we will learn to fill gaps caused by poor communication, lack of wisdom, insecurity, low self esteem, and other types of baggage, often taken into marriage. We will be equipped and empowered with the teaching and revelation of the word of God to walk victoriously in areas that once left us stressed, drained, and defeated. The institution of marriage is for the glory of God, the building of His kingdom, and the increase and prosperity of His people doing His work. When we cease to please and glorify the lusts of our flesh, we can then walk in marriage God's way for His glory. Let's go back to the garden and put the Holiness back in the matrimony. I declare that lives will be transformed by the deep truths revealed by God in this book.

Chapter One

Learning What to Leave and How to Cleave

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh. Genesis 2:24 (KJV)

It is interesting to note that in most societies throughout history, the father presents the bride to the groom in marriage. The foundation of this tradition is found in the Scriptures as we see God, the Father, presenting the woman to the man as He presented Eve to Adam. Ceremonially, we also witness the woman leaving the authority of her father and being entrusted to a new authority – her husband. Unfortunately, in the modern marriage ceremony, there is no representation of the man’s departure from anyone or anything, especially not in our western culture. As we further explore this institution you will discover that the mandate to *leave and cleave*, applies both to men and women. We will further determine whom the father and mother represent in this transfer and the revelation behind this departure.

Our scripture of reference begins, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother.” The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines *leave* as: *depart from, abandon, and terminate association with*. Strong’s Complete Dictionary of Bible Words defines *leave* in this scripture as the Hebrew word *arah*, *which means to leave, uncover, and/or make naked*. Although this scripture refers to the man, we have already established that the woman leaves the father, as represented in scripture when she leaves the Heavenly Father who fashioned her and presented her to the husband. We must realize that this requires not only physically leaving the authority of the father and mother, but also what they represent. Throughout childhood, the parents are the delegated *authorities* in our lives. The Greek noun for authority is *exousia*, which translates to, *power or right to control*. The verb is *exousiaza*, which means *to exercise full privilege over*. Once you become an adult, the role of the parents should change and they should become your “*former authorities*”. Fathers and mothers, despite being considered good or bad parents, custodial or absent, make the most impressionable deposits into the development of our

lives. For instance, where a parent is absent, the deposit may be negative, such as the loss of self-worth or self-devaluation, which so prevalently exists within our culture today. There may even be two parents; however, the household may be dysfunctional, which also has a negative effect on the child. In any case, the way we grow up directly affects our adult lives. In some cases for better others worse. Your parents' influence or lack of influence in your life significantly impacts your attitudes, values, traditions, and standards. Many of these impartations will need adjustments and others even abandoned, as you develop and grow into your own family.

Let us further examine who or what the "*former authorities*" are in a spiritual context. In the natural, these are any and everything that control, rule, or has rights over you. In a spiritual sense, these include past or present hurts, emotional pain, lusts, strongholds, addictions, sins, individuals, self-will, and anything you are surrendered and captive to. Left in tact, these authorities block the ability of the Holy Spirit to flow freely in your life and prohibit His ability to usher you into divine purpose. These are all barriers to becoming joined to your spouse and to the purpose for which God has called you. You must submit to Christ and leave your "*former authorities*" in order to fulfill the call of God on your life and have a truly successful marriage.

Let's examine three common *authorities (that which has rights, control or rule over you)* often carried into marriage which we often fail to "*leave*" (*depart from, abandon, and terminate association with*). They are insecurity, past relationships, and controlling behavior.

1. Insecurity

If you have faced issues of promiscuity, low self-esteem, rejection, any type of abuse, or abandonment by someone you've loved, it is likely that insecurity is an area in need of healing in your life. If you haven't received healing and restoration in this area, these unresolved insecurities can cause a number of other issues to manifest in your marriage. Insecurity causes fear, deceit, and pride. In marriage, insecurity

causes constant confusion. It keeps those around you from walking in freedom and honesty in an effort to avoid hurting your feelings and emotions, which are unsundered to Christ. This will cause you to have difficulty trusting others and continually thinking others are against you. In extreme cases, you will project your insecurities on your mate, leaving them confused, feeling as if they have the problem. Insecurity causes you to take things personally, becoming easily offended. This can create a very hostile environment for your spouse to function in.

2. Past Relationships

Whether good or bad, past relationships must be left in the past if you plan to move successfully into your future, particularly in marriage. Unabandoned, past relationships will negatively affect your future whether you are single or married. The relationship could have ended as recent as long as 20 years ago or as recent as two weeks ago, however, if you are not healed and delivered of the physical, emotional, and spiritual ties from past relationships, you are still bound by them in some way. These are “unhealthy soul ties”. Unbroken, these “unhealthy soul ties” will cause you to reminisce, ponder over, and wonder about that individual or relationship, possibly even going as far as discussing it in your current relationship, which would certainly be unacceptable to God and your spouse. You will have difficulty totally cleaving to your spouse, sharing only a small part of yourself. These “unhealthy soul ties” keep you bound in carnality and block your spiritual growth and development. They will also damage your spouse. You may be hurting, rejecting, or mentally and emotionally abusing your spouse, because of a past relationship. Whether man or woman, you must be healed and delivered in this area, to fulfill your complete God ordained role in marriage.

3. Controlling Behavior

Controlling behavior is often a result of being raised in an abusive or dysfunctional household, being a single adult for an extended period, being a single

parent, or being in a position of authority. If you identify with any of these categories, you may possibly have controlling behavior to some degree. Controlling behavior is often exhibited with aggression, very obvious and even abusive. However, others exercise this behavior subtly and virtuously unnoticeably. For further study as to how this behavior is carried into marriage, we will refer to them as abusive control and subtle control.

A.) Abusive Control

Abusive control sometimes occurs when one has been a victim of, or has observed abuse, pain, aggression, and/or violence beyond their ability to control. Although some of these individuals can appear or be kind and considerate on occasion, they harbor feelings of insecurity, depression, anger, and in extreme cases, rage. In search of some escape, they are often attracted to others who seemingly experience a lifestyle unlike their own. These individuals may also struggle with jealousy and envy, or possess a deep resentment towards someone that causes them to manipulate or hurt those closest to them. Although they may deeply desire to behave otherwise, this has become somewhat of a learned behavior. Deep within, they desire a fulfilling relationship, showing and giving love, however, because of the mental, emotional, verbal and/or physical abuse, their relationships are nightmares. Subconsciously, they want someone else to experience the pain they feel. Due to the lack of control over the abuse they experienced in their past, they have an innermost need to not only control their lives, but the lives of others close to them. Unfortunately, in many instances, they behave in the same manner as those from whom they so badly desired to escape.

B.) Subtle Control

Subtle control can be an issue when one is accustomed to controlling activities, people, or situations in their daily life. This could be a single

parent, a high-ranking official, a CEO, a pastor, or an individual who has been single for an extended period of time. Whether man or woman, when functioning in this capacity, one can inadvertently attempt to control or dominate people and situations. Subconsciously, they may have an “I’m in charge” mindset, which must be abandoned to effectively operate in marriage. This can be particularly challenging for those in leadership and those who have been single parents. Not only do they manage their own lives, but they also assist in the development of the lives of others. Having been responsible for most decision making, it is especially difficult for them to transition into sharing this task and they often make decisions without consulting their spouse. This causes the spouse to feel insignificant, disrespected, and inadequate, creating hurt and low self-esteem. Consequently, the spouse may retreat and withdraw. Inevitably, this leads to questions such as, “why don’t you ever talk to me?”, “why can’t you ever make a decision?”, or “why don’t you ever support me?” The controlling spouse is unaware that they have stripped their partner of the ability to feel a part of a team or partnership.

In addition to insecurity, past relationships, and controlling behavior, there are numerous other vices within the category of “former authorities”. Some are irresponsibility, witchcraft, idolatry, and greed to name a few. Despite what the former authority may be, the key to overcoming these issues is exposing them and allowing the transforming power of Christ to heal every part of you. It is time we understand how to break all shackles, claim our healing, and walk in wholeness. We need to understand there are different types of healing, *but God declares, “I am the Lord who heals thee.” (Exo. 15:26 NIV)* God can heal every area of your mind, heart, soul, and spirit. Some of us need physical healing, some emotional, some spiritual, and some may need mental. In every case, for couples, healing is essential to victorious living as one. Too often, we fail to receive healing and deliverance. For the most part, it is not because we lack faith or doubt God’s ability to heal. In many cases, particularly regarding emotional, mental, and

spiritual healing, there are some essential steps we fail to accomplish in order to receive our healing and deliverance.

In order to *be* healed, we must first acknowledge that we *need* healing. This means that we must face the reality that we and/or our situation are distressed, and we are suffering. Too often, we fail to acknowledge the reality of our condition; subsequently we are unable to admit or honestly address the need for healing or deliverance in the situation. Our healing process begins when we acknowledge the situation. The affirmation that the problem exists releases the power of God to work in the situation. He then touches hearts, minds, and spirits on our behalf. As long as we go on pretending the hurts, pains, and other ailments don't exist, we hinder God's work in our situation. When we study the many miracles Jesus performed throughout His earthly ministry, we find that He required an acknowledgement of the need before healing it.

When it comes to physical injuries, we spontaneously do whatever is necessary to bring relief and healing. However, it is not the case, in our treatment of the emotional, mental, and spiritual injuries we sustain, although the same intervention is required. When the hurt first occurs, it seems so much easier to just bandage it up, scurry on our way, as if "it will be okay." We often do this believing the pain of confronting the problem will be greater than the pain caused by the problem. Many of us hate confrontation. We feel that confronting issues will result in unchristian behavior, or perhaps feelings we have bottled up for years will come bursting out. We would much rather respond with "I'll pray about it" or "everything will be alright, in time". We don't realize that the situation will actually worsen with time, and perhaps with detrimental consequences. As Christians, we need to understand that confrontation is inevitable. We must learn to express our concerns, and deal with issues, in an appropriate way to bring healing and resolution to problems and situations. It is time for us to walk in wholeness and healing. For too long, we have remained damaged and weak after the pain of our past. The enemy desires to keep us from our healing because he knows we will not walk victoriously without it. When we remove the bandage from our area of pain, by confession and exposure, we can then allow Jesus to apply the cleansing agent, which is

His Word. Because He loves and cares for us, we can trust Him to cleanse and renew us. When we are careful not to allow the area to be irritated too soon after healing, we will be made whole and experience true victory and restoration in that area.

For those who are single, a transformation and renewal of your mind is essential before considering marriage. You must undergo a detachment from the behaviors, customs, and traditions of the “*former authorities*”. In other words, you must depart from the natural and carnal things that had authority over you and shaped you into who you are. Furthermore, you must allow God to begin the process of re-shaping you to bless your own family with the understanding, wisdom, knowledge, and directives that come from Him alone. One of many wonderful things about God is, once you commit yourself to Him and declare Him Lord of your life; you are made free from the bondage of the “*former authorities*” in your life. You are made free, no longer a slave to sin. In *John 8:36* Jesus declares, “*If the son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.*” After abandoning the “*former authorities*”, and coming into a healthy place of divine order, the process of being joined to someone can take place in your life.

Our scripture of reference concludes, “...and cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh”. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines cleave as *to adhere to firmly; to be united, to stick to*. Strong’s Complete Dictionary of Bible Words defines cleave in this scripture with the Hebrew word *dabaq*, which means to *abide fast, follow close, and/or to be joined together*. Again, this speaks to the man, however, it is followed by, “they shall become one flesh”, which constitutes that both man and woman must cleave (stick to, be joined with, adhere firmly) to one another. Many people in marriage have never decided to cleave *or dabaq (follow close, join together)* to their spouses. Unrealistically, we want to receive the benefits of a good marriage- the *blessings, happiness, and fulfillment*- however, we are not willing to apply the basic principles of God’s Word. We are quick to say, “I’m not happy” “I don’t deserve this”, and “why me”, as if we are perfect and so deserving. Despite what people seem to think, cleaving doesn’t magically occur during the wedding ceremony. You must purpose your whole self: mind, will, soul, body, and

spirit in order to function as one with your spouse. This is crucial in the fulfillment of the purpose of God for your marriage and your life.

Another profound truth about cleaving (*sticking to, be joining with, adhering firmly*) is, you can not be motivated by your own personal comfort or desires. Have you ever been to a church service that was “*jam packed*” and had to sit extremely close to the person beside you? You both may have similar intentions, hopefully to worship and glorify God and receive His Word, but perhaps the seating was uncomfortable. Despite what you felt, your spirit was able to *push through* the discomfort and accomplish your goal to be a blessing to God and enjoy the saints. This too, must be the goal concerning cleaving. You must *push through* your times of discomfort by allowing your spirit to break through the carnal and selfish nature of the flesh.

In “*leaving and cleaving*”, try to imagine this natural example. When you attempt to drive forward, but continue looking in your rearview mirror, you have to slam on brakes every few feet. This delays you in reaching your destination on time. When constantly bound by things in your past, you have a difficult road towards your future. You must continually stop to deal with issues that should’ve been *left behind*. The only definite way to move forward as one is to focus on what’s ahead of you. In *Philippians 3: 13, 14* Paul says, “*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*”

The concept of two becoming one sounds challenging, and rightfully so. The minds, wills, aspirations, and goals of two individuals must be merged into one new family with one common vision. The consolation in this process is knowing you and your spouse are of one accord in the spirit of God, which should provoke you to follow after the things of God for your marriage, instead of the things your flesh desires. As you learn what to leave and how to cleave, you will reach new levels not only in your marital relationship, but also your relationship with Jesus Christ. You will discover that dying to

your self will afford you the experience of victory and prosperity. As you crucify the flesh, leaving your past, and embracing your future, God will be glorified and you will be elevated in Him for His glory.

Let's review the key points in Chapter One, Learning What to Leave and How to Cleave, for Couples.

1. The word of God states in Genesis 2: 24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh. You must leave your mother and father or "*former authorities*" to be joined to your spouse and your purpose in God.
2. Determine what you may be taking or have taken into your marriage that should've been "*left behind*".
3. Understand that "*leaving the former authorities*" is more spiritual than physical. It includes the breaking of mental and emotional strongholds, while exercising control over unhealthy thoughts that would attempt to overpower your thinking.
4. The key to overcoming these issues is exposing them and allowing the transforming power of Christ to heal every part of you and walking in the deliverance made available to you through Jesus Christ.
5. In order to cleave to your spouse (stick to, be joined with, adhere firmly), you can not be motivated by your own desires and personal comfort. The Spirit of God and the love, purpose, and promises of God for your marriage must be your motivation.
6. Remember, the minds, wills, hearts, aspirations, and goals of two individuals must be merged into one new family with one common vision. The consolation in this process comes when you are of one accord in the spirit, which will enable you to follow after the things of God for your marriage as opposed to the desires of the flesh.

Chapter Two

Naked and Unashamed

And they were both naked, the man and his wife and they were not ashamed. Genesis 2:25 (KJV)

In this chapter we will *uncover* the importance of being naked and unashamed. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines *naked* as *devoid of covering, concealment or disguise*. The word *naked* in this scripture is translated in the Greek as the word *gumnos*, which in adjective form means, *exposed to the all seeing eye of God*.

In the natural, when we consider areas of our bodies to be imperfect, scarred, or abnormal, we are often ashamed of our nakedness. Whether in the presence of our doctors, spouses, or family members, we are uncomfortable with the idea of exposing ourselves, even when our imperfections are beyond our control. When in a situation that requires such exposure, we have a natural tendency to hide. Even in the most innocent case, it is shamefulness that forces us to cover areas of our life that we feel should remain hidden. In Genesis 3:7 the scripture states, *“the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”* (KJV) After their sin, Adam and Eve felt ashamed – an emotion they had never before experienced. God created them to be fully exposed in one another’s presence, free from shame, which to that time was non-existent. However, their sin produced shame, which resulted in their becoming stained, scarred, and imperfect losing their original identity. What was pure had become impure. Consequently, they covered themselves before one another, and attempted to hide from God (*Gen 3: 8-10*). Since the fall of man, it has been part of our human nature to conceal our sins, fears, imperfections, and other blemishes that mark our lives. This produces a “cover up” or “fig leaf” mentality.

This is a significant issue for many marriages today. Instead of entering into the union of marriage *devoid of concealment or disguise* and *naked and exposed to the all seeing eye of God*, we enter into relationships covered with fig leaves, not exposing who

we really are. This can result in the unintentional deception of those we claim to love, which in many cases leads to devastation once our true identity is revealed.

For too long, we have worn *masks*, concealing and disguising our true identity. Darkness hides in areas of our lives that are void to exposure to light – light which comes by way of the truth. The bible states in Ecclesiastes 2:14, only a fool walks in darkness. Darkness gives Satan direct access into your life and in situations. As married couples of those planning to marry, you must carefully examine this area in your relationship to ensure that your foundation is established void of concealment, disguise, or pre conceived expectations- total nakedness.

Challenges in marriage often occur due to failure to expose pertinent issues, situations, and circumstances prior to marriage. Therefore, many enter into this life long commitment, with misconceptions, undisclosed issues, and unidentified expectations, which once revealed causes difficulties in the marriage.

Consider this example:

You are considering planning to purchase a home, which requires a significant long-term financial commitment. The exterior of the house is in great condition, in a prime location, and surrounded by pleasant neighbors. You note a few minor flaws which can be easily repaired, but you fail to obtain a professional home inspection, perhaps because of the cost and time involved. You base your decision to purchase the property solely on the word of the seller, who *appears* to be a decent person. You sign a purchase agreement with the seller, who did not disclose any defects in the property. Shortly after you move in you realize that the seller failed to disclose known defects in the property because of his need to sell quickly and for fear that you would decline if you were made were aware of the true condition of the house. After the first storm, you discover a few leaks that were painted over without repair. You also discover standing water under the house, causing moisture damage. The home you were so eager to purchase is

riddled with major defects and problems that will worsen with time if not corrected. After spending time, money, and more effort than you anticipated to make this house a home, you want out. When in actuality, patience, and a thorough inspection may have saved you time, money, and heartache.

Unfortunately, this same situation depicts the marriage today. Because we want what we want, when we want it, we do not slow down, pray, and communicate about the issues, situations and circumstances that will not only impact our lives, but the lives of those close to us. Too often we rush into this lifelong commitment without consulting the mighty Counselor for guidance into all truth. If you are already married and this describes you, there is still hope. There is no problem or situation that can not be reversed by the hand of God through your prayers and obedience to His word. You and your spouse must be willing to go “back to the basis” and rebuild the foundation of your marriage, laying the new improved foundation necessary for fulfillment and success.

Let’s look at some actual examples of what happens when being “naked” before God and one another is bypassed and omitted from the relationship.

A man dearly loves and respects his fiancée and her family. Prior to their marriage, he observes that her parents are not merely a support system, but they have an extreme amount of influence on her. They are around much too often, and occupy most of her time. He feels this may be an issue, but fails to address it with his fiancée, her parents, or their pastor/counselor. He continues, covering the situation with a “*well fitted fig leaf*” and unprayerfully, progresses toward marriage. Now, he is the *head* of his household but unable to operate in his authority because Mom brings dinner over every other night and Dad drops by unannounced to *check on things* the nights that Mom cannot. Furthermore, the wife calls her parents to get their *opinion* on everything the husband suggests. On weekends the wife insists they must take her parents out for dinner to show their great appreciation for their *help and support*. The new husband feels he is never as good as Dad, and often his opinions and ideas are overruled by Mom. Even

when he is physically at home, he does not even feel “*at home*”. Obviously, his wife lacks discernment, as she remains *clueless* about his feelings or the trouble. He believes it’s too late to share his true feelings, fearing that he will be misunderstood, creating even more confusion. Because he failed to address his observations before the marriage, many of the following occur:

- He is frustrated and stressed.
- He isn’t communicating with his wife effectively, if at all.
- He has developed anger and resentment towards the in-laws he really loves.
- He feels inadequate and unfulfilled in his role as the head of the family.
- He works excessively, comes home late, or keeps himself very busy in church or other activities.
- He is not praying about the situation and may be operating in the flesh.
- She is angry at with him for not “appreciating” her parents, unaware that her relationship with them has become unhealthy as it relates to her marriage.
- She is hurt by his lack of communication, unaware that he has shut down to avoid exploding.
- She is no longer praying for her husband.
- The in-laws now regard him as irresponsible and unfit, unaware that his retreat is due to their controlling and influential behavior.

These behaviors further mask the problem, causing the situation to become more miserable daily. This is just one example. Imagine if this same man had grown up in a home where no love was displayed and he had no siblings. The occurrences listed above would be multiplied.

Consider another scenario which depicts the devastation associated with failing to be naked before God and one another:

A widow is seeking and serving God and raising her three children. She becomes acquainted with a minister and begins dating him. He seems kind,

considerate, and *spiritual*. She has been praying for a husband and believes he must be “the one”. Her friends and family tell her the most popular lie among single Christian women. “*He is a nice, godly man, and there are so few of them around anymore.*” Because he is a minister, she believes she has no need to *check him out*. Caught up in her own perceived needs and desires, she continues in the relationship. Her emotions blind her to the many signs and signals of concerns she should communicate to him and investigate before considering marriage. Unprayerfully, she moves ahead to marriage. After two months, she discovers that this kind, considerate, and godly man has been “*churchin*” his entire life. He knows the word of God, but does not know God at all. He does not pray. He cannot lead the family or demonstrate love for her or her children. Since he became a part of her life she and her children are in situations worse than they have faced before. Her children, who were excelling in education and the things of God, are withdrawn, disinterested in school, and church. As a result, many of the following is occurring:

- Her prayers for their relationship have decreased.
- She avoids being at home, which further damages the family and the children’s sense of security and stability.
- She is angry with God, asking “why me?” and failing to recognize her failure of her responsibility to diligently seek and obey Him from the beginning.
- She has allowed anger, resentment, and hatred towards the husband for deceiving her to take root
- She is often argumentative, she yells, and is emotionally volatile.
- He feels that she is not being a wife, failing to recognize his own issues and deceitfulness in the situation.
- He makes her feel as if she is the problem, or is the “immature one” not operating in the spirit.
- His communication is poor, causing a breakdown in the entire family.

- They are covering up their situation in the presence of church members, their families, and themselves, by not addressing it. (sewing fig leaves together to cover one another)
- The children want their old mom back and they resent the *phony* step dad.
- The children's minds are consumed with adult issues and they are burdened with pain and depression, as they too cover up the family's crisis.

This is another example of the agony, pain, and devastation caused by the lack of nakedness, openness, and honesty before God and one another.

When we speak to our fiancée or spouse, we must uncover ourselves before one another. This robs the enemy of an opportunity to work havoc in our relationship. When we expose areas and situations in our lives, it humbles us and gives God glory and room to work His will in us and in our situation. It also increases our faith and hope. It promotes maturity, trust, and respect in your relationship with God and your mate. Instead of walking in fear, shame, and guilt, you walk in authority, faith, power, and most importantly, unity.

In order to walk in a healthy fulfilling relationship, we must get *naked* before God, exposing every dark area so that we can freely take hold of our deliverance and healing. As revealed in chapter one, many of us have been bound by "*authorities*" that must be abandoned before we can walk in purpose. We must uncover unhealthy situations in our families, relationships, and marriages, while dealing with our own issues, inadequacies, and insecurities. We must break every *unhealthy soul tie*, allowing God to work His transforming power within us. We should be consumed with delighting ourselves in Him and seeking His kingdom. It is then that we can receive God's blessing in marriage and be a blessing to our spouse. We are promised in Psalms 37:4 *if we delight ourselves in the Lord, He will give us the desires of our hearts*. When we delight ourselves in Him, our agendas and motives change from our self will to His will for us. There is no need for hesitance in His granting of our heart's desires, because our hearts have been renewed by Him. Matthew 6:33 commands us to seek first the kingdom of God

and then all other things shall be added unto us. When we seek the Kingdom of God before anything else in our lives, God can rely on us to handle the things he desires to entrust to us. Obedience to these scriptures is vital in building the foundation for a healthy and victorious relationship, whether married or considering marriage.

Now that we have established the importance of nakedness, let's see how nakedness results in our feeling *unashamed*. When we are *naked (devoid of concealment and disguise)*, there is a greater degree of fluency we experience in our lives. Despite our pasts, once we strip ourselves before God and our spouse, which initiates the process of becoming spiritually and emotionally healthy people, it is then that we will encounter a greater level of comfort, security, freedom, and authority in our lives and relationships. This is like a small child who freely runs naked in his home among those he loves and trusts, feeling safe and protected. In his innocence, it is perfectly harmless. This should also be the case in marriage. In the right circumstances, we should be able to identify with this childlike freedom. After much prayer (together), communication, and the exposure of the workings that make up your character and personality, you should feel safe and free, no longer feeling the need to hide. You should feel no shame or inadequacy. At this point, all issues should be exposed and addressed. Your spouse should also feel the trust and security that will usher him/her into a greater level of communication and fulfillment of purpose in the relationship. It is being *unashamed* that enables you to share your deepest hopes, dreams, and aspirations, no matter how silly they may seem. Your fears are diminished because of your support and concern for one another, not linked to mere emotions, but rather bound by the assurance of sincere Godly love through relationship, honesty, faith, patience, caring, protection, and hope. To the both of you, nothing is silly, nothing is shameful, and there is no need to conceal anything, because you have become *naked and unashamed*.

The question to you is can your spouse approach you freely without criticism, disrespect, or fear of being ridiculed or humiliated? Can you be trusted to receive his or her hopes, dreams, and aspirations? Hopefully, your answers are yes. However, if you are unsure about your response to these questions or you have no doubt that “no” would be

your answer, then the following fill lay the groundwork to a relationship filled with the communication, joy, peace, and understanding that we all long for in marriage.

When you enter into a serious relationship and you use a specific criteria to qualify the individual as a prospective spouse (and granted you should), you must be willing to meet the same criteria. For instance, if you require a copy of his/her credit report, criminal background report, bank statements, pay stubs, medical report, DMV report and a letter from the pastor, you should be willing to provide the same. You cannot be selfish about it – and yours should be equally as good, if not better, since you are the one using the criteria!

It is essential that you both complete Christian counseling, prior to setting a wedding date. On the contrary, most couples seek counseling after having said yes and setting the wedding date. They squeeze in three counseling sessions before the ceremony, with someone who simply reviews all of the scripture verses that contain the word marriage, husband, or wife. Most often, they are oblivious to the need to ask questions which will uncover and discover whether or not this is a union that pleases God. Thorough and open counseling sessions will allow some people to walk away without ruining a good friendship and staining the Holiness of matrimony. If you are considering marriage, ask questions about everything that could impact your life together and your personal God ordained purpose.

The following is a list of questions that will help you learn some very important facts about your potential spouse, however, you must also be prepared to answer these questions. This makes good conversation when you are getting to know one another.

1. What do you consider your God ordained purpose to be?
2. What are your hopes, dreams, and ambitions?
3. What are you currently doing to fulfill God's purpose for your life?
4. On the average, how many hours do you spend in prayer each week?
5. How often do you sing songs in praise and worship to God?

6. How is your relationship with your family? Do you have a relationship with your pastor?
7. What issues or obstacles have you overcome since salvation?
8. Are you tither?
9. Do you exercise? Tell me about your eating habits?
10. What is your philosophy about finances? What type of debt do you have? Do you have any credit issues?
11. Have you ever been married? Have children?
12. Why do you feel your previous relationship ended? How do you feel about the situation and the person?
13. What did God reveal to you as a result of the experience?
14. What do you consider the woman's role in marriage? What is the man's?
15. Why do you want to marry me?
16. What are your likes? Your dislikes?
17. What kinds of things aggravate you? What pleases you?
18. What was the happiest occasion in your life? The saddest?
19. What is your view on sex in marriage? What do you think is too often? Not often enough? Is there any kind of sexual behavior that makes you uncomfortable?
20. What about hygiene? What are your habits?
21. Do you have a problem discussing these kinds of things?

It probably is not a good idea to attempt to ask these questions all at once, but these certainly are questions to be asked prior to marriage. Remember, as you ask them, be prepared to discuss and answer them. Maybe some answers won't make or break the relationship, but they will alleviate a number of issues and otherwise undisclosed facts. If you shower in the morning and night and he only showers in the morning, and that is an issue for you, at least you will know before the honeymoon!

As a more serious example, consider this:

She may only pray every other day and you twice every day, or you may worship numerous times each week and he has yet to learn the importance of worship. These are issues that can cause division early in marriage if left undisclosed. You would be amazed at issues that are important to some people and considered insignificant to others, or the things that drive some people *crazy*, and are totally ignored by others. These types of differences can be very significant in a marriage, however, questions concerning spirituality and intimacy with God most often go undiscussed for fear of offense. Because of trying to appear “*saved and sanctified*” they won’t even ask or answer vital questions, for fear that they would sound “*unsaved and unsanctified*”. After marriage, these are the people who will nag and complain to no end, tearing you down for not being perfect like them!

If you are married and skipped this vital process, it is not too late, there is hope. Discuss your issues, write them down, pray about them, and seek God’s Word and Godly counsel to lead you to the road of healing, recovery, and growth. I declare that as you continue reading the life changing message found in this book, your healing is on the way.

Let's review the key points in Chapter Two, Naked and Unashamed.

1. In Genesis 2:25 the Word of God states that *Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed. Naked* speaks to being *devoid of covering, concealment, or disguise*. It is defined in the greek by the word *gumnos*, which translates in adjective form as *exposed to the all seeing eye of God*. This indicates that God's original plan for us was to be open, exposed, and uncovered before God and one another. To be blessed in marriage, we must expose our innermost thoughts, emotions, hurts, pains, and aspirations to God where He can heal and deliver us. It is only then that we can expose ourselves to others without condemnation.
2. We must follow the command found in Matthew 6:33, which directs us to *seek the kingdom of God first, knowing all other things will be added unto us*.
3. We must delight ourselves in the Lord, finding our love, joy, and fulfillment in serving Him and walking in confidence that *He will give us the desires of our hearts as stated in Psalms 37:4*.
4. We must not make decisions based on our carnal nature, self-will, and emotions. We must seek God for truth without fear of what it may reveal and require of us.
5. We must be willing to shine the light of Christ and His Word on the dark areas of our lives that we are often prone to hide. Hiding causes us to walk in pride, self-deceit, and untruth, while exposing the truth gives us victory, power, and authority, which makes us unashamed and free from the weight of fear and guilt.

6. Get concise, anointed, teaching and counseling. Ask questions, give answers. Save yourself and someone else from the struggles that come with entering into a relationship which is not ordained by God.

7. If you are married and failed to endure the process of becoming naked and unashamed prior to your marriage, make a commitment to reveal and seal every crack in the foundation of your marriage. You must earnestly pray and seek God, together as one, touching and agreeing on pertinent issues. It's time out for "I pray for him or her in my own prayer time." That alone is not enough.

Chapter Three

Understanding Your Spouse

Marriage requires and demands understanding. Too often, we fail to humble ourselves and become more acquiescent to our spouse's stand on specific issues and concerns. Understanding in marriage is foundational for success. To insure that we learn to effectively understand our spouse, let's define understanding and examine what God's Word teaches concerning it.

Merriam Webster's dictionary defines *understanding* as *showing a sympathetic or tolerant attitude towards something or an agreement of opinion or feeling: adjustment of differences*. Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words list the most commonly used Hebrew word for understanding as *biyn* which means *to attend, consider, look well to, perceive or discern*.

In previous chapters, we established some of the fundamentals for the two becoming one in marriage. That alone warrants the need to learn and exercise being understanding. We must accept and embrace the challenges that come with building a solid foundation for a successful marriage, in which understanding is vital. Too often, we argue our point relentlessly without having a *sympathetic or tolerant attitude towards* the other person and their stand on the matter. In other words, without understanding. In our fight to be understood, we lack the wisdom and discernment necessary to promote growth in this area. When we lack understanding, we lack wisdom. Without wisdom, we can not make good decisions for our spouse, our family, or ourselves. In this chapter, we will discover that understanding and wisdom work cooperatively.

Let's examine what the Word of God says about understanding and wisdom:

1.) Proverbs 3:13

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom and getteth understanding.

Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding.

(NIV)

This is a promise that the man who gains wisdom and understanding will receive blessings and happiness. We often murmur and complain about our situations without considering the lack of wisdom and understanding shown to our spouse. If we exercise wisdom and understanding we will be better spouses and people. The bible states if a man lacks wisdom, let him ask God and it will be given to him.

2.) Proverbs 4:7

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom and with all thy getting, get understanding.

Wisdom is supreme, therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. (NIV)

This passage not only communicates the value of understanding, but the cost of such. To walk in great blessings, there is a cost. In most cases the cost is to defy our flesh (*carnal sin nature*). We must be willing to pay this price by humbling ourselves, giving ourselves, and challenging ourselves to walk in understanding (*a sympathetic or tolerant attitude towards the other person and their stand on the matter*) This scripture says that obtaining wisdom is principal, *or above everything* in our lives. Therefore, wisdom should be one of the first things we seek concerning our relationships.

3.) Proverbs 10: 23

It is as sport to a fool to do mischief, but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct, but a man of understanding delights in wisdom. (NIV)

Simply stated, when we walk in understanding we have great wisdom, but when we walk void of it, we act foolishly. Unaware, we sometimes feed into the foolishness caused by misunderstandings simply because we fail to apply wisdom and understanding in the situation. We find ourselves complaining, nagging, and arguing instead of seeking God for guidance and understanding. When we operate with understanding we are considered by God to be wise. This not only positions us for success and victory in our relationships, but also in our daily lives.

4.) Proverbs 14: 33

Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.

Wisdom reposes in the heart of the discerning and even among fools she lets herself be known. (NIV)

Wisdom dwells within those who exercise understanding and discernment. Even in the midst of foolishness, wisdom and discernment allows for the truth to be revealed about the situation and allows God to expose the truth in a situation without hurting anyone in the process. Without discernment we can convey the wrong message, or even the right message in the wrong way. Wisdom and understanding help us to be gracious and caring in our approach.

5.) Proverbs 15: 21

Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

Folly delights a man who lacks judgement, but a man of understanding keeps a straight course. (NIV)

When we walk in understanding, God is pleased, however, foolishness is to him who is void of wisdom, lacking judgement. How often have you found yourself saying and doing foolish things in a disagreement and wondered how it went so far? When we fail to exercise wisdom and sound judgement we stray from understanding and healing to a path of foolishness and pain. We must use caution to avoid deviation from God's plan.

6.) Proverbs 17: 24

Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.

A discerning man keeps wisdom in view, but a fool's eyes wander to the ends of the earth. (NIV)

One who is understanding and discerning can stay focused and walk in wisdom, however one who does not is constantly seeking and searching. When we fail to exercise understanding, we not only fail to resolve an issue but we raise other issues. This foolish behavior occurs when we are void of discernment and wisdom. It results in continual misunderstandings and it gives the enemy a chance to wreak havoc in our relationship.

7.) Proverbs 19: 8

He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good.

He who gets wisdom loves his own soul; he who cherishes understanding prospers.
(NIV)

Those who will acquire wisdom and understanding shall see prosperity. Often we see couples walking in the blessings of God and we say, "why can't that be me?" We fail to consider the struggles they may have endured to arrive at their level of understanding, or the sacrifice they may make to live in harmony. We are sometimes unwilling to do what it takes to receive our breakthrough and our change. We continually ask God to "do it",

without “*doing*” anything ourselves. We ask Him to “take it out” instead of us “giving it up”. We must remember that prosperity and blessings are promised to all that obtain and operate in wisdom and understanding.

8.) Proverbs 14: 29

He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding, but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly. (NIV)

Understanding helps us to be patient and slow to anger. When we walk in haste, without discernment or consideration for our spouse, we act foolishly. When we take the time to understand we will become more considerate, respectful, and loving toward one another.

9.) Proverbs 16: 20-24

He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the Lord happy is he. The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning. Understanding is a well spring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly. The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips. Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers; and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord. The wise in heart are called discerning and pleasant words promote instruction. Understanding is a fountain of life to those who have it, but folly brings punishment to fools. A wise man's heart guides his mouth and his lips promote instruction. Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. (NIV)

Those of us willing to walk in wisdom and trust in God, shall be blessed. When we handle matters vigilantly, we must exercise faith in God to work things out. When we operate in discernment and understanding we provide healing and faithful instruction to our spouse. This opens the door to more effective communication in future situations. *Proverbs 12: 18 declares, “reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” (NIV)*

10.) Proverbs 17: 27, 28

He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. Even a fool, what he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

A man of knowledge uses words with restraint and a man of understanding is even tempered. Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue. (NIV)

It is necessary to use self-discipline in our speech. We should not respond suddenly to anything without first seeking wisdom and understanding from God. The word of God says even a fool is wise when he keeps silent and holds his tongue. Those who will shut their mouths are esteemed as people with understanding because they are less likely to worsen the situation by speaking prematurely. Remember, the bible says a man or woman of understanding holds his peace.

As these scriptures confirm, the use of wisdom and understanding is vital for daily life. If God requires you to walk in understanding with others, how much more do you think He requires it in your marriage? Consider how you feel when someone disregards your views, ideas, or opinions. It leaves you empty and hurt. You must understand, just as you have strong beliefs and convictions, your spouse does also. No matter how weird, silly, or wrong you may think their view and behavior are, your job is to understand them

and inquire of God for the wisdom and discernment to communicate without demeaning or humiliating them or belittling their feelings, views or ideas. By understanding each other you will have the power to bring healing, growth, peace, and unity in your marriage. Imagine the strength, love, and victory you will obtain if you put these scriptures into practice. Undoubtedly, this takes much prayer, patience, and temperance, but as promised in the word of God, it produces life, growth, and blessings to all who will meet the challenge.

To effectively understand your spouse, you must make sure that you listen when he/she speaks. You should be certain that you are communicating in the most effective manner to be heard correctly. Good listening skills are essential in all type relationships, but moreso in that of husbands and wives. We often misjudge and accuse one another because we fail to comprehend what is said to us or we fail to correctly verbalize what we mean. It is necessary to recognize that men and women communicate and interpret things differently. Women are usually more detailed, wordy, and expressive, while men are more specific and direct, often nebulous on the minute details observed and recalled by women. For best results, we should modify our communication style to accommodate our spouse.

The way a person communicates information will generally reveal their ability to process information communicated to them. For example, if your spouse communicates in a very detailed, expressive way, he/she will more than likely process information in the same way and feel slighted when details and specifics are not included by someone whose communication style may be less expressive or bland. Most women communicate in this way. For women to communicating more effectively with their husband they should limit details and long narratives. Avoid specifics and instructions for every situation and make your point. If your spouse is very vague, or straight to the point, they probably will not recall every sentence spoken during the conversation. Most men communicate this way. Men should try to remember some particulars to demonstrate their interest and effort in communicating with their wives. It may be good to propose something that will show your wife that you were indeed *paying attention*.

Developing good skills for listening and speaking are foundational for understanding and communication. Let's examine what God's word specifically says about listening and speaking:

1.) Proverbs 1: 5

A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.

Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance.

(NIV)

Like understanding, listening promotes wisdom and discernment. Listening is the key to learning. When we listen it we can apply understanding and discernment, better equipping us to appropriately respond. We must not only hear, but also listen, praying for guidance and understanding.

2.) Proverbs 12: 15-17

The way of a fool seems right to him but, a wise man listens to advice. A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult.

A truthful witness gives honest testimony but a false witness tells lies.

(NIV)

When we fail to communicate honestly, we walk in carnality, (*fleshly human nature*) which the Bible says is foolish. Walking in carnality causes us to become easily aggravated, annoyed, and offended. We are more likely to speak and act in our frustration, resulting in our speaking prematurely and in error. The scripture says when we are wise and good listeners we can overlook insults. This gives God the glory and limits the occasions for confusion and misunderstandings.

3.) Proverbs 18: 13

He who answers before listening-that is his folly and his shame.(NIV)

Simply stated, when we give a response without first listening, we make fools of ourselves and are ashamed afterward. How often do we respond hastily without hearing the details of a situation? Usually, we regret our response once we know all of the details. This can cause shame, guilt, and separation, which is a hindrance to understanding and communication. We must be mindful of how easy we can injure a person or situation by reacting to hastily.

4.) James 1: 19

My dear brothers, [and sisters] take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. (NIV)

Again, I must reiterate the importance of effectively listening before speaking. We should avoid making false assumptions and becoming angry. When we speak or react suddenly, we are apt to be easily angered which causes us to deviating from God's plan for the situation. Being slow to speak promotes being slow to anger, which promotes a lifestyle of righteousness.

5.) Ephesians 4: 15

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

This is not a license to say whatever *you feel* to those you love. You must speak truth, however with discernment, wisdom, love, and maturity. Appropriately doing so, will mature you in Christ and encourage your spouse and those you encounter.

Being consistently understanding and communicating effectively is achieved through some trial and error, as is our growth and development in God. They both require patience, wisdom, and great faith. Although there are times when it “*works your nerves*”, it is only a test. The word of God declares that the trying of our faith works patience, and if we let patience have its perfect work we will be mature and complete, wanting nothing. God also instructs us to ask Him if we lack wisdom and He will give it to us. When we seek the wisdom of God for our marriage, He will reveal truth to us and enable us to exercise a greater level of discernment and understanding. We must fervently seek God, knowing that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Too often, we expect to miraculously receive God’s blessings without demonstrating our willingness to apply His word. Our obedience demonstrates our faith. The measure of our faith is revealed when we enter into times of trials, tribulations, and testing. We should accept that these processes aid in crucifying our flesh and develop the fruit of the spirit in our lives.

The word of the Lord stated that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. If the mountain top and valley low experiences of marriage won’t help develop these fruits, nothing will. Even the healthiest marriages face these God ordained challenges. As couples, you must remember your response to the challenge is more important than the challenge itself. The Bible states in Romans 5: 3-5, “... *but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh us not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*” We must learn to find peace and assurance in the many promises of God found in His word. It is my prayer that you will operate in a level of understanding and communication that will cause you to be victorious in every area of your marriage and your life, and to be used further for God’s glory.

Let's review the key points in Chapter Three, Understanding Your Spouse.

- 1.** Remember understanding is defined as *to show a sympathetic or tolerant attitude towards something or an agreement of opinion of feeling; adjustment of differences.* The Hebrew definition for understanding is *to attend to, to perceive or discern, or look well to.*
- 2.** Discernment and wisdom are vital to your successful development of understanding. Without them, you will deviate from God's plan and make hasty foolish decisions.
- 3.** Consistent understanding and effective communication promote healing, growth, peace, unity, and fulfillment in marriage.
- 4.** When communicating with your spouse, consider his/her communication style. This will reduce the chances of poor or miscommunication. If your spouse is vague or just straight to the point, don't be expressive, lengthy, and detailed. If he/she is wordy or detail oriented try to be more specific in your communication with them. Everyone will appreciate it and God will bless and multiply the effort.
- 5.** When you want to throw up your hands and say, "forget it!" earnestly seek God. Effectually and fervently pray, asking God for strength, guidance, and wisdom that comes from Him alone. Then walk in obedience and do what he says!
- 6.** Find assurance in the promises of God and remember, happy are those who find wisdom and gain understanding.

Chapter Four

The Power of Agreement and Serving

In this chapter we will discuss the importance of agreement in marriage, and provide steps to assist you in developing the “art of agreement”. We will also discover the great power that God releases when we walk in agreement and service to one another. Too often in marriages today, we use the “it’s all about me” approach. We have the “I’ll do this, if you’ll do that” mindset instead of learning how to serve one another and resolve our issues in a healthy manner. These selfish attitudes always result in everyone’s loss. During this false sense of agreement and service, we are actually compromising to receive what we want, instead of coming together in agreement, whereby eventually everyone is blessed. Walking in true agreement does appear to be a “win, win” situation initially, however, it always positions us to walk in power and victory. To effectively walk in agreement in marriage we must crucify our own selfish desires and exercise the wisdom and understanding mentioned in the previous chapters. This requires us to utilize a greater level of maturity in our relationship with Jesus Christ and others.

Miriam -Webster dictionary defines *agreement* as, *the act of being in harmony regarding a matter of opinion*. Another definition is, *complete accord usually attained by discussion and adjustment of differences*. Strong’s Complete Dictionary of Bible Words list the greek definition for *agreement* as *sumphoneo*, which means *to be harmonious, to accord or concur*. There is a distinct difference between agreement and compromise. *Compromise* is defined as *the settlement of differences by arbitration or consent reached by mutual concessions*. *Concession (concede)* is defined as *to acknowledge grudgingly or hesitantly*. The disadvantage of compromising is that there is hesitance, or a resentful unwillingness to come to agreement, rather than the *harmony* and *complete accord* found in exercising agreement, which produces a greater unity and power in the relationship. In a compromise both parties lose something they wanted or had strong convictions about. Failing to agree *or reach complete accord by discussing and adjusting their*

differences, couples often find themselves harboring resentment, frustration, and in some cases, clinging to what they *lost* in the compromise. This creates division and confusion in marriage. Agreement affords everyone the opportunity to interject their ideas and thoughts, however, instead of compromising, they prayerfully and harmoniously agree on a decision, or a directive by God in the situation. In order to effectively walk in the power of agreement, we must examine what the word of God says regarding it.

Agreement began in Genesis 1:26 when God said, “let us make man in our image, after our likeness...” Although many theologians disagree about who God was referring to when He said “our” image, the fact remains, man was made in agreement and harmony, as stated in His word. The Bible records in I John 5: 7, 8, “*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one in agreement. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*” This further validates the God ordained necessity for agreement and the power of such agreement. One foundational scripture for agreement, which wonderfully applies to marriage is, “*How can two walk together except they be agreed?*” (Amos 3: 3) This is the basis of our study concerning the power of agreement.

Consider how a lack of agreement can affect other areas in marriage. For instance, when there is no agreement, there is no understanding, communication, peace, joy, trust, or power. Generally, we do not consider the consequences of our disagreement in marriage. Although, you will have differences, you should be determined to reach a place of harmony. You should accept that when making decisions, we should be willing to *agree*, or, *reach complete accord by discussing and adjusting their differences*. Keep in mind that you are two individuals learning how to grow and function as one and you should consider that every opportunity you have to discuss issues will assist you in the integration of your thoughts and ideas. There will be many occasions when you will not have the same feelings, views, or approach, however, to victoriously overcome those instances, you must pray, discuss, and

adjust. Prayer and communication with God as a team will aid you in reaching the *accord or harmony* essential for agreement. It is unfortunate that many couples do not take the time to pray together. This is the case with “seasoned” matured Christians as well as “babes” in Christ. Prayer promotes unity. The Bible promises that whatsoever you shall ask in prayer believing, you shall receive. It further promises in James 5:16 that *the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much*. We cannot expect to have a purposeful, fulfilling marriage useful for the glory of God when we fail to include the instructions from God’s word in it? Do we think that marriage requires any less holiness than other areas of our lives? Quite the contrary, it requires much more of us.

Consider Matthew 18: 19, 20 which promises, *“Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* This scripture further guarantees that when we come together in agreement for His name sake, He will not only grant our requests, but He will be in the *midst* of us. For God to be in our midst means that He is the core, center, focal point, heart, nucleus, and very foundation of our lives. As we touch and agree in prayer, we invite God and elevate Him in our situations and circumstances, allowing Him to release a greater level of understanding, wisdom, and power in us. In turn, we become closer to Him and closer to one another. If Adam and Eve had communicated regularly with one another and with God in unity, Satan’s attempt may have been nullified. Consider the lack of discussion when Eve offered Adam the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 3: 6 states, she *gave her husband the fruit and he did eat*. Bearing in mind our understanding of agreement, Eve should not have assumed that she could make such a critical decision without her husband’s approval; furthermore, Adam should have interjected his thoughts on the matter, taking into account what God said and knowing that they would face death as a result of disobeying God. Eve was so deceived that she actually believed this fruit could benefit them, nevertheless, these events further validate the need for prayer, communication, discussion, and

agreement. The implementation of such will greatly reduce the likelihood of destruction.

When was the last time you grabbed your spouse's hands and initiated a prayer of agreement and declaration of the things of God for his/her life or for your marriage? How often do you take the time to pray or fast as a couple for direction, purpose, and success for your marriage? Consider the countless times you squabbled to no avail, circumventing the most important principle and the surest remedy of all, which is prayer. Recognizing that we can approach the throne of God in the most basic way, free from fancy words, or deep verbalization, we must simply agree on issues and go to our Father for support and where we lack the ability to agree we must pray for that too. In Matthew 16:19 the Lord declares, *"I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."* This is an awesome pronouncement given by our Lord. However, if we fail to use the keys that He has given us, we will fail to unlock the doors to the many areas of victory that await us. Agreement in prayer is critical for our success in marriage. We can not expect success in our lives, much less our marriage, without exercising these biblical fundamentals.

In the previous chapter we examined the fundamentals of understanding in marriage. Once you have mastered those basic truths, it is much easier to master the "art of agreement". Once we see these challenges as opportunities to serve the Lord in our service to one another, we will walk in a new level of anointing, victory, and purpose. We must not allow our flesh to cause us to "get out of character", as I often say! We are called to walk in agreement, which is much easier when we value our marriage and understand the importance of serving our spouse. Yikes!, sounds so difficult! Although the flesh wars against not first fulfilling our own needs and desires, the spirit welcomes the opportunity to exercise this godly and uncommon behavior. This takes us into our study of serving in marriage - the art of serving.

Consider the word of God which states in Colossians 3: 22 – 24, “*Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as manpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Jesus Christ.*” When you serve others as if you are serving the Lord, you then can discover the joy in serving. This type of service requires becoming mature and selfless Christian. Remember, we are not serving to please others, but we serve because of our recognition and respect for God. Those of you unable to remotely imagine your spouse as your master, please consider one definition of the word master according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary; *one who exercises control or authority*. You must see your service not as a slave but as a free servant of Christ, your spouse, and others. Galatians 5: 13-15 reads, “*For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in this one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*” This confirms God’s requirement to serve and affirm the power of serving, not only in marriage, but daily life. This is a powerful text, it reminds us that if we do this one thing, all the law is fulfilled! Fulfilling law is a breeze once we become disciplined enough to master these spiritual principles.

One definition for serve is *to answer the needs of, or assist others*. Consider how you feel when someone serves you. Not only does it promote unity, it begins a reciprocal process whereby you desire to serve those who have served you. In actuality this is doing for those who have already done for you; nevertheless, it increases the likelihood for sincere service to others. Something I often ask wives who complain about their husband’s lack of support, how often they serve their husbands, and if they serve them how often is it done voluntarily. I pose the same questions to husbands because the same rule applies. Can you remember the last time that you did something for your wife for no reason other than to be to be a blessing?

Here are a few things husbands and wives can do to serve one another:

Wives to husbands:

- Compliment him regularly. This satisfies his need to receive respect, honor, and validation.
- Ask for his help, advice and opinion. This satisfies his need to be needed.
- Make an extra effort to provide a peaceful environment, exercise your “spirit woman” skills learned in the book *Back to the Garden The Woman, The Purpose*. This creates a pleasant environment for him to return to.
- Help him in the yard or with other “chores”. This reduces the “chore” feeling when he has to do these kinds of things; it also demonstrates your willingness to help him in his tasks and your desire to be in his presence.
- Arrange romantic evenings. Who says the man has to always be the aggressive one? This makes for a surprisingly pleasant time together and leads to a greater level of communication and closeness.
- Give your husband time for him (“him” time). Occasionally find activities that allow give him time to himself at home. This will give him the privacy that he needs to express himself and deal with issues he may need to face alone.
- Make him a coupon awarding him whatever his heart desires, redeemable at any time he is stressed or burdened. This will be a nice gesture demonstrating your willingness to serve him at anytime.
- Find out what attracts your husband and make an effort to present yourself in that manner. (Clothes, hair, make-up, shoes, perfumes, hygiene, etc) This will help you connect and enjoy one another. It also breaks the monotony.
- Initiate prayer together regularly especially when he is facing difficulty or pressure.

Husbands to wives:

- Give your wife compliments, hugs, and kisses for GP (*general purposes*). This satisfies her need for attention and affection.

- Remind her that you appreciate her for the many duties and responsibilities she messages. This makes her feel good, like, *it's all worth it!*
- Be creative and spontaneous. Do things that require thought and planning. This appeals to a woman's detailed thought process and makes a woman feel that you "*went all out*" just for her.
- Offer to assist your wife with the kids, ironing, cooking, or cleaning. Often women feel that men think this is "woman's stuff". Show her that you are *different* than the average man.
- Find out what attracts your wife and present yourself in that manner. (Clothes, hair, shoes, colognes, etc.) This will help you both connect and enjoy one another. It also breaks the monotony.
- Do the *small stuff* that goes a long way with women. Cards, flowers, gifts, and special evenings or outings. These are just the extras that demonstrate that you care for and think about her.
- Initiate prayer together regularly, especially when she is facing difficulty or pressure. She will feel comforted and protected.

If you are having trouble recognizing the importance in doing these things, it is highly probable that you rarely serve your husband or wife, if any at all. You need to get to work on performing some of these "acts of service". Do not be dismayed, good things are in store for you. The word of God instructs us in the book of Ephesians to *serve wholeheartedly as if we are serving the Lord, not man, knowing that the Lord rewards everyone for whatever good he/she does*. Part of "the art service" is the comfort and peace found in knowing that your service pleases God and brings joy to others. Furthermore, when you function as a servant, you invite God into your situation and He acts on your behalf. Even in the most difficult circumstances, He can be glorified. This requires an uncommon level of humility; however, because of Christ power working in and through us we can do that is which is uncommon. You will be pleasantly surprised at the wonderful blessings and benefits that come when serving your spouse.

It is my hope that you will walk in the spirit of agreement and collaboration with your spouse, functioning with the heart of a servant, causing a greater level of wisdom, maturity, and authority to be released into your relationship for the glory of God. It is my prayer that you will embrace the times of prayer, discussion, and adjustment, recognizing that each time you reach agreement, you walk in a greater strength and power as a couple. I pray further that you will allow your spirit to receive the many truths found in this book as you pursue God's purpose for your marriage and your life.

Let's review the key points in Chapter Four, The Power of Agreement and Service.

1. When walking in agreement be careful not to compromise, but agree. Agreement is the act of being in harmony regarding a matter of opinion. Complete accord of harmony is usually attained by discussion and adjustment of differences. Remember in a compromise there is a hesitance or unwillingness to come to agreement. In a compromise everyone loses something, so practice the art of agreement.
2. There is a great power, authority, and victory that is unleashed when we walk in agreement. Matthew 18:19 says, "*Again, I say unto you that if you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my father which is in heaven.*"
3. Serve is defined as *to answer the needs of others*. Serving promotes love, unity, and the spirit of giving. Master the art of serving your spouse. How can you serve others if you aren't serving your spouse.
4. When you serve one another as unto the Lord, you can experience the joy of serving knowing that you are pleasing God and bringing joy to someone else.
5. Consider innovative ways to serve and show love towards one another.

Chapter Five

From Genesis to Revelation

In this chapter we will go *back to the garden* and uncover the chain of events that took place in the Garden of Eden, regarding the fall of mankind. We will examine both Adam and Eve's roles and how we as believers today can overcome the issues that have followed us from the Garden of Eden. We will study the scriptures in the early chapters of Genesis, and uncover the crime, the motives, and the consequences caused by the man, the woman, and the devil, which led to the pronouncements made upon mankind by God.

For a more effective study of the experiences in the Garden, we will outline the chapter, focusing on four significant areas and the roles and responsibilities of Adam and Eve as it relates to husbands and wives today. These areas are:

- 1) The creation
- 2) The crime
- 3) The consequences
- 4) The conquest.

The Creation

ADAM

Genesis 2:19 indicates one of Adam's first responsibilities in the Garden. We discover that God entrusted a level of authority to Adam by allowing him to name the animals which He had created. "...and [God] brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them." It appears that God tested Adam's use of this authority. It further appears that God approved of Adam's declarations, "...whatsoever Adam called every living creature that was the name thereof." This passage reveals God's delegation of

authority to man to speak identity into the life of God's creations. It is the first representation of man speaking into the life of another being; giving it identity backed by the approval of God. This authority is a great responsibility God has delegated to man. However, due to ignorance of the power and authority in our words, it is being misused in ways which result in more curses than blessings – more death than life.

It is time to consider what you are or are not speaking into your life and your spirit; or perhaps the lives of your spouse, your family, your friends and your enemies.

Adam was put into a deep sleep – a temporary death, and was pierced in his side as a type of things to come. His body was broken as God took one of his ribs for the fashioning of the woman, Adam's bride. She was presented to Adam for the fulfillment of God's plan. His bride was a foreshadowing of the church. Similarly, Christ experienced His body being broken and a piercing of His side leading to His "*temporary death*", temporary in the sense that the grave would not hold him. Moreover, as a result of His death, the church (*representative of the woman*) – the bride of Christ, was given life in the earth. Just as Adam's bride was presented to him after he arose from his sleep, so it is with the bride of Christ. This deep sleep or "*temporary death*" represents the work of the Spirit. This process was not a death and breaking that only Adam had to endure. Every man since Adam must also allow God to do the same work in his life. There has to be breaking and death of your self-will, uncontrolled emotions, undisciplined thoughts, and ungodly desires. This is vital. It is the endurance of this process that enables you to enter into the Holy presence of God. When you become broken and "*dead*" to self, the purpose of God can be fulfilled free from your own selfish wants and desires. Furthermore, after your breaking and healing, God can present you with your suitable helper, the woman of God designed to usher you into purpose.

EVE

We must review the names of the woman given in the early chapters in the book of Genesis. In Genesis 2:20 the KJV refers to the woman as a *help meet*. The NIV version of this phrase *help meet* is a *helper suitable*. The Greek word for helper is *ezer*, which

means *to support, aid, or protect*. In several passages in Scripture, the word *helper* is used to describe the Holy Spirit. Those same passages, in the Greek text contain the word *ezer* as the translation for both –the woman and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our paraclete – our protector, our support to lean on for guidance into truth. *Paraclete* is a Greek noun-meaning *comforter* or *advocate*. The verb *paraclete* means *a calling to one's side or one who comes alongside*.

Let us further study the truths revealed by another name given to the woman in the third chapter of Genesis. The name, *Eve*, was given to her – interpreted to mean *giver of life*. Of course, we know that she was the first mother recorded in Scripture. However, her name, *Eve*, meant more than life giver in the natural sense of the word. Women were intended to be givers of life through their spirit, actions, words, and deeds. We must be reminded that we have a God given ability to prophetically speak life into people, surroundings, and situations. God is calling us to be life givers — the helpers, protectors, and women of wisdom in our daily living, speaking life into our spouses, families, and others, as well as their visions and ideas.

As detailed in Scripture in *Genesis 2:21*, we know the woman was fashioned from the rib, which was taken out of the man. Let's examine the significance of the rib. The Home Health Medical Dictionary describes *rib* as *one of the paired, curved rods that support the body. It protects, or acts as a shield to the vital organs, wrapped around them enclosing them from harm*. Webster's Dictionary describes the *rib* as *to protect or keep alive*. In each case, the purpose of the rib is to protect, which is the same protective quality intended in the design of woman. When we walk in purpose, we can envelop those we love, enhancing, protecting, and supporting them.

The Crime

ADAM

We will examine the lack of communication that occurred between Adam and Eve. In Genesis 2:19, we recognize the extent of Adam's communications. We perceive

that there are different levels of communication and they are based on the type of interaction or relationship and its purpose. For instance, when Adam spoke to name a fish that was its name and when he spoke to name a bird that was its name. That was the extent of his communication concerning such. These creatures, not being equal to him, required nothing more in the way of communication. His responsibility was fulfilled. However, when God gave him the woman, who was equal to him and, like him, was created in the image of God, another level of communication was required. The woman was a part of Adam, made suitable (*or comparable*) to him and fashioned as a helper for him. This was to be a relationship that required a level of communication that would necessitate continual and intense life giving speech for the success of God's human team. That is what God created Adam and his helper, Eve, to be – a team.

If Adam had understood his responsibility for a higher level of communication with the woman and maintained such for relationship building, the serpent's enticements would have been ineffective and the loopholes into her soul would have been nonexistent. The opportunity for the serpent to communicate with her as freely may have been impossible. The woman would have been so fulfilled by the words of Adam and all that God revealed to him, that deception and disobedience would have had no place and she would not have been led astray by her own desires, emotions, and aspirations. Furthermore, in *Genesis 3:6*, Adam should have questioned Eve when offered the fruit, knowing the commands given regarding the fruit stated the result in eating it would be death.

Perhaps this same lack of communication exists in your marriage. This must be addressed and corrected in order to prevent future "crimes" in your marriage.

In *Genesis 3:12*, when questioned by God Adam immediately attempts to divert the responsibility for his sin to the woman. Moreover, he was so consumed by the act of finger pointing that he even accused God of being party to his failure. He blamed God for *giving him the woman*. He states, "the woman that *you gave* to be with me, *she gave me* the fruit of the tree." In other words he implied, *it's her fault and your fault too God for giving her to me!* This was an attempt to take the focus off of himself as the delegated

authority, the one primarily responsible for management of the garden and the enforcement of God's mandate. Had Adam fallen on his face and cried out to God in repentance for his own disobedience and interceded for Eve as well, he would surely have touched the heart of God.

Ask yourself the following:

- How many times have I resorted to complaining about and/or accusing my spouse or others before kneeling to pray for them?
- How often do I intercede in prayer for my spouse or others concerning issues and areas of imperfections prior to finger pointing?
- Do I give God the opportunity to move in situations and glorify Himself because I act more like Jesus than Adam in handling my relationships?
- How often do I pray for the ability to stand for God and oppose ungodly decisions made by those close to me?

Men of God, I challenge you to cover your wives, families, and others in prayer as Jesus has not only covered you by His blood but He continually covers you in prayer before the Father. As Christ is to His bride, the church, you are a spiritual covering to the woman God has placed in your life. Moreover, as Christ, you must be willing to die to self in order that life is restored to dead and dying situations, circumstances, and even spiritual lives. Failure to intercede for and be the covering for your spouse, and others under your authority, results in discontentment, complaining, and accusations, which provides a root for the growth of bitterness, contention, unforgiveness, pride, and rebellion. It also causes you, the head, to leave them without guidance and leadership. This provides the enemy an opportunity to work havoc in their mind and emotions.

EVE

In Genesis 3:1-6 we note that Eve allowed the enemy to deceive her, working havoc in her mind, will, and emotions. She allowed the components of doubt, deception, diversion, and defeat to overtake her in this time of vulnerability. The following not only reveals the how the enemy appealed to Eve, but also the major reasons that lead to the existence of sin in our lives:

1. We question, or allow someone else to question, what we know to be the truth of God.
2. It opens the door for dialogue with the enemy.
3. The enemy challenges the Word of God and makes an appeal to our flesh (*our emotions, ungodly desires, and carnal nature*)
4. Our flesh is aroused and we began to doubt and/or ignore the truth of God's Word.
5. Doubting God's Word demonstrates a lack of faith and disbelief, resulting in our making poor choices and decisions.

Review the following distorted views that consumed Eve's mind once she gave in to the enemies tricks:

- Natural sight as opposed to spiritual insight (*saw that the tree was good*) — this speaks to Eve's inability to see in the spirit. When Eve looked at the tree, after doubt and deception set in, she no longer avoided it for fear of consequence as she previously had. Becoming separated from God, and operating in her carnality, caused her to have a distorted view of the tree. She saw it as something to attain – something good and desirable.

- Security (*good for food*) — this reveals a woman’s natural need for security and fulfillment. The desire to know all of our needs are met. This is still a carnal desire. When deception set in, Eve’s security seemed inadequate and a desire for more was aroused. She saw this, in the natural, as another resource for them.

- Lust and desire (*and pleasing to the eye and also desirable*) — this reveals Eve’s natural satisfaction and desires. Webster’s Dictionary defines *desire* as *a conscious impulse towards something that promises enjoyment or satisfaction in its attainment*. When we are lead by our lusts and desires, that which is sinful, harmful, or damaging, appears to be helpful, necessary, and pleasing to us. We then have a distorted view of things because we have been seduced by our lusts and desires.

- Pursuit of wisdom and power (*desirable for gaining wisdom*) – Remember, Eve was designed by the wisdom of God. She was equipped with all that she needed. However, she was deceived into believing that she could be even wiser, knowing good and evil as God. All that Adam and Eve knew was good. It’s hard to imaging why Eve would have even wanted to know evil. Perhaps it was that evil, in and of itself, aroused her curiosity, as it was unknown to her. However, the attainment was not worth the loss.

The word of God instructs wives to submit to their husbands in everything. You cannot operate like a single woman. If you, like Eve, fail to take matters to your husband prior to making decisions, you must put an end to that behavior. You must never make impulsive decisions. Many of our poor choices are made because we do not have two-way communication with God. We do all of the talking and fail to take the time to hear what He is saying. We allow our needs, desires, and thoughts to open the door for the enemy to infuse our mind with doubt and deceit. As women of God, we must spend time communicating with God and worshipping Him so that there will be no room for the subtle tricks of the enemy to work against us.

The Consequences

ADAM

The first and most impacting consequence resulting from the fall was the separation from God and the shame and guilt that both Adam and Eve must have felt. In Genesis 3: 7 after Adam sinned by disobeying God's command, God called to him asking, "Where are you?" Adam's response to God was that he was *afraid* because he was *naked*, so he *hid*. After his disobedience and sin, he immediately became aware that the relationship as he knew it was severed. At that point, Adam also became aware of his nakedness, perhaps he became aware of something much more than his being without a physical covering. Adam became aware that he had been stripped of something of his spiritual covering as well as God's glorious image and likeness. Adam's awareness of his nakedness resulted in his feelings of guilt and shame for his disloyalty to God. After his disobedience and sin, Adam's guilt and shame caused him to attempt to hide from God.

Sin causes us to walk in darkness, and consequently, hiding results in separation from God and others. This provokes us to conceal our sin, which results in strained and impure relationships.

The attempt to conceal or cover-up sin was also present with Adam and Eve in the garden, as they tried to cover themselves with fig leaves. This is the "fig leaf" deception, which deceives and convinces us that we should keep our sin hidden for fear of the consequence of exposure. Too often, we apply man-made coverings to ourselves because of our inability to face God after we have sinned. Genesis 3:8 reads, "*they hid themselves from God amongst the trees of the garden.*" (NIV) Failing to repent, (which is to turn away from sin and be committed to changing our thoughts and behavior) we mask ourselves with rituals, obligations, relationships, and even church activities. Like Adam and Eve, we too are hiding among the trees hoping that God will somehow overlook us. This pulls us further away from God and the continuation of business as usual often leads to self-deceit and hypocritical living. This is a trick of the enemy and a result of not

knowing and/or trusting God's promise to forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness after we confess to Him.

In Genesis 3:14–24, the scripture records God's sentence on the perpetrators who committed the inimitable crime – the fall of man. God pronounced an individual curse upon each accomplice - Adam, Eve, and the serpent (Satan). Each curse imposed a unique penalty and very distinctive consequences, which transcended throughout the history mankind. In verse 14, we read the curse God pronounced on the serpent (Satan) which includes, "...on your belly you shall go and you shall eat dust all the days of your life..." Interestingly, in verse 19, God's admonishment to the man is, "...*for dust you are and to dust you shall return.*" Let's consider what *dust* represents in this passage. Dust is the origin of the flesh – the physical make-up of man. Therefore, dust represents flesh, which speaks to the carnal nature of man – the body apart from the spirit. Our flesh (carnal/sin nature) is the most vigorous hindrance to fulfilling God's purpose. It is also the greatest opposition to our becoming filled full of His Spirit. With this in mind, let us look again at God's command for Satan to eat the dust all the days of his life. Spiritually speaking, God has given the enemy the "authority" to eat up or devour the flesh – the carnality of man. He has given the enemy the authority to destroy or devour that which is in you that is useless to God – and only that. When Satan attacks, he will always challenge the things of the spirit – those things which God has revealed to us through His Word and His servants. Satan will turn up the pressure in such a way that it will reveal any doubt, confusion, fear, and all other issues and thoughts we may be struggling with in our human or carnal nature. We must not let those feelings and emotions overtake us as he intends. However, understand that through the power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, those feelings and emotions can be overcome by the truth and promises found in the Word of God.

In Genesis 3: 17-19 we see the accounts of God's judgment on Adam. Because of Adam's disobedience and yielding to Eve, God commanded him to work and eat from the cursed ground (or earth) for eternity, he declared that the ground (or earth) would produce thorns and thistles (or hindrances) for him. He also banished him from the Garden of Eden (v23).

EVE

In Genesis 3:16 we find the pronouncement of God's judgment on Eve as a result of her sin. We will study the sentence imposed on Eve in two parts. This is the first part of her punishment, as declared by God, "*I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.*" In our examination of this scripture, we find that pain and sorrow is promised throughout the entire child-bearing process. We have always considered this process limited to conception through birth, however, in actuality, it begins prior to the nine-month window. It actually begins at puberty when the female body undergoes a transformation, which enables the production of the egg necessary for the conception of a child. After the initiation of this process, it becomes a regular cycle on a monthly basis, whether we conceive or not. Now many of us really do consider this a curse; and we do so because of the physical distress, hygienic concerns, emotional instability, and oftentimes, downright painful process that our body endures to prepare itself for conception.

The next progression in this process is the sorrow experienced after conception. The intimacy between the husband and his wife progresses to a physical exchange necessary for conception. The traditional and most God honoring process for this exchange is time spent together, between a man and his wife, cultivating love, adoration, caring, and communication. This level of intimacy leads them to share their spirit, soul, and body; the latter being the process by which the seed of the man fertilizes the egg that is within the womb of the woman, and a life is conceived. After a period of growth, development, and nurturing, the body is ready to birth (deliver) new life. Throughout this stage, the body has been stretched, pulled, cramped, kicked (from the inside), disfigured, and greatly inflated. Up to this point, as many of us can attest to, this is not a pleasant experience by a long shot – with the worst still ahead. Inevitably, the stage of delivery comes and this is the ultimate point of sorrow coupled with the pain as God declared in the garden.

After examining, with much detail, the birthing process, and the sorrow and pain associated with it, from a natural viewpoint, let us compare it with the same process in

the spiritual realm. As in the natural, our spirit experiences changes which cause discomfort, challenges, pain, and occasional sorrow, as we prepare to receive the seed of promise or *the Word of God*. There are similar changes and preparation for this conception just as in the natural. Once you become a woman of God through salvation, like the natural body, your spirit begins a transformation process whereby it, too, is prepared to receive a seed of promise for the conception and birth of your purpose and destiny in God. As in the natural, this process can be difficult; it is sometimes extremely challenging, stretching our faith, draining our emotions, and painful to our flesh. However, just as was declared in the garden for the natural, it is ordained to be so in the spirit. This process is required to prepare us for our expected end. The seed of promise, placed within our spirit during our time of intimacy with God, requires growth, development, and maturity. As in the natural, at the appointed time, the birth (delivery) of the purpose is inevitable. Also, as in the natural, this process can be painful and challenging, but again, after a successful delivery, the blessings birthed out of the pain are larger than life, with the potential to change, impact, and affect countless others.

Let us examine another consequence that we, as women, must understand clearly. It is found in the second part of the judgment God pronounced on Eve in Genesis 3:16, “and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over you.” We must define three key words in the text: desire, husband, and rule. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines *desire* as *a conscious impulse towards something that promises enjoyment or satisfaction in its attainment*. In the Vine’s Expository of Old and New Testament Words the Greek noun for *desire* is *epithumia*, which means *a craving, longing, passion, or turning towards something or someone*. Interestingly enough, the word used for *husband*, in this particular passage, is the Hebrew word *ish*, which simply means *man*. The verb *rule*, is defined by Webster’s Dictionary, as *to exert control, direction, or influence on or over*. In the Vine’s Expository of Old and New Testament Words it is translated as the Greek verb, *proistemi*, which means *to stand before, to lead, to attend to, and to guide*. As a result of God’s pronouncement on Eve, women have a natural *urge or turning* toward man. Her heart, which was originally created for the purest, most innocent love and pursuit of God was turned toward man, as a result, so is ours.

We must examine ourselves and uncover the truth about our behavior. We have a need, an urge, a longing, and a turning toward man, which we must redirect toward God – replace our desire for man with an intimate relationship with God. He is more than able to fulfill our deepest needs. We must understand that this natural desire or turning toward man is born of the flesh; therefore, as with other fleshly strongholds and vices, we must fight to correct it, overcome it, and walk in victory. The correction is the conscience decision to change; the effort is what is required to overcome and to put God in His proper place as Leader, Lord, and King. We have to direct our longings, desires, and passion toward more of our Father in Heaven and we will bring the judgment of the flesh under subjection to the Spirit. When we turn toward God, and accept His Lordship, He fills the emptiness that appears to exist when we are without a man in our life and we can enjoy victory over misdirected emotions. We must realize that all of the power, authority, and ability that is being revealed in our revisit to the garden is null and void if our hearts are not turned totally back toward God.

The Conquest

Adam and Eve

Genesis 3:14 reads, “... *and I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers...*” The Webster’s Dictionary defines *enmity* as *mutual hatred or ill will; ill will and vindictiveness that threaten to kindle hostility*. The Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words defines the Hebrew word for *enmity* as *echthra*, meaning *hostility or opposition*. It is vital that we understand the purpose for this intense opposition that was initiated by God.

We must recognize our inner hatred for the enemy and develop an even greater hatred for the bondage that once held us and still hold many others captive. The enemy knows whether or not we truly hate him, or will entertain him. When enmity was placed between the serpent and the woman, and the serpent and the seed of the woman (which is man), it was mutual – it was not one sided, as we have been lulled into thinking. Wake

up! We are to hate the enemy as much as he hates us. Our hatred is intended to be the fuel that will fire us up enough to identify, expose, and destroy Satan and his demons. We must develop a love for the things of God and the people of God, so much that a hatred for Satan will be natural. We must constantly be ready for battle – in a ready, aim, and fire mode. If we are not tuned in to Christ, and led by the Spirit of God, we will take the hatred and opposition created within us to be used against Satan, and fire it against people, instead of the demons it is intended to destroy. Without the spiritual training and development, through prayer, worship, and study, we have distorted and imprecise spiritual insight which impairs our ability to see and causes us to identify the wrong targets, therefore, firing inaccurately.

God has uniquely designed the woman for battle naturally as well as spiritually. Although we are physically designed to be more fragile than men, we have the ability to endure more challenges, changes, discomfort, and pain in frequency and intensity. No offense, but we can imagine that Adam, the head, may have walked throughout the garden never even being aware that there was an enemy lurking about. Even in the scriptures, God uses the female gender concerning warfare. We have to understand the enemy hates us both, man and woman — he knows who we are, who we represent, and who we carry within us, which are the future sons and daughters of God. The following scripture passages, in the book of Revelation, not only validate this enmity, they also inform us of our predestined victory in God:

Revelation 12: 1-2, 4 “*And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered...and his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them down to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.*”

Revelation 12:13 *and when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.*

Revelation 12:17 and the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

We accept that Satan is after us; however, as with any war or “mutual opposition”, we should pursue him just as aggressively. We must fight with spiritual weapons. The Bible instructs us in 2 Corinthians 10: 3-6, “...though we live in the world we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of this world. On the contrary, they have the divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.” (NIV) We must operate in faith and put on the whole armor of God, (Ephesians 6: 10-20) that we may be victorious in battle. We have to understand this is a war filled with hatred and opposition, but the Word of God promises us victory.

The second portion of our reference passage, found in Genesis 3:14 reads, “...*he shall crush your head and you shall strike his heel.*” Again, men and women of God, be reminded, the promise is victory. From the book of Genesis through Revelation, God has promised us victory in every battle. Our previous scripture passage described the war and our promised victory through Christ Jesus. Consider that God loves us so much that despite the crime committed against Him in the garden, He still had a great and mighty plan predestined for us. Although, the enemy used mankind, as the vehicle by which sin came into the world; God, in His omnipotence, grace, mercy, and compassion, used the same vehicle to rectify sin, which is through Jesus Christ. In the midst of God’s judgment and curse, He extended the opportunity whereby our relationship to Him could be re-established, knowing that our reconciliation would be vital in our war with Satan. Even with our imperfections, God desires that we walk in the power and anointing of being more than conquerors. What an awesome God we serve. Glory to His Name!

Let's examine what God is saying to us through our reference passage, "...*he shall crush your head and you shall strike his heel.*" The "he" whom God is referring to is the Seed of the woman, Jesus Christ. Through Jesus Christ, the enemy's head, (*which speaks to the authority*) shall be crushed – *or destroyed*. The only recourse that the enemy has is permission to strike His (*Christ's*) heel – *or walk*. Actual this speaks to Satan's ability to affect Jesus only in His earthly walk; however, not in any way to destroy Him. This refers not only to Christ, the Seed of the woman, but the woman and future generations of men as well.

Men and women of God, you have been given the power to crush the head *or authority* of the enemy in this Earth; which includes your life, the lives of others, businesses, governments, and world systems – all that is on this Earth. The most damage the enemy is permitted to cause is to strike your heel, which speaks to an occasional stumble or temporary limp. A strike to the heel may slow you down but doesn't rule you out. He does not have the approval of God to keep you down, knock you out, or destroy you. As we recall from Chapter One, he is only allowed to eat dust. (*flesh, carnality*) He is only given more authority when you open the door to sin, which invites him into your life. Romans 8: 36, 37 states, "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Even when we feel that we are being slaughtered, the promise of God is that we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ.

If we examine a few other scriptural passages, found in the Revelation, another remarkable fact is revealed. As we have examined the hatred and the war; let's now study the promises revealed in the following passages:

Revelation 12: 6 "... *the woman fled into the wilderness where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.*"

Revelation 12:11 *“And they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death.”*

Revelation 12:14 *“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time from the face of the serpent.”*

These scriptures are the revelation of things to come in the war between God and Satan. In verse 6, this wilderness represents a place of refuge and protection (unlike most other references to the wilderness throughout scripture.) This fleeing into the wilderness, God’s prepared place, is His place of security, which He promises to all true believers. God is not promising that Satan will not attack us by “striking our heel” as we studied, but He has promised to nurture and protect our soul.

The verse 11 passage proclaims that the victory is won by the blood of the slain Lamb, Jesus Christ. This was the deadly blow to Satan. However, our fight against Satan requires our claiming and testifying to the cleansing and redeeming power of the blood, testifying to Christ’s power, and being willing to sacrifice our earthly lives. In verse 14, Satan was sent back to Earth. This was his time to rule for a “short time”. Nonetheless, scripture states that the woman was given two wings of a great eagle (this speaks to swiftness) that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, and she would be taken care of and out of the serpents reach. Again, we see God’s promise to take care of His true believers, during this period, totally out of the enemy’s reach.

Men and woman of God, to be a beneficiary of these promises, you must ensure that your relationship with God is true and intact. I pray that you will walk in the power and victory already established for you, taking full advantage of all the promises of God for your life and marriage. It is my prayer that through these truths you are enlightened, equipped, and empowered to become the Holy Ghost filled tag team needed to walk in your purpose to destroy the kingdom of darkness.

Let's review the key points in Chapter Five, From Genesis to Revelation.

1. We must understand how God created us as man and woman and how we are to work together, strengthening and enhancing one another for His glory. God has awesomely handcrafted us in such a way that our purpose compliment one another, equipping us to walk in victory.
2. We must understand what led to the crime in the garden as we attempt to break curses, walk in healing, and wholeness. We must recognize the methods that Satan used then and still uses today to hi jack our destiny and purpose in God. We must walk as overcomers, striking deadly blows to the soon to be overthrown kingdom of darkness.
3. We must repent and turn away from foolish behavior regarding our relationships with both God and our spouse. It is critical that we have a repentant heart and spirit before God, walking boldly, yet in the spirit of humility, realizing apart from God we cannot function.
4. We must accept that Satan determined to destroy us; however, as with any war or “mutual opposition”, we must pursue him just as aggressively. We must fight with spiritual weapons. From the book of Genesis to Revelation God has promised us victory in every battle we incur. Even in our imperfections, God wants us to walk in the anointing of being more than a conqueror.
5. We must constantly be set for battle; in a ready, aim, and fire mode. If we are not turned toward Christ and led by the spirit of God we will take the hatred and opposition within us and use it against people, as opposed to the demons that it is intended to destroy. Without the spiritual training and development that comes by way of prayer, worship, and study, we have a distorted spiritual sight which causes us to see and destroy the wrong enemies.

Chapter Six

Sex in Marriage

In chapter six we will examine seven important tips for believers regarding sex in marriage. We cannot victoriously walk in God's purpose for marriage without addressing this topic. Sex is a vital part of marriage that when understood and correctly handled, has purpose, meaning, and fulfillment. Sex is rarely taught on in ministries today and is often omitted from pre and post marital counseling. Although it is one of the last issues to be counseled on prior to marriage, it is one of the first issues that men and women find themselves needing guidance on after marriage. In the body of Christ, we must learn to address all areas of our lives, regardless how uncomfortable it may feel. Too often, we experience situations that may have been prevented, had they been addressed beforehand. In society today, sexual abuse, promiscuity, adultery, homosexuality, prostitution, pornography, and the general decrease in morality, has changed the outlook of sex in such a drastic way, the average person needs some form of teaching and counseling about sex prior to marriage. Because the church has failed to address sexual issues, many Christians struggle with different kinds of sexual strongholds that have gone undealt with, causing bondage, depression, and continued brokenness.

It is essential to realize the information in this chapter is effective when one is walking in wholeness and liberty in Christ. Those who are unhealed, or bound by religious traditions, ideologies, or philosophies, will be unable to receive the nuggets of wisdom and truth offered in this chapter. You should approach every area of your life and marriage with the understanding that God is concerned about all aspects of your life, even those that we are not concerned about. It is my prayer, that as you read and study this chapter, you will receive the information essential in helping your marriage grow and develop in the areas of sex in marriage.

SEVEN THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SEX IN MARRIAGE

1. Why, Why? Must I?

The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the woman to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way the husband's body doesn't belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time that you might devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together so that Satan won't tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command. I Corinthians 7: 3-6 (NIV)

Many women and men, wonder why they need to have to have sex in marriage, as if it is some vile act. One of the first realities that you must grasp is that according to scripture, once married, you no longer have sole possession of your body, but joint possession with your spouse. Now, you both have input concerning your body and sex. The scripture states there should be *mutual consent* when abstaining from sex. You should no longer be concerned solely with what you may or may not want to do, but now have to consider your responsibility not to *deprive one another*, as stated in scripture. If the basis for your marriage is truly Godly love and you are emotionally healed and whole, sex should not be a problem. If sex is a problem, you must assess the "love gauge".

For example, if you are a wife or husband feeling "deprived", you must first examine the level of love you are conveying to your spouse to ensure that your partner is not physically withdrawn, as a result of their emotional withdrawal, which could be due to the lack of love, respect, and kindness you show them. Your flesh would prompt you to approach this situation accusing your spouse, as opposed to examining yourself. Your mind will think thoughts such as; they don't want me, they aren't a normal man or woman, they don't love me, or, they have someone else, without considering that you may have failed to show them the kind of love that leads to one's comfort and freedom in sex. We are swift to be unloving or unkind towards our spouses, yet we assume that they somehow would want to have sex with us, as if we didn't treat them unjustly.

In verse 6 of the scripture referenced, it states that this proclamation is by permission *or* concession, not given as a command. However, because God did not command that sex occurs regularly in marriage, it does not lessen the necessity for its regular occurrence. The scripture in Genesis 2:24 states, “*and the two shall become one flesh.*” Much more than meeting a fleshly appetite, sex is about bonding, mutual consent agreement, and love, so in marriage sex is critical. This is a process which provides a physical, emotional, and spiritual exchange that further strengthens the bond between husband and wife. Because sex is about love, sharing, agreement and bonding, it is critical in marriage. So change you “must I?” uptight mindset and take a more welcoming and unselfish approach to sex in marriage.

2. What goes and what doesn't?

Marriage should be honored by all and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Hebrews 13:4 NIV

The writer of Hebrews is refuting ascetic teaching, by stating first, that marriage is good and honored by God. His intent was to reveal the truth to people who were under the ascetic teaching, being taught that even the marriage relationship itself was unwholesome. His second objective was to state that sexual relationships outside of marriage were defiling “the bed”, which was intended for marital sex. Anything outside of marriage, *i.e.*, adultery, fornication, whoredom, and all sexually immoral acts were unacceptable and would be judged by God. The writer says nothing in scripture to indicate that anything was actually unacceptable by consenting married couples. However, of course any sexual immorality, sexual abuse, or perversion would obviously be unacceptable. This would include things such as pornography, multiple partners, same gender sexual relationships, etc. (See Leviticus Chapter 18)

Simply stated, consenting married couples are permitted to please one another in whatever manner they desire, taking into consideration the previous paragraph. I believe

that in marriage couples need to explore the many ways sex can be gratifying and enjoyable, regularly pondering new ways to excite their best friend and lover. Many people argue over what is considered to be unclean and unacceptable. In this debate, I say, whatever any man esteems as unclean, to him it is unclean. (Romans 14:14) We cannot judge one's personal preference or view on what is acceptable in our mind, however, we can initiate discussions about these things with those we care for, taking into consideration that you could have a totally different view than your spouse. A failure to discuss your views could lead to issues in your sexual relationship after marriage.

If we study the book of Song of Solomon, you will find a most pure, yet passionate love story, thoughts, dreams, and drama. After reading this how could one deny God's intention for us to have a passionate, fulfilling love life in marriage?

3. Turn on's and turn off's ?

But speaking the truth in love, we may grow up in him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: Ephesians 4:15

This is a very delicate area. It is true that we should not be bound by fleshly turn off's and on's in regards to our spouses, however, the reality is that we sometimes are. I know it's an oxymoron, however, the reality is that some things can cause us to be turned off and some things can cause us to be turned on! This too has an effect on our love life. I want to address the referenced scripture because I believe that once again, it is the lack of communication that causes us to have issues in this area. When we truly love someone, communicating truth to them actually protects and strengthens them. A painful truth is more effective than a flattering lie. The key is praying for God's wisdom and seasoning our words with such grace and love that one is not torn down or embarrassed, but rather, built up and encouraged.

There are many instances that your spouse may smell delicious, look appetizing, or do something that just grabs your attention! In those cases they need to be told. Tell

your husband he's fine! He looks good in those jeans or that suit! Tell him you love that cologne! Let him know that you are *deeply moved* by him. The same applies to husbands regarding their wives, men tell your wife she is *hot, sexy, or fine*. If you have a favorite hairstyle, nightgown, or suit, tell her how great she looks and that you are *deeply moved* by that particular thing. This encourages promotes unity and communication and builds up one another. Giving your spouse attention at home regularly, lessens the likelihood that someone will be *moved by* someone else's attentiveness to them.

Having considering the positive side to this, we must address the negative also. If there is something that really concerns you, or is a turn off to you, it would be less than fair if you did not share it with your spouse. In many cases there are little things that we struggle with that have big affects. For instance, if your spouse has poor hygiene issues that turn you off, you should address it. (*if you are premarital and reading this book, it is vital, as stated in chapter two, to find out about some of these things through questions, conversations, and observance*) You don't shout, "hey your breathe stinks, get out of my face!", however, you can pick a good time and say; "you know I really care about you and I've noticed something that is going on with you that I need to talk to you about. You may even be unaware of this honey, but... and maybe you should consider..., or maybe it may help if you..., I would hate for you to be out and someone else tells you this other than me."

I have heard women and men complain about everything including breath, body odor, unclean homes, lack of good hygiene habits, clothes, hair, feet, and I could go on. If you have issues with things concerning your mate, and instead of telling them, you simply stop being intimate with them, you are truly doing them a disservice, and not showing love. Maybe you think it is embarrassing. Well, good news for you, God can give you the wisdom and grace to deal with anything when you approach it with a pure heart and honesty. Just make sure your motives are right.

**4. Headaches, tired, sicknesses, the girls, football, basketball, golf, the guys-
ENOUGH ALREADY! YOU'RE MARRIED!**

It is critical that you overcome the headaches, preplanned illness, games, tiredness, and other issues blocking your time of intimacy. Once someone is rejected long enough, they stop trying. Then the next thing you know, you're saying, "what's wrong with you?", or, "you must have a problem". When actually you are the problem, or were the problem. Despite what society would have us to think, particularly about men; people are not some machine that you can rig, turn on and off immediately, with no recollection of the previous in or output. You must be realistic in your approach, considering the outcomes of your withholding.

If you truly are just "beat", or worn out all the time, you should look at ways to increase your energy level and stamina. I have four children (18, 17, 16 & 11), a full time job, a growing business, over 25 business clients, and am currently writing this book and two others. I still currently do laundry, yard work, as well as cook and clean like other single parents, and participate in my families activities. I could probably juggle a husband too, if God so appointed! I say that to say, energy is part of our make up. One of my suggestions to you is to exercise a little daily. Exercise results in energy. Also take high potency vitamins in the areas that your body is deficient in. Get the *proper* sleep, not too much or too little. Lying around a lot or being lazy zaps your energy and lowers your stamina. This can be unpleasant for your spouse, furthermore it slows down the momentum of the household. Who wants to attempt to have sex with someone always, complaining, rejecting advances, and yelling, "Get off me!" all the time. Remember our previous tip on rejection.

Do not schedule so many activities that you have no time for sex in your marriage. What are games, sports, nail appointments, pedicures, and personal time if it rules out the time you have to come together. Keep in mind the need for prioritizing. Make time for lovemaking, and avoid being, sick, or tired, if it is preventable.

5. Romance for some...

Man or woman, if you know you are married to a helpless romantic, make a point to add the dramatic and romantic flavor to your sexual encounters. You will be surprised, how many women and some men are into romance. The candles, the rose petals, the music, the whole ambiance! For many women this demonstrates the extra preparation and special touch that *deeply moves* them! Don't be fooled men appreciate romance too. This doesn't necessarily require an abundance of money being spent (depending on how far you want to go), nor does it always require you leaving home, although I highly recommend you do that sometimes too. You can light the fireplace, cook a romantic dinner with the proper lighting, give each other body massages, or do other things that take time and preparation that can give a touch of romance to the evening.

For some it is a chance to show off, for the bashful it is a chance to be swept away by their spouses, but for most it is a special memory that made the evening "all about them". Regardless of your personal preference to romance or not to romance, I believe that every relationship is blessed by it. No matter what age couple you are, romance is always nice and can be arranged specifically to suit you and your spouses taste.

6. Break up the monotony!

Get rid of boring! Same old places, same old ways, same old things, "same ole, same ole". Don't let the flames die out. Keep throwing coals in the fire! I know that it does not sound very religious, but there is no scripture that records a particular sexual position. Remember you're married already!! Sex is about bonding, sharing, pleasure, and fulfillment. Who ever said you have to always be face to face, tummy to tummy! Forgive my candor, but some of us need deliverance!! (*Sorry mom, still facts from heaven! I love you!*) I can say with confidence, that most of you have more than one room in your home, not necessarily a bedroom, but other rooms... well use them! When we break up the monotony, we bond with one another and believe it or not, this overflows to other areas of the marriage. When you are "naked and unashamed" literally, you are more likely to be "naked and unashamed" in other areas of your relationship, exposing your true self and true feelings.

It is my belief that you and your spouse should be able to do whatever, whenever, wherever, and however (within our previously identified God mandated boundaries), without feeling ashamed or silly. For those of you who simply can't get with it, that is fine, however, please make sure that you and your spouse have some type of agreement if they appreciate the more free approach to sex in marriage.

7. From the physical to the spiritual...

In my forthrightness regarding sex in marriage, I will be attenuating a critical truth if I fail to address the importance for us to always exercise our ability to balance the physical with the spiritual, never allowing ourselves to walk in the flesh or carnality. Remember that as many that are led by the spirit of God they are the sons (and daughters) of God. You are to always walk in agreement as one, in the spirit of true Godly love and compassion for one another. Taking advantage of every opportunity to bond, share, love, and grow into what God purposed for your marriage, being sure to treat one another with love, reverence, respect, and honor.

How can you expect to receive the promises of God for your life and marriage without first being a promise keeper? How can you expect to be so deeply cherished without first loving your spouse? How can you expect a breakthrough without being willing to break? How can you expect to walk in agreement, when you don't promote agreement in your marriage? How can you call yourself a mighty man or woman of God, when you have no compassion in your heart for the very gift of life God has entrusted you with? I challenge you to walk in these truths about sex in marriage, while walking in repentance, deliverance, and wholeness, hand in hand, with your blessed partner.

It is my prayer that you have been blessed by the God inspired writings found in the pages of this book. I use my God given authority to speak life into your marriage, no matter what circumstances you may be facing. God has a preordained assignment just for you. It is my prayer that you will seek the face of God and heed

his instructions, by demonstrating your obedience. It is my prayer that you will learn, grow, and develop into an awesome tag team for His glory. Assisting and enhancing one another as you walk in divine purpose. I leave you with these instructions given by Paul to the church in Ephesus.

Ephesians 5: 21-31 (NIV)

Submitting to one another out reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Most wise and glorious God,

We honor You, worship You, and adore You. Your creations sing Your praises and we welcome You in the place of our hearts. We praise You not only for what You have done but also for who You are. Today we see You as God Almighty, high and lifted up, on the throne of righteousness.

Lord we repent, we turn away from every way that is not like You. We ask You to release the bondage of every false authority that has kept us from Your authority and presence. Lord, we desire to be like Christ. We ask Your forgiveness of both sins of commission and omission. We turn away from it all as we turn to You and face the purpose that You have for our lives and our marriage.

Lord, we thank You for Your forgiveness. Thank You for removing the guilt of sin. Thank You for our salvation, Thank You for an opportunity for a higher level of intimacy in our relationship with you and one another. Lord, as we walk in faith and believe on Your promises for our lives and our marriage, We ask that You supply our needs of the spirit, the emotions, our relationship with one another, and of our physical nature as well. Meet every need in accordance with Your will our live in Your way and in your timing. We fully trust You, Lord. We receive the blessings and promises found in Your word.

In the all knowing, saving, delivering, powerful and perfect name of Jesus,

Amen