



The Sweet Christian Bride
A Bride's Devotional

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A bride's devotional / Lindsay T. Hall

1. Marriage—Religious aspects—Christian—Meditations 2. Wedding—
Planning

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A Bride's Devotional



By Lindsay T. Hall



Introduction

Planning your wedding is one of the greatest, most exciting times in your life. It can also be one of the most stressful. Remember that above all, you are a daughter of God, even before you are a fiancée or a wedding planner. These forty devotionals are meant to help protect the priorities of your heart in a time of unusual busyness and heightened emotions.

Feel free to skip to whichever day benefits you most and use the tracking tool to remind yourself of which ones you have already completed. Otherwise you can use the recommended order below.



Who God is...

The first step in becoming a sweet Christian bride is to know who God is because 1) He is your partner through the planning, and 2) He is your model for who you want to be.

Finished

_____	<i>Organized</i>	9
_____	<i>Deliberate</i>	10
_____	<i>Glorious</i>	11
_____	<i>Victorious</i>	12
_____	<i>Abundant</i>	13

Who you are...

Now that you know the end goal for who you want to be, take a look at who you currently are. Knowing your strengths, weaknesses, talents, and characteristics will help you in planning because 1) you will have a realistic and intelligent understanding of what you have to work with as you create a plan, and 2) you will be able to choose wedding details that reflect who you are, which makes for a better wedding.

Finished

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_____	<i>Filled with the Holy Spirit</i>	22
_____	<i>Beautiful</i>	23

Who your husband is:

Bridal culture tells us that the wedding is all about the bride, but your wedding will be even more amazing when you are planning it with your fiancé in mind too because 1) the wedding is a celebration of both of you, and 2) you will enjoy it more when you can share the joy with the one you love most.

Finished

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_____	<i>Your Lover</i>	30

What marriage is:

In the midst of planning this exciting event, it can be easy to lose sight of what you are ultimately preparing for: your marriage. Even though you might prefer to focus on the wedding and the marriage in chronological order, it is crucial that you keep preparing yourself for your marriage while you plan your wedding because 1) keeping your eyes on the finish line will help you to run on the right path, and 2) your wedding will be over in one day, but your marriage will be forever.

Finished

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Planning a glorious wedding:

Scripture can give you guidance even on the details of your wedding! Planning according to God's Word will make your wedding even more glorious because 1) God's way is perfect, and 2) you and your guests will have greater opportunity to engage in worship during the wedding day.

Finished

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_____	<i>Seating Arrangement as Prayer Cordon</i>	43

Staying disciplined:

No matter the occasion, we are never on vacation from God. Your wedding is no different. Remaining diligent in your spiritual disciplines can help in the ease and glory of your wedding because 1) they take the focus off yourself, and 2) they help to foster relationships, particularly those with your future husband and with God Himself.

Finished

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God is...

God is Organized

"The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: The Israelites shall camp each in their respective regiments, under ensigns by their ancestral houses; they shall camp facing the tent of meeting on every side. Those to camp on the east side towards the sunrise shall be of the regimental encampment of Judah by companies. [...] Those to camp next to him shall be the tribe of Issachar" (Numbers 2:1-5a)

I bet you never thought the book of Numbers could guide you in your wedding planning. Usually it's one of the books people skim quickly with a slight perplexity as to how it relates to them now. If you are one of those people, I want to invite you to stop here in Numbers, even in the midst of your wedding planning, and soak in one of the most beautiful traits of God: His organization. Our God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow (Hebrews 13:8), so His organization then is still His organization now.

Why did it matter that God had a particular order for the tribes of Israel? Maybe because He knew which tribes got along with each other and which needed space. Maybe because He knew which tribes could move and defend the fastest and which needed more protection. Maybe because He knew which tribes would be blessed to be closer to the Tabernacle and which were less deserving. I don't know which combination of reasons prompted God to appoint a specific position and order to each tribe, but God is anything but haphazard. His organization was the best possible arrangement for Him and for the Israelites.

If God is organized then it is important that you aim to be organized. Having an order to how and when you tackle the wedding planning can ease a lot of potential stress for you and for others. It also allows others to follow your plan and initiate helping you. But most importantly, it demonstrates that you are planning in a manner that is thoughtful and not haphazard. Your wedding is one of the most celebratory days of your life, so take God's example and spend some time organizing it before you jump in headlong.

How in your wedding planning can you foster this beautiful trait of organization?

Have you set a time-line for each step of the planning? Is your budget thoughtfully guiding each step? Do you have an efficient system of communication between all the planning parties? Are you able to delegate planning details to responsible people?



Lord, thank You that You are ordered and that I can trust Your plan! You are a great example to me for how I should approach wedding planning. I am particularly concerned about (list aspects of wedding planning) and ask for Your intentional order and organization for these particular aspects. Please bring me the right people and resources to keep me organized through this detailed and exciting process. Let all that I do reflect the goodness of Who You are. In Jesus' name, Amen.

God is Deliberate

"Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed" (Psalm 139:16)

Though being deliberate seems the same as being organized, they are two different yet complementary characteristics. God is organized in *how* He does things, but He is deliberate in *what* He does. In other words, His deliberateness allows Him to cast a vision, create a plan, and develop a strategy for achieving it. His organization is the method by which He executes that strategy and delegates tasks to His team.

What is so beautiful about God's deliberateness is that He had *you* in mind before He ever began making you. You are stunning, intentional, and masterful. God knows you, not just your personality and your preferences, but your instincts, your defaults, your desires. Remember this as you are putting together your wedding ceremony. Rather than choosing what is cheapest or most convenient, cast a vision for what is uniquely you and your fiancé. Being you is pleasing to God.

What is your vision for your wedding?

What is your strategy for time management so that you can ensure intentional decision-making? Have you had conversations with your fiancé about what his vision for the wedding is? Do you have a plan for raising the money and for enlisting the help that you will need in order to act intentionally?



Lord, Beautiful Creator, thank You for Your perfect plans. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14a), and I ask for Your wisdom in casting a vision for this wedding that would celebrate who You have made me and (fiancé's name) to be. Give us insight into the hiccups we might have along the way so we can develop a peaceful and enjoyable strategy for putting our vision into action despite the difficulties. Where I am lacking in this process, fill in for me, and where I am already strong, use that for Your glory. Make a masterpiece out of this wedding. In Jesus' name, Amen.

God is Glorious

"The house of the Lord was filled with a cloud so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God" (2 Chronicles 5:13c-14)

Shakina glory! God in all his glory is so stunning and overwhelming that even the holy priests could not bear to be in its presence. Think of the burning bush at Moses' feet, the pillar of cloud and fire that led the Israelites, or the trumpets and clouds at Jesus' return. God's presence is staggering. He is the all-powerful Lord of all that is good, holy, and beautiful. And He will be at your wedding.

If the President of the United States RSVP'd "yes" to your wedding, would you second-guess the planning decisions you have made? God, who is even more famous and powerful than the President, will RSVP yes the moment you invite Him. Remembering this as you make your planning decisions can help you to act with integrity, making everything the best you can make it. God, unlike the President, knows your heart, the words you will have spoken, and the thoughts you will have entertained during your planning process.

God, even in all His glory, loves you with impossible mercy. His standards for a successful wedding have nothing to do with how much money you spend or how much time you have allotted. Better yet, He is willing to help you plan your wedding so that you are not caught off guard when His presence catches your breath at the ceremony.

His burning, blinding, trumpeting glory is alive in you because of His Holy Spirit given to you. When you pray for God's guidance by seeking His wisdom in the Scriptures, allowing the Holy Spirit to prompt you, and seeking Godly counsel from others, you will be planning your wedding in accordance with God's will. His glory will be abundantly evident in the vows you will make, the songs you will sing, and the celebration that you will host!

In the planning process, are you giving your best?

Would you be proud to have God as a guest at your wedding? Are you asking Him what He wants for your ceremony and reception? Are you listening for His answer?



Lord, You are glorious! I see Your glory when I ponder the stars or gaze at the ocean; I see it when I read of encounters with You in the Bible. Your presence is so awesome that I have a hard time fathoming how glorious You truly are. Lord, I confess that I often minimize Your greatness and that I don't always acknowledge Your presence. Help me to encounter You every step of the wedding planning process. I want my wedding to glorify You completely, and I know that I cannot do that without Your help. Beautiful, breathtaking, brilliant Lord, I dedicate my wedding and my marriage to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

God is Victorious

"The Lord will keep you from all evil; He will keep your life" (Psalm 121:7)

"Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle; my rock and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues the peoples under me" (Psalm 144:1-2)

For as celebratory and invigorating as getting married is, unfortunately, it is not a time exempt from spiritual attack. If you are for God, then Satan is against you. Spiritual attack can manifest in many different ways, all with the common factor of disturbing your focus on Jesus. Because of the added emotions, stress, and significance of your wedding season, the enemy will probably target you with more intentionality than he would in a regular season of your life. You are about to get married, which in essence is holy, and the enemy does not like that.

But no matter the attack made on you, you do not need to fear. God is your general, your army, your strategy, your weaponry, and your victory. We all know the end of the story: God is victorious! He has defeated Satan once and for all, and until Christ returns again, He will be the one fighting for us.

If you ask Him, God will train you to work with Him against evil. He can equip you to stand with grace and peace and joy even when family dynamics explode, when stress sets in, when vendors deal duplicitously, when conflicts arise, and when anything at all challenges your focus on Jesus.

Through Christ, you are victorious! Be a confident bride, knowing that you stand in the refuge of the Lord.

Are you training for battle?

Have you made a point to spend time with God each day and to listen to His plan for you? What are you worried about in the planning process? How can you entrust those worries to God? Where have you seen His victory in your planning process so far? Have you considered keeping a journal of your wedding planning so that you can record God's battle plan and victory in this time?



Victorious Lord, thank You that I am on the winning team! Thank You that You chose me to stand with You against evil, yet thank You that You do not depend on my battle prowess to win. I am grateful for Your protection. Lord, wedding season is busy and complicated and can often throw me off guard. Help me to truly trust that in those times, even when it doesn't seem like it, You are fighting for me and protecting me. Use all of my wedding planning for Your good so that the enemy does not win even one battle. I am surrendered to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

God is Abundant

"Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rite of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the chief steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now'" (John 2:6-10)

There are so many passages in Scripture that show how abundantly God provides, but this one seems most in line with wedding concerns considering this event was a wedding. When the resources ran out, Jesus—God the Son—created them from what was already there. Not only did He turn water into wine for the guests, but He did it in such a symbolic way (using Jewish religious vessels that were privy only to the holy leaders of the temple) that it marked this moment as significant by the perfect, poetic manner in which it was done. God made a statement about Who Jesus was.

God knows how much money you have. He knows whether your heart is hospitable for your guests' sake or lavish for your own. Just like He multiplied the widow's oil and the little boy's two fish and five loaves, He is able to take what you already have and make it enough to take care of your guests. And He can do it in a way that demonstrates to you that He knows who you are.

Are you trusting God as your abundant provider?

Do you have concerns about your guests' welfare because of budgeting issues? What do you already have that you could use in place of buying something new? Do you believe that God knows you well enough to meet the needs of your heart?



Lord, all that I have comes from You. Thank You for entrusting it to me! I want to be a great steward of Your provisions, and I want to lavish my guests with selfless hospitality. Help me to discern when to spend money and when to use what I already have. Take what I have and make it worthy of such an occasion. Use it to let others know that You are God! Let my heart truly know that when You are the provider I will have enough, and keep it from wanting more. In Jesus' name, Amen.



You are...

You are Uniquely Created

"For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are your works; that I know very well" (Psalm 139:13-14)

We know that no two people are alike—not even twins. We are all genetic snowflakes to some degree. In a scientific or practical sense, that seems obvious and expected. But in a spiritual sense, to stop and consider that every one of the billions of people who have lived on our earth were hand-created by God with intentionality, it starts to feel impossible and even a little absurd. God did not make us out of a factory mold. He hand-stitched every bone and sinew, feature and characteristic, temperament and talent together to *thoughtfully* create a unique masterpiece.

With all the care that God put into creating you, you can praise Him by showing others His work of art. When you are yourself—who God made you to be—you bring glory to Him because you are not trying to fix His masterpiece.

You have ample opportunity to show your guests God's creative hand by making decisions for your wedding that are in line with your personality and taste. Weddings that are distinctly in the bride and groom's style are so much more enjoyable than weddings that seem in line with the latest wedding trend.

Do you see yourself as God's masterpiece?

What five words describe your personality? What three details of your wedding ceremony are most important to you? How can you use your answers here to serve as a blueprint for the decisions you make in the planning process?



Lord, I am in awe of how creative You are. Thank You for the way You made me and (fiancé's name). Show us where we can glorify You with our personalities, preferences, talents, and plans. Use our wedding to point people's focus to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

You are Purposed

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope" (Jeremiah 29:11)

God's kingdom works out in the end because of His triumphant power over evil. It works out in the meantime because He uses us imperfect people to share His love and truth. It can be easy to look around at other Christians and feel relief that God has called them rather than us to such extreme evangelism, suffering, and missions because, hey, someone's got to do it. But God's plan was made with you in mind too. He created *you* with purpose for His kingdom.

When you stand on the altar before your friends and family, you are sharing one of the most intimate parts of your life. Your guests are going to witness core aspects of who you are and of who God is because of the vows you make, the readings you choose, the songs you include, and the dress you don. Your wedding is a reflection of you, and thus, a reflection of God.

Just as God created you with purpose, you can plan your wedding with purpose. Consider it not just a marriage celebration but also a worship ceremony in which your guests can experience the presence of God.

Do you know what your purpose in life is?

Do you know what your purpose for today is? Have you been planning your wedding as if it had purpose in the heavenly realms? If not, consider what will pass away and what will remain when Christ comes again, and then prioritize in your planning according to those things that will remain.



Lord, only You have insight into what truly matters yesterday, today, and forever. Will You help me to catch a glimpse of Your eternal purpose for my wedding so that it will not be in vain? I confess that parts of my heart want this wedding to glorify myself, and other parts of my heart do want to glorify You but don't really know what that looks like. I am relying on You to be my guide. Though I am making the plans, let Your purpose prevail (Proverbs 19:21). In Jesus' name, Amen.

You are in Need of Accountability

"Make no friends with those given to anger, and do not associate with hotheads, or you may learn their ways and entangle yourself in a snare" (Proverbs 22:24-25)

When I volunteered in youth ministry, the unofficial motto of each meeting became "Identity in Community." It's true. We are whom we hang out with. The application from this is that we all need accountability for whom we let speak into our lives. If your close counsel is not godly, then you will have a much more difficult time discerning whether you are staying in or straying from God's will.

You have probably already figured out that you need accountability for certain tempting behaviors in your life. If so, you are wise to continue that accountability during your wedding planning, a time where stress and emotion can make you more vulnerable. But do you also have accountability with your planning materials? It sounds silly, but media can be an incredibly powerful voice of influence.

As you consult Martha Stewart Weddings for what kind of table set up is in right now, Modern Bride for which couture gown is on sale at a trunk show, or The Knot for bachelorette party ideas, are you evaluating their advice as you would a friend's.

Your identity as a bride will be found in the community of examples, advice, and vendors you surround yourself with. Be sure that you are balancing your research with advice from Scripture, with vendors that fit in your budget, and with examples of godly brides who have gone through the planning before.

Are you letting God speak as one of your prime voices of influence?

Do you have friends who can hold you accountable to finding good counsel? Does your heart light up at ideas that are outside of what God wants for you? Have you prayed that God would excite your heart for the ideas to which He leads you?



Lord, You are the ultimate source of all good. Help me to see beyond the magazines and websites and dress racks, and beyond the sales gimmicks of the wedding industry, to see what You think is pleasing and good. Let my heart desire those things. Clear away voices of influence that would cause my identity to be found in anything other than You, and hold me accountable to listening to You. Ultimately, You are the only thing that matters. I love You, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

You are a Giver of Grace

"We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Each of us must please our neighbor for the good purpose of building up the neighbor" (Romans 15:1-2)

Nobody is perfect; we all need grace. You are probably finding out during your wedding planning process that your fiancé, your family, and your closest friends have opinions that you never knew. They probably also have very different ways of vision-casting, executing, and communicating than you do. Though those differences can be incredibly valuable, they can also be the trigger for disagreements, unmet expectations, and miscommunication.

Sometimes it can be easier to see that we need grace than it is to see that others do because most of us evaluate ourselves on intention and others on outcome. But there will undoubtedly be a time during the wedding planning that miscommunication happens or that someone else was not able to do what you had delegated in the time frame or manner that you had hoped. In these disappointments, you are given a decision: react according to the outcome or show grace. Notice that reacting according to the intention wasn't an option. The truth is, your friends, fiancé, family members and vendors could intentionally allow poor outcomes in the planning process, but you are still charged to treat them with grace.

Grace doesn't mean you are condoning their outcomes or intentions; it simply means that you are choosing not to apply a punishment that they deserve. Doing something as radical as showing grace builds others up in Christ by your acting as Christ did. Think about how many times you have messed up and how grateful you were that God's grace abounded for you. Just as you need grace, you also need to offer grace to those who disappoint you. By doing so, you will be creating opportunity for God to take control and sort things out. Very often, you will even find that the way God uses this disappointment for good will be incredibly valuable to you.

Can you give grace if you do not first receive God's grace?

In what areas of your wedding planning do you feel like you are falling short? What disappointments have you encountered as you have worked with your friends, family, fiancé, and vendors? How can you show grace in those instances (yes, even if they have already happened)?



Lord, thank You that You give me grace I don't deserve. Help me to show that same grace for others so that I can build them up in the love of Christ. I confess that I am struggling with (list your disappointments). I want to control the outcome and punish the people who let me down, but I know that, ultimately, I would be impeding Your availability to bless and orchestrate according to Your will. Lord, forgive me that I judge others by their outcomes. I know this whole process would be much easier if You were the One calling the shots, not me. Do Your good work in me and in my fiancé, family, friends, and vendors so that the planning process and the wedding itself will leave us all better people. In Jesus' name, Amen.

You are Made Clean

“I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud, and your sins like a mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you” (Isaiah 44:22)

“The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give” (Isaiah 62:2)

We all bring baggage into our marriage. For some of us, that is the consequence and entanglement of our own sin such as promiscuity, infidelity, substance abuse, or other sinful behavior. For others, that baggage comes from someone else’s sin imposed on us such as being a victim of rape, assault, neglect, verbal abuse, or other violation. There is also baggage such as grief, disorders, or other difficulties that seem “the cards you were dealt.” Most of us carry a combination of sort.

This baggage is real and will have to be dealt with when you are merging your life with another’s. And your fiancé will bring his own set of baggage that will become intertwined with your own. Although the process of working through these wounds is long and difficult, there is such hope in Christ!

Israel was a nation whom God loved so dearly that He entered into a covenant relationship with her. Scripture uses the analogy of marriage to describe God’s relationship with Israel. Tragically, Israel had an affair with other gods and deserted God without much of a repentant heart.

God loved Israel so much, however, that He continually sent prophets to speak Truth to her and to tell her of the bad that would come with living as an adulterous wife and the good that would come from letting God be her only husband. He told Israel that He would forgive her sins and that He would vindicate her from the wrong done to her. The end result was that Israel would be restored and redeemed by God’s love!

Whether you have had sex before marriage, whether you have broken a previous marriage covenant, whether you have had a shameful past...God loves you and will redeem your repentant heart! He will give you a new name! And whether your innocence was stolen from you, whether you were coerced into sin, or whether you were cheated out of joy, God can restore all that you thought was lost and hopeless. It is His goodness that makes you clean. And through His merciful and steadfast love, He will do much healing work in you through your marriage to tangibly give you a new name.

Do you believe that God can actually heal, redeem, vindicate, and restore you?

What baggage are you shouldering? Have you talked with your fiancé about it? Have you taken necessary therapeutic steps to work through it?



Lord, You are the ultimate healer Who can transform hearts, Who can multiply remnants, and Who can redeem the most desperate, lost, and tragic. You are enough, and I need You to show me that. Protect my marriage from my baggage, and use my baggage as opportunity to make my marriage even greater. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

You are a Bride of Christ

"Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure'- for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints" (Revelation 19:7-8)

What beautiful parallels there are between being the Bride of Christ and being the bride of your fiancé. Just picture when Christ returns as the rider on the white horse Who is dressed in His royal robes of power. Behind Him are the armies of heaven riding white horses. As you stand there, part of the Bride of Christ, you know that He will forever protect you. His power will reign forever. He has already made the greatest sacrifice for you, His beautiful bride who stands dressed in her finest for Him.

If Christ were the person standing before you at the altar on your wedding day, you would be caught in awe as you looked at Him. Your vows would be of the utmost sincerity and your beauty and attire would be prioritized with total humility for His sake. You would be standing in confidence that the covenant you were about to make would be satisfying and lasting forever.

On your wedding day, your groom will obviously not be Christ in person, but he will be a son of God. Your fiancé is precious in God's eyes; he is a man created in God's image. Because of Christ alive in you and in your fiancé, you can have total confidence that your marriage will be lasting and fulfilling. You can present yourself fully adorned and without blemish as a living sacrifice that would bring honor to your fiancé. And you can fully believe the words you vow because you know it is Christ Who backs them up. And you can certainly stand overcome by awe and adoration for this awesome man that will soon be your husband.

Are you preparing yourself to be your fiancé's bride as you would prepare yourself to be Christ's bride?

Have you prioritized your quiet times alone with the Lord, even in this busy time? Do you and your fiancé set aside time for date nights and for non-wedding conversation? Are you ready for the marriage that will immediately follow this wedding? Can you take one minute right now to make a list of qualities you adore about your fiancé?



Lord, how awesome will it be to see Christ return in all His glory! Thank You, thank You, thank You that You have chosen me to be in an everlasting covenant with You. I adore You, Lord. In the same way, help me to delight in my fiancé and to fully believe in and commit to the covenant we are about to make. Prepare me for him as You would want me to be prepared for You, and by that, let him know how much I love and respect him. In Jesus' name, Amen.

You are Kind

"The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived there ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things"
(Mark 6:30-34)

The apostles were not pleased to see their anticipated rest time stolen by needy people whom they didn't even know. Jesus, on the other hand, could see the opportunity for God's glory. Jesus greeted the masses with compassion, which means He was able to see outside of His own needs and into the hearts of the people. Not only did He greet them kindly, He also offered to them what He had to give: teaching. He taught for so long that everyone became hungry, and the very next thing to happen was the astounding miracle of feeding the five thousand from nothing but two fish and five loaves. Despite His exhaustion and expectation of rest, Jesus knew that offering the masses the kindness that they yearned for would allow for incredible glory to God. He trusted that God would sustain them all by multiplying the few provisions that they had.

Although preparing the details of a wedding is exciting and legitimately wonderful, it can also be tiring and frustrating. In those times, it can be incredibly easy to lose your patience and perspective, acting unkindly to the very people who are trying to help you. Maybe your plans are not panning out in the direction that you had hoped, or maybe your helpers are not able to commit as well as you would like. Maybe everything is going smoothly, but you are just plain worn out. Even in these moments, God can empower you to be kind. And even when you feel so drained that you are lacking time, energy, and joy for yourself, God can multiply your remnants to be enough for you and the people with whom you are interacting. And here's the best part, God can use those moments of nothingness to do miracles for His glory!

Do you show the kindness of Christ even when you are pushed to your limits?

What circumstances trigger unkindness in you? How can you shift your perspective off of yourself in those moments and onto the opportunity for God's glory? Is there anyone to whom you need to apologize for unkindness? Do you believe that God can sustain you in times of fatigue and stress?



Lord, what would I do without You? You are the One who breathes new life into dry bones. You are the One who redeems disappointment, turning it into opportunity. Forgive me that when I become physically hungry, tired, and stressed that I forget about how caring and powerful You are. Instead I fight to make sure that my needs are met. Lord, will You help me to take each step of the planning process, especially the tiring and frustrating ones, with patience and perspective so that I can offer kindness to those around me? I want them to see the goodness of Christ's love through my actions and words. I want them to see You in all Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

You are Filled with the Holy Spirit

"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19)

God designed every single thing that ever has and ever will live on this earth. He fathomed the solar systems that we haven't even discovered yet. He moves mountains and commands the waters. A pile of bones comes to life when He gives them breath. God even conquered death and evil. This is our God!

By His Spirit, hearts are hardened or melted, wisdom is given, new languages are learned, demons are defeated, and goodness is shown. This very Spirit of our glorious God lives in us, in our bodies, our hearts, and our minds. And the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead gives this same life to us (Romans 8:11).

Think of your greatest obstacle in planning your wedding. Are you not victorious because of the God of the impossible Who lives in you? Not only can you have total confidence that if you surrender your planning to God, what needs to be done will be done (spectacularly!), but also you can use the Spirit inside of you as a guide for the decisions you make. You have a built in conscience and wisdom that allows you an extra layer of help when you wonder "Should I or shouldn't I?" What a privilege that God Himself is a tool and a helpmate for you in this planning time!

Are you allowing the Spirit in you to have a voice and an outflow?

Are you being prayerful in the decisions you make? Can the people who are working with you see the Holy Spirit alive in you by the way that you talk and act? Are you "feeding" the Holy Spirit by guarding what enters your mind, your body, your relationships, and your schedule?



Lord, You are more glorious than I can fathom! Thank You for the times when I look at Your sunsets and at the mountains, and I can catch a glimpse of Your grandeur. I am humbled that You live in me, a broken, sinful, unhealthy woman. Help me to consider this privilege as I live my daily life. Give me discernment for what I allow to come into my mind and body, and multiply the power and purpose of my words and actions. I am comforted knowing that You, the God of the universe, is in control of my wedding planning. Thank You that You care so much about me and the desires of my heart. In Jesus' name, Amen.

You are Beautiful

"Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and by wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing; rather, let your adornment be the inner beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God's sight" (1 Peter 3:3-4)

There is something so momentous about getting ready for your wedding ceremony. Your hair and make-up is given extra attention, your friends and family help you put on this one-time gown, and you intentionally add the finishing touches of your shoes and jewelry and other nostalgic items. Though you have gotten ready for an event before, this preparation will seem different, more significant.

Peter's instruction to let your beauty be from the inside, not on the outside, doesn't mean that you can't hire a hair dresser or wear your great-grandmother's earrings. He is simply reminding us that nothing we can do on our bodies or faces can change who we are on the inside. Looking your best for your fiancé's sake is an honoring and respectful act, but nurturing your mind and heart and spirit the morning of your wedding will be the most important preparation you can do for him.

Your beauty comes from the fact that you have the Holy Spirit alive in you. You are a masterpiece of God. The fruit of the Spirit that pours out from you allows you to be a woman of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. You are beautiful already because of God's beauty in you. As you spend the time and money on your hair, face, body, and attire for your fiancé's sake, be sure to first spend time and energy on your spirit for God's sake.

Do you think you are beautiful?

What aspect of getting ready for your wedding are you most excited about? What aspect of the fruit of the spirit do you think people most identify with you? As you plan your wedding-day schedule, how can you factor in time for nurturing your spirit?



Lord, You are the originator and designer of all things beautiful. Thank You that You have chosen me as Your masterpiece! I pray that You would guard my heart from pride as I seek to be outwardly and inwardly beautiful on my wedding day. Give me the confidence of one who has Your Spirit inside of me, and help me to prioritize time with You above all primping. Let the outward preparation that I choose to do be honoring to You and to (fiancé's name), and let my outward beauty be a stunning reflection of Your Spirit inside of me. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Your husband is...

*Your Husband ** is a Gift from God*

"Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1:17)

Think about your favorite Christmas or birthday presents from your parents. Usually, they spent time getting you something they really thought you would enjoy, right? It was special because it was from them and because it was something you wanted!

Buying or making a good gift for someone is not a quick or brainless process. You have to really know what that person wants, likes, and needs. Then you have to evaluate the potential gifts based on the following factors: is there value to the recipient, is there significance that this gift is coming from you, and would the recipient purchase this himself/herself if the opportunity presented itself? If the answers are yes, yes, no, respectively, then it's a great gift idea. Any other answer combination and the gift will likely be unappreciated, inappropriate, or too practical.

If parents know how to give good gifts, think about how much better God is at giving good gifts to His children (Matthew 7:11). Because He designed and created you, He knows every desire of your heart and every need that you have and will ever have. He also knows what you are willing to get yourself and what would have to be given to you.

When it comes to relationships, He is the One Who brings people into our lives, and He is the One Who stands as the cornerstone for lasting relationships. He is love, and through Him, we are able to love. God gave your fiancé to you as a gift. Consider the magnitude of that thought as you talk with your fiancé and as you spend time with him. He is God's good gift to you!

How would you treat a present that God Himself had picked out and purchased for you?

Are you a good steward of what God has already given you? Do you need to be treating your fiancé differently now that you recognize he was carefully and thoughtfully given to you by your loving God? How can you show God gratitude each day for the precious gift that He has given you?



Lord, You have created me, You have ordained a purpose for me, You have died and risen for me, and now You have given (fiancé's name) to me. What a giver of good gifts You are! Please help me to remember each day that he is a gift from You so that I will cherish him with special attention and be a good steward of what You have graciously given me. Thank you, Lord, for knowing what would make me so joyful! In Jesus' name, Amen.

** The truths in this section are not yet fulfilled by your fiancé because you are not yet married. They will be true, however, in marriage when your fiancé becomes your husband. I grappled with what to call this section because the man I'm talking about is your fiancé now as you are reading this, though the truths aren't necessarily fulfilled until you are actually married. I settled on calling this section "Your Husband Is," recognizing that I am speaking more into the future than into the present with the devotional though into the present with the questions.

Your Husband is the Head

"But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas the more respectable members do not need this. But God has arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another" (1 Corinthians 12:18-25)

Christ is the head of the Church and we are all part of His Body. We make distinctions of importance, but God doesn't. Regardless of what "body part" we are, God made us essential for the proper working of the whole Body. Though God can act independently of us, He often chooses to act through us. This means that if we aren't the best finger or elbow or nose that we can be, the Body of Christ does not function as God intended.

Just as Christ is the head of the Church, so is the husband the head of the marriage (Ephesians 5:23). We like to politicize this and defend our equality, claiming egalitarianism in the marriage, but God didn't design this structure as a hierarchy of importance so much as a functional system. God knows what works and what doesn't, and He arranged the members of the body of marriage as He chose, not as we would understand politically. When He created marriage, He had in mind a covenant relationship that is forever and that flourishes by the Spirit of God. If your husband, as the headship, had no body to be the head of, wouldn't that make him as worthless to the marriage as a body without a head?

You are both equally needed for this marriage to flourish, and you are both equally as valuable. You are to *mutually* submit to each other and to *mutually* care for each other (Ephesians 5:21). And when situations arise where you can both equally lead or come to a conclusion, yet you are not able to do so with consensus, let your husband lead because he is the headship. God honors this design time and time again because it is His design, and He knows that it takes faith to obey it.

Do you believe that your husband will be the headship of the marriage?

What emotions does this notion spark in your heart? Can you find other examples in life where a system of order does not equate to a hierarchy of importance? Do you trust God as the creator of marriage? Do you trust your fiancé to lead you closer to God? If not, are you sure he is the one to be your husband?



Lord, submitting to You is a delight because I know that You are good. It's not always easy, and I often have to put my pride aside, but I trust You and want to love You completely. Help me to do the same with my husband in our marriage. Help (fiancé's name) to be a godly head and me to be a godly body so that as one flesh we may grow closer to You and to each other. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Your Husband is Your Teammate

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not easily broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

Being on a team is one of the few experiences in life where we simulate the idea God had of us working as a body. Just as Christ is the head of the Church body, a coach is the head of a sports team, and a project manager or boss is the head of a business team. The head provides the strategy for success that utilizes the strengths of each team member accordingly. The boss provides training and development to teach each team member its integral part; there cannot be only one team member or it is not a team. When game time comes, the sports team plays to win and the business team pitches to earn the sale. Success doesn't always come, but usually each game or pitch is just one attempt at a larger plan. The team presses on together through win and through loss.

In marriage, you and your fiancé will be for each other because marriage is about oneness. God is an incredible coach who knows how to utilize you and your fiancé to your fullest potentials. He uses you to cover each other's weaknesses, and He stirs in you a mutual vision for the future.

This metaphor can sound a little cheesy when you hear it, but the moment in your marriage where you experience your spouse as your teammate, it is the most profound and appreciated realization. In the midst of disagreements, hearing your spouse say to you, "I am on your team," diffuses the desire to be at odds with each other and allows room for God to bring you back to oneness with your spouse.

No matter how many wedding decisions you disagree on, and no matter how many expectations are unmet on your wedding day, at the end of the day, you will be married!

What has your experience been with being on a team?

Are you typically a "team player"? Have you experienced the power of having a teammate in your fiancé? Where are you and your fiancé at odds? How can you use Scripture as strategy for functioning as a team through that disagreement? What are some mutual visions for the future that you and your fiancé can focus on in order to keep the aspects of wedding planning in perspective?



Lord, You know Your plans for us (Jeremiah 29:11), You know our strengths and our weaknesses, and You fully equip us to prosper in the ways you intended. Teach (fiancé's name) and me to be unified in our goals and in our processes of achieving them. Show us what it means to be a teammate to each other even when we are angry or hurt. Thank You for being the central cord in our threefold strand. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Your Husband is Your Helpmate

"Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.'" (Genesis 2:18)

God gave Adam a job to tend to the Garden of Eden. When God gave him that job, Eve was not yet in the picture. God thought Adam was sufficient on his own to get the job done. It was a joyful vocation because sin had not yet entered the world. And yet, God determined that it was not good for Adam to be totally on his own. Although Adam was capable of working alone, God created Eve to be Adam's helpmate, and this was good. Even though it was Adam's job to tend to the garden, it was now Eve's job—again, joyful vocation—to help Adam. A great example of spouses being each other's helpmates!

Asking for help can be difficult, but help is good. Whether it's helping to unload the dishwasher, repair the car, raise the kids, or create income, there will be times when you will be given a job that you cannot do as well if you did it alone, maybe for efficiency's sake or perhaps for emotion's sake. In those times, your spouse is your helper. Because he is your partner, it is good for you to work together when it's appropriate, even if it's not his job to do.

Of course, the reverse is also true as we see with Adam and Eve. When your husband has a job to do, you are his right-hand woman if he needs you. Sometimes that help simply comes in the form of emotional support or of taking care of other errands so he can get his job done. Whatever the task at hand, there will be times when partnering with your spouse will not feel like you are his teammate so much as his assistant. This is still good when done for the Lord!

Wedding planning is a perfect example of being a teammate *and* a helpmate. You have both been given a job to plan a wedding, so you stand as a team who is working towards a shared goal with mutual interest. There will be times, however, when each of you is given a job to do that the other is not mutually invested in, but because you will be each other's spouses, you will be the one called upon to help. Whether you care about the groomsman's gifts, or whether he cares about the bridesmaid's dresses, you are partners who can help each other even when the job is not your own.

Do you and your fiancé have a healthy partnership?

Would you rather he do his own thing and you do yours? Are you able to accept his help? Do you offer him clear instructions and accept his critical or positive feedback? Do you feel inferior if you assist him with his jobs? Will you let your desire to control ease up so you can let him help you?



Lord, help me to love my husband the way I want to be loved and to respect him when he is helping me. Remind me of our equal value to You and to our marriage, no matter what role he or I is assuming. And when he calls upon me to be his helpmate, let me respond with joy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Your Husband is Iron

"Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens the wits of another" (Proverbs 27:17)

King Solomon, the author of this proverb, is arguably the wisest man in recorded history. For him to attribute a growth in wit to other people is significant considering he originally received his wisdom as a gift from God. If anyone would know about wisdom, it would be Solomon.

The opposite to his claim is true too: One fool dulls the wits of another. We are who we hang out with. God knows that and He gives us the Holy Spirit to help discern who is wise and who is foolish.

Your fiancé has proven to be a man you want to learn from and grow with, and once you are married, God will allow you to experience an intimacy with each other that will open more opportunities for growth than you have ever had with your fiancé before. You will learn each other's dreams, fears, shames, and wounds so that you will grow in wisdom about how to love each other. And the more you learn to love each other, the more you will be able to love the broken people around you. God will use you and your fiancé to sharpen each other's minds and hearts for His glory.

In the planning process, there are many opportunities to clash with your fiancé. Whether it's something small like disagreeing on what type of flowers to use or something big like feeling unsafe around your in-laws, you will likely experience moments of discomfort or even hurt during the planning. If you can remember in those moments that God uses you to sharpen each other, you can give direction to that pain you are feeling.

Iron is sharp, so being sharpened hurts. Being sharpened is not a time of abuse but rather a process of making you more useful to God's kingdom can turn a fight into a growthful conversation. Remembering this can change a confrontation into a revelation.

Do you want to grow?

Do you want your fiancé to be one of God's main tools for your growth? How have you already grown since your relationship has started? Have you and your fiancé experienced any tension or hurt in your wedding planning? If so, how can you turn those moments into opportunities for sharpening?



Lord, You are brilliant! You knew how stubborn we could be and how, even though we want to grow, we wouldn't want to go through the uncomfortable process of growth. Thank You for giving me a safe, loving relationship in which to grow. I am truly grateful for that. Thank You in advance for how (fiancé's name) will sharpen me, and I, him. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Your Husband is Your Lover

"I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me" (Song of Solomon 7:10)

King Solomon was quite the man of passion. He writes in Song of Solomon about a marriage full of romance and intimacy, and yes, let's not forget the obvious, sex. His steamy love story is documented in God's holy Scriptures for us to learn from and be inspired by. Why? I believe one of the reasons is to give us permission to have passion in our married sex lives. If we have spent so much energy preventing ourselves from having a sex life before we were married, sometimes saying "I do" doesn't automatically change our mindsets.

As husband and wife, you will be lovers. Though you want to be very careful not to arouse physical love until you are married, you have much to prepare for. You might need forgiveness from past sexual experiences, instruction as to what actually happens when you and your husband have sex, or understanding as to what each of your expectations are for your wedding night. (If you are sexually active with your fiancé, I strongly encourage you to refrain from sexual activity until you are married so you can let God do a preparing work in you for how He designed the marriage bed. Also see "You Are Made Clean.")

In the safety of pre-marital counseling, you can have discussions with your fiancé that will help prepare you both for your physical relationship. The closer you come to your actual wedding day, the more you can prayerfully put creativity to your future sex life. Be careful not to dwell on your future sex life to a degree that is tempting or unhelpful, but do pray that God would fully prepare you and your fiancé for the change that happens the moment you say, "I do."

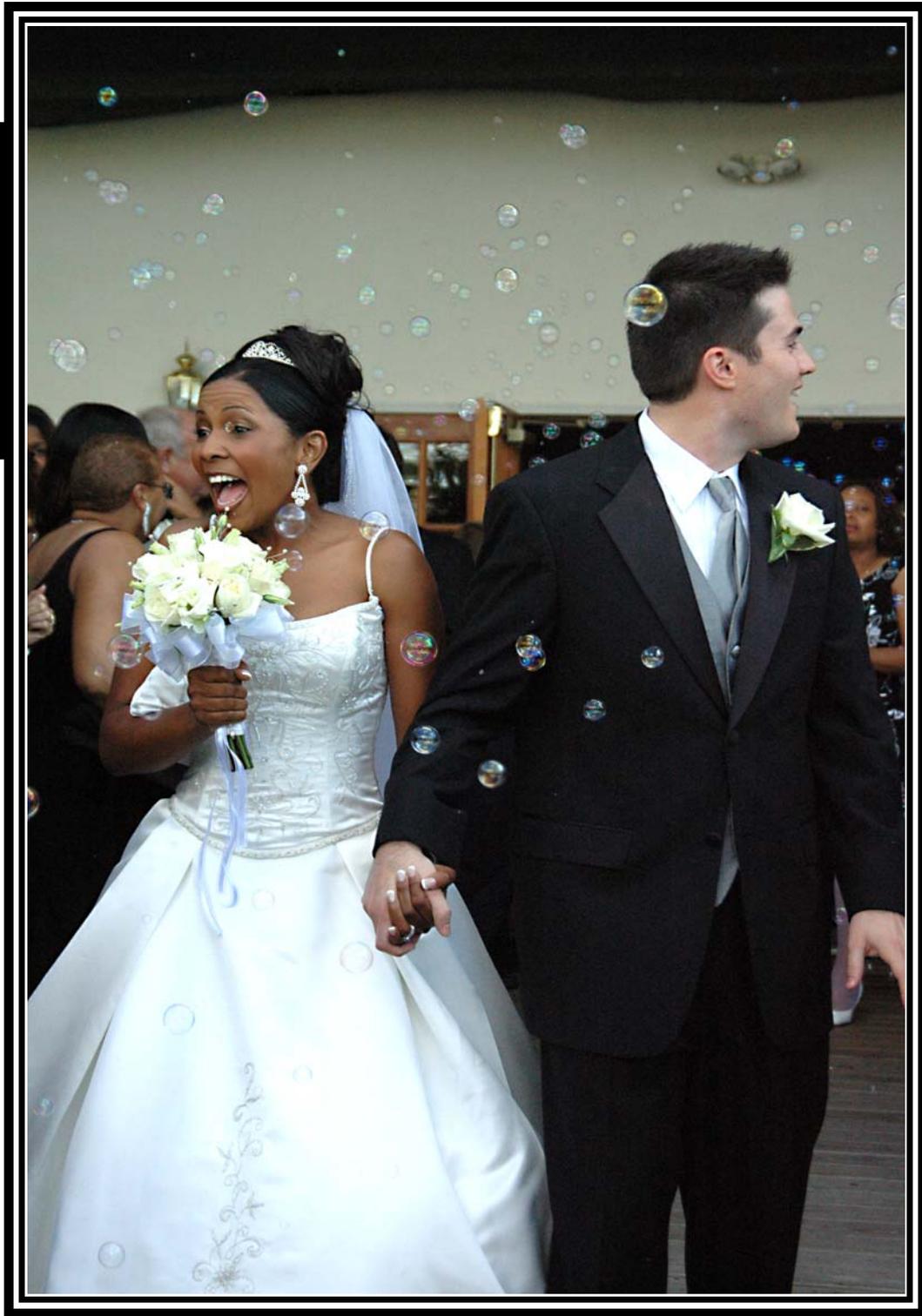
In the meantime, during your wedding planning, keep intimacy and romance in mind. A special date, a love note, or a slow dance can go a long way toward reminding your fiancé that you love him and are excited for the marriage, not just for the wedding.

What does it mean to be your husband's lover?

What areas of your heart, body, mind, or spirit do you need or want to work on in order to prepare yourself to be your husband's lover? What hopes do you have for your married love life? Are you fighting to protect sexual purity during your engagement? What do you think God's design for sexual intimacy is? Do you have a safe environment to talk and pray with your fiancé about your future sex life?



Lord, all that You made is stunningly beautiful! You designed husband and wife to bring pleasure and passion to each other through romance, intimacy, and sex. Please prepare (fiancé's name) and I for a healthy and life-giving sexual relationship. Protect us in the meantime from temptation to cross sexual boundaries before we are married. Bring healing to our past and present wherever necessary, and bring hope for our future so that we will fully delight in each other. Thank you, Lord! In Jesus' name, Amen.



Marriage is...

Marriage is an Eternal Covenant

"Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of that kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:21-27)

When the risen Christ returns for His bride, when He gathers and restores the Church and opens the gates to the New Jerusalem, His marriage will last forever. It will not be like a contract where we can break our terms and cancel the relationship. It will be a covenant dependent solely on Him to fulfill the terms. In our redeemed bodies, we will be holy as He is holy, able to enjoy the presence of Christ forever!

The complexities of our one day being in the eternal presence of a holy God are so far beyond what we can understand that God graciously gives us the picture of marriage so that we might catch a glimpse of His plan.

Because marriage echoes the eternal covenant of the restored relationship between Christ and the church, marriage is arguably the holiest relationship we can have in our lifetimes. It is a gift to be treasured and a commitment to be honored. What a staggering reality that God has given you so much of His heart when He brought you together with your fiancé for the purpose of marriage!

Do you believe that marriage is forever?

Are you and your fiancé committing in your vows to a 50/50 relationship or to a 100/100? What is your game plan for the moments that will inevitably arise when your marriage is difficult? Does the idea of "til death do us part" as a form of worship frighten you or sit right with you? What steps can you take to better understand God's holy design for marriage?



Lord, I don't fully understand Your design for an eternal, mutually-submissive, covenant relationship in marriage because Your ways are so far beyond brilliant. But I do trust Scripture and Your Spirit to guide me through it. Help me to throw off what hinders. Erase any past hurt or fear that prevents me from delighting in submitting to the love of my life who loves me unconditionally, and give me a perspective that marriage truly is forever. When difficult times come, keep me and him from the temptation to call it quits. I love You, and I trust You, Lord. Thank You for this precious relationship You have blessed me with. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Marriage is a Holy Vow

"It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not fulfill it" (Ecclesiastes 5:5)

Standing before the love of your life at the altar is a turning point in both of your lives. You will walk away different. Legally speaking, what makes that conversation life-changing is the witness of the commitment and the legally ordained declaration that you are married. Spiritually speaking, what makes you married in that conversation are the vows.

You are both making a holy promise to the other before God to be united forever. Wow. How amazing that by the power of Christ alive in you, you get to spend your life with your chosen one who has also chosen you above all the rest!

Of course, making a decision like this is very significant. You and your fiancé must be ready to pledge such a weighty and difficult commitment, especially because it is done before God who has been known in Scripture to take vows very seriously. If you are ready to fully commit, then what a joy that you are about to enter into a covenant of marriage!

When you are married, God will fervently work on bringing you both into unity as one flesh. He will use your marriage to heavily refine and incomparably encourage you. As my pastor told my husband and I on our wedding day, husband and wife have the power to build each other up or to tear each other down to levels that no one else can. This is a relationship with the potential for power unlike that of any other.

Anticipating the magnitude of what will arise from this commitment is an invigorating joy, like a conqueror watching his quest unfold before him. Ask God to help you stand with confidence and joy at the altar so that your marriage pledge will serve as the unwavering foundation for a lifetime with the one that you love most.

How do you know what to vow?

What kind of wife do you want to be over the course of your lifetime? What will your husband need from you throughout your marriage in order to keep it strong? Do you prefer plugging into the history of those who have vowed before you or creating vows that are original and specific to your relationship? Would you want to know what your fiancé is vowing to you before you stand at the altar and say "I do," or would you prefer the surprise of his vows as if he were presenting you with a gift?



Lord, my relationship with You requires utmost responsibility and commitment, yet it yields more glory, power, and opportunity in my life than I could possibly find elsewhere. Help me to see my marriage as the same kind of serious joy. Guide me in my vows, and help me to treat my promise as holy. In the face of gravity, let me also stand in celebration at the unfathomable joy and freedom that results in these vows. Be the impetus for each word (fiancé's name) and I choose to include in our vows, and be our strength to carry them out. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Marriage is a Celebration

"So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord" (2 Samuel 6:15-16a)

The paramount picture of celebration in Scripture is David's unabashed dancing before God because of God's presence in the ark. David is the king of the people who are celebrating with him. Normally dignitaries put on the face of formality even in moments of triumph because that is what is considered politically wise. But David threw that caution out the window. Being in the presence of God's glory, he simply didn't care if his people thought him undignified. God's opinion was the only one he was thinking about in that moment. It was for God that he leaped and danced and gave thanks.

Your fiancé and you have chosen to set each other above everyone else, and not lightly, but with the purpose of loving each other forever! Together you are entering into such a holy relationship that God will show up in ways that He hasn't before when you were single.

His design for marriage is one of the most transformational and intimate relationships ever created. You will have a best friend, a companion in the big and little moments, a supporter, and helpmate. You will be known by your husband and you will know him. In all the moments and stages of your life from here on out, you get to do them with someone you love. What a reason to celebrate!

During your wedding day, release the logistics of your ceremony and reception to a trusted coordinator and rely on photographs or videos to remember the details. Let yourself be present in the celebration, and enjoy your wonderful day!

Have you taken time to rejoice over your upcoming marriage?

Can you think of ways to celebrate other than dancing, playing music, and leaping? How can you use celebration as a discipline in the stressful moments of planning? With whom can you unabashedly celebrate your marriage?



Lord, You are fun! You are the best thing that has ever happened to my life, and I want to be better at celebrating You each day. Use my marriage to teach me celebration. Through each step of wedding planning, excite me with glimpses of my future, overwhelm me with delight for my fiancé, and teach me different ways to joyfully thank You for all of this. Hallelujah! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Marriage is a Purifier

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to Himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27)

This is one of the most beautiful pictures of what marriage is. Jesus sacrifices Himself in order that we might all be with Him in the presence of the Father one day. Paul draws the parallel to marriage as he instructs husbands give themselves up for the betterment of their wives. Wives have the same privilege of seeking the betterment of their husbands. One day husbands and wives will stand before the throne of God and account for whether they created and accepted opportunities for their spouses to look more like Jesus.

Because of the intimacy and vulnerability and trust in marriage, God does deep chiseling in our hearts through our spouse. Even the simple refining of learning how to live with someone helps us to become less selfish and more loving.

God takes that teaching to every level of our hearts and habits that we allow Him. The more that God refines us in marriage, the more that we will be presented to Him in splendor. As the analogy of the triangle goes, if you are at one of the bottom angles of an isosceles triangle, your husband is at the other, and God is the top angle, then as each of you grows closer to God, you will also increase the closeness between each other.

The more that you cherish each other in marriage, the more opportunity you allow God to clean out the junk in your hearts, minds, and habits.

What stands in the way of you and God?

How can your fiancé be a tool for extracting that hindrance in your faith? Have you already seen growth in you and in your fiancé since the start of your relationship? When you picture yourself as the woman you want to be in the future, what about yourself do you need to let God purify in order to become that woman?



Lord, You are completely unblemished, holy, and pure—the picture of everything good. Thank You for serving as an example for me of who I want to be, and thank You for the opportunity in our marriage to make me that person. Convict me of the sin that stains me, and help me to entrust to You my weaknesses and strongholds that need purification. Empower me to be a tool for purification in (fiancé's name). Let our marriage flourish with all of the potential that You designed it to have. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Marriage is Oneness

"And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man He made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.' Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Genesis 2:22-24)

What a beautiful picture of oneness! Literally out of one was the other. There are times in marriage when this feels like the literal truth, that you are so united that no other possible explanation prevails except that you are one flesh with your spouse. God's design for marriage is that it would be more intimate than even the relationships between children and parents, out of whose flesh you literally came.

Many couples seem to be total opposites. Their values and visions for the future are the same, which is why they had confidence that their relationship would work, but their personalities, interests, thought patterns, upbringing, communication styles—you name it—are pretty different, and even opposing. Yet they are one flesh when they become married.

The physical closeness that comes by simply sharing the same space and the same free time with each other in marriage forces middle ground to be learned by each spouse. If it is not, then the opposites that attracted you will become the aspects that will irritate you. With Christ's help, the disparate behaviors and reactions sift out over time, leaving two people who function well together as a team. This is God's design for marriage.

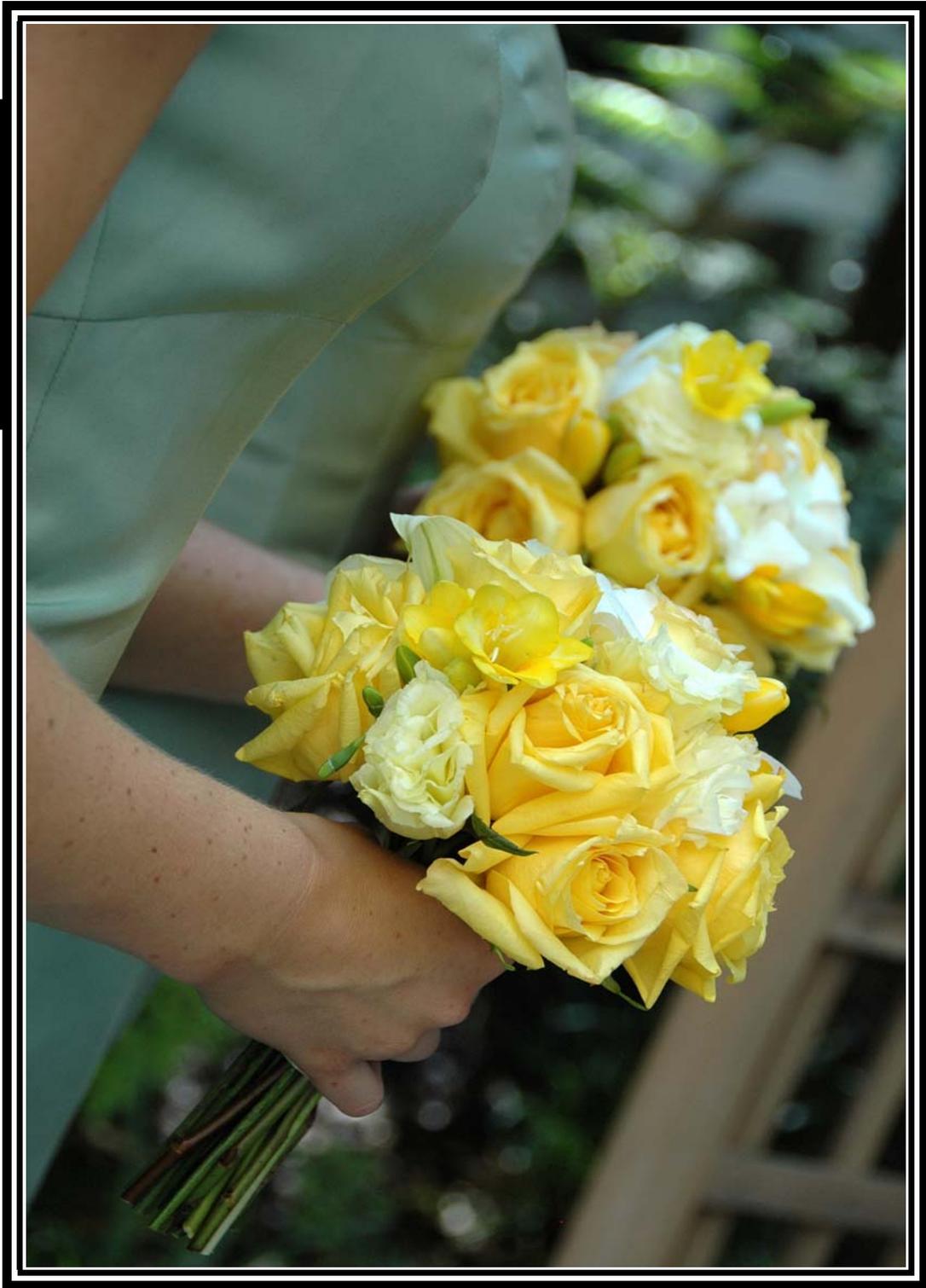
Some spouses actually do become alike in their personalities, thought patterns, interests, etc., but others stay different yet become complementary. Whichever dynamic you and your fiancé will adopt, you will be headed towards oneness in marriage, towards the deepest intimacy that God has designed in our relationships.

Is your relationship with your fiancé currently moving towards oneness?

Are you learning how to "leave" your parents authority in order to "cleave" to each other's in marriage? Do your differences usually create a complement or a clash in the relationship? Have you made any decisions in your wedding planning that have created division between you and your fiancé? If so, are you certain that you have made the correct choice? Are you spending enough time with your fiancé in non-wedding related contexts to nurture your movement towards oneness?



Lord, You are the epitome of intimacy. You know the depths of our hearts and souls, and You know the very thoughts in our minds and the days of our lives. Thank You for giving me an opportunity to be in a relationship that reflects Your deep intimacy. Give me the perspective to see the good in my fiancé when we are at a point of conflict. Show me how our differences can strengthen our team, and keep me from grumbling when those differences become challenging. Be the common aspect of our lives that unites us as one flesh above all else. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Planning a glorious wedding

Budget as Trust

"And taking the five loaves and the two fish, [Jesus] looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces" (Luke 9:16-17)

"While [Jesus] was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head.

But some were there who said to one another in anger, 'Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.' And they scolded her. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her'" (Mark 14:3-9)

When the little boy offered his two fish and five loaves, the disciples thought he was crazy. They thought Jesus was crazy too for thinking that was enough food to feed 5000 people. But God knew what He was doing. He made the meager resources enough and brought glory to His name.

On the other end of the spectrum, a woman lavished Jesus with very expensive perfume. Others in that room judged her for spending too much on something they thought was a waste. But Jesus knew her heart, and God used her extravagant giving as an anointing before Jesus' sacrifice. As Jesus said, her expensive act would be remembered by all who heard the Gospel.

The wedding of your dreams might not match perfectly with the budget you have to spend. Consider that a blessing because there will be room for God to work in ways that go beyond simple math. If your budget is smaller than you had hoped, pray for God to multiply what you have or to bring you discounts and free resources. And if you have a lot of money to spend, determine whether God wants you to spend all that. If He does, then lavish your guests without guilt for spending. God knows your heart, and He knows how He will use your generosity for the good of His kingdom.

The God you worship is the God of the impossible, so involve Him in creating your budget and invite Him to do miracles with what you have!

How much is the right amount for you to spend on your wedding?

Have you prayed for guidance on creating your budget? Whose money is involved in the budget? Are you diligently seeking out good deals and effective usage of the money you have? What is your relationship with money? Do you trust God to provide for you the wedding that He desires?



Lord, all of my resources come from You, so let me be thankful and trusting of Your provisions. Please guide me in making and sticking to the budget. No matter how much or how little I have to give, multiply it in order to bless my guests and to demonstrate Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Guest List as Evangelism

"He said also to the one who had invited him, 'When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous'" (Luke 14:12-14)

The kind of heart Jesus was describing in a righteous hostess was humble and hospitable. He or she would have invited people for their sakes, not for his or her own. Can you imagine the joy that the host would experience knowing that he or she is blessing and serving the children of Christ?

Creating the guest list at a wedding can be very tricky and often downright stressful because the per-person cost is so expensive. It's also a monumentally significant event, so you, your fiancé, and both of your sets of parents are going to want close friends there to share in the experience. It is a good thing to have your closest friends and family with you on your wonderful day.

If arguments set in, however, about whose guests are more important than others, consider the idea that Jesus was getting at. What if you had no stake in the person who comes to your wedding except the privilege of honoring, serving, and blessing them? Would that still not be worth it from an eternal perspective? Whether it's your dad's business partner or your in-law's second cousin, you have an opportunity to share the Good News by inviting them to share in your holy ceremony!

God can change lives through your wedding, so whether the guest is one you want there or not, you have the opportunity to be an agent of evangelism for Christ's glory.

Does your heart desire control over your guest list?

If so, why? Have you taken the time to pray over the names on your guest list—the ones you know and the ones you don't? Are you planning your wedding with service to your guests in mind? If you find you have extra seats at the end that are already paid for, are there people or couples whom you could bless by inviting them to your wedding, even if you do not know them well?



Lord, this day will be one of the biggest, most awesome days of my life, and I want it to be perfect. I confess that my version of perfect rarely matches up with Yours. So thank You that You have a great plan in mind, and just as You know each hair on our heads and words on our tongues, so too do You know each person who will come to the wedding. Open my heart to embrace each guest as my brother and sister, and fill me with Your love so that I can delight to plan with them in mind and engage them on the wedding day. Whether it's my best friend, a guest I don't know, a vendor, or a passer-by, bring the people that You know will be blessed. Thank You so much for using me to do holy work in Your name. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Favors as Love

"The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Mark 12:31a)

The idea of loving those around you as you would want to be loved is a remarkable guidepost for staying on the path that God has set before you. In loving your neighbor with a selfless love, you are pleasing God and obeying His commands. This kind of love takes planning and it takes energy. How can you love someone as you would want to be loved without first knowing what would make you feel loved?

Guest favors are one of the many details in your wedding planning that can flourish with this mindset. Have you ever received a cheap, thrown-together wedding favor? Or a picture frame with the bride and groom's wedding date on it? It's not that the bride and groom were wrong to give gifts, but rather that those are not gifts that benefit the guest. What picture would you put in a frame that has someone else's wedding anniversary date on it?

But favors that are useable like CD's, candies, blankets, salt and pepper shakers, or water bottles are actually functional for your guest. There is thought put into those gifts because the bride and groom have evaluated what the guest might need or have use for.

Similarly, favors that are sentimental to the bride and groom, even if they are totally unusable, are loving gifts because the bride and groom have spent time, energy, and money on inviting the guests deeper into their relationship by sharing a piece of their story with their guests.

One of the greatest favors I received was a pinch of coffee grounds that was sweetly packaged up. With it was a note explaining how the bride and groom met in a coffee shop and grew their relationship over late-night conversations in a coffee shop. They wanted us to be a part of their story.

Would you want to be a guest at your own wedding?

Have you asked yourself what your guests would want to take home with them from your wedding? How would you want to be loved as a guest at a wedding? If you do not have a reason for choosing your favors, is it better not to have favors? As you package, purchase, or create your favors, would you consider praying for each of your guests?



Lord, thank You that You know each person who will be at our wedding. Empower me to make decisions on their behalf. Show me what needs they might have during the wedding and help me to address them before they ever arise. Bless our favors to be more than just tokens of thanks, but rather to be rich with love. Give us the time, energy, creativity, and money to know what would bless our guests and show them Christ's love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Communication as Fellowship

"You must understand this, my beloved; let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness" (James 1:19-20)
"Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to advice"(Proverbs 12:15)

Communication is always a tricky process because we think and convey in different patterns and styles. Making sense between two people is difficult enough, but when the added voices of parents, in-laws, wedding planners, vendors, bridal party, and guests are involved, maintaining clear and loving communication becomes possible only with intentionality. And good communication matters in wedding planning, not only because each piece of the puzzle needs to fit together in a certain way and time, but also because it can disarm potential unmet expectations from everyone involved.

This is your wedding, and you likely have specific visions for it that are very important to you. That is a great thing because it shows how deeply you care about it, but if your desire for control begins to anger others or yourself, then it is time to entrust control back to God. He knows the deepest desires of your heart and He knows what His vision for your wedding is. He also knows how everyone else is feeling and what they are thinking even when communication lines are muddled.

Being slow to speak and quick to listen can greatly empower your leadership because it gives room for God to prompt your words, thoughts, and actions. Others around you might have great advice that could really benefit you and your guests. Whether you take the advice is up to you, but being willing to hear it shows a lot of class, love, and humility that can help to clear the communication lines.

The people around you in the planning process are likely people who love you, and they are certainly people whom God desperately loves! You can worship God by your communication with His children during the planning process.

Do you actively listen?

Does your opinion come at the cost of others? Have you set boundaries for when to talk about wedding details and when to leave it at the door? What is your style of communication? If it is not naturally clear and conscientious, are you willing to express whatever tips, disclaimers, apologies, and thank you's are necessary for keeping good communication?



Lord, You are the One who puts language on our tongues. Please help our words to form out of listening hearts and a desire to love. Bless all of the wedding conversations to be clear so that no one walks away with a false idea or notion. Open my heart to accept good counsel and to entrust my opinions and desires to You, so that You can carry them out as You see fit. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be honoring to you (Psalm 19:14). In Jesus' name, Amen.

Invitations as Celebration

"Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness'" (Genesis 1:26a)

How many times a day do you look in the mirror and think, "I look like God. I can see the resemblance!?" Probably not too many times. But we *are* made in His image. We have His Spirit inside of us, so we can act, think, and move like He does. And just like siblings adopt different features and tendencies from the same set of parents, so too do we reflect different aspects of God.

When you send out your wedding invitations, you are setting a tone for your wedding. It is the sneak preview of what is to come because the invitations usually reflect the colors or theme or venue of the wedding.

The invitation is also a preview into your relationship. Because your guests are coming to celebrate your marriage, they will be looking for clues as to what your relationship is like and who each of you has become now that you are with each other. What a great place to show some personality and get them celebrating from the start!

Most importantly, your invitations are a wonderful opportunity to give glory to God. Simply by letting your invitations reflect who you are, you are also letting them reflect who God is because you are in the image of God.

Whether you include pictures on the invitation or simply create the invitation in the style of your personality, it will reflect you. Showcasing your personality in your invitations is a subtle way of saying, "Look at what God created. Did you know that He has this personality too? Isn't He awesome!"

What aspects of your personality honorably reflect God?

Has your personality or character changed since you and your fiancé began your relationship? How does that change reflect the hand of God? In what ways can you appropriately and creatively celebrate those changes in your artistic choices for your wedding invitations?



Lord, You are a brilliant creator! I am humbled that You spent time to create me and to give me Your signature touch. I am Yours, and I want people to know that by how I act. What aspects of my personality do You think would represent our marriage and celebrate You well? Please show me how to personalize wedding decisions so that the guests can see You when they see our personalities come out in the wedding. Bless each invitation as a preview to the love they can know if they know You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Seating Arrangement as Prayer Cordon

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

How different the world would be if we constantly rejoiced, prayed, and praised! Inevitably, the busyness and "need" to focus on other things takes our mind off of intentional gratitude and prayer. As wise Brother Lawrence said in the seventeenth century, however, we are too busy *not* to pray, especially when planning something as holy as a wedding.

One of the greatest opportunities to pray and rejoice in your wedding planning is during the creation of the seating arrangement. This can also be an opportunity for arguments and stress to sneak in because of all the points of views on where each person will sit: will the music be too loud, will they feel unloved sitting on the edges, will they know anyone at the table?

Rather than letting the brainstorming turn into a litany of worries, you can use it as an intentional time to give thanks for the people in your life. As you consider each name in the seating arrangement, pray for them. Thank God for them, and ask Him to orchestrate divine appointments with the others at their tables. They might never know the time you took to love them through prayer, but God will. Not only does He respond to prayers, but also He changes the heart of the one who prays.

Have you been rejoicing, praying always, and thanking God during the planning process?

Would you be blessed by a bride and groom's prayers for you as a guest at their wedding? Is there anything holding you back from spending the time to pray for your guests by name? Who could partner with you in praying for your guests?



Lord, Your Spirit is beautiful and mighty! Thank You that You have given Your Spirit to me to be my strength and to guide my thoughts. Give me a heart for prayer and a perspective of gratitude so that all of the busyness of wedding planning may become opportunities for Your Spirit to equip me according to Your will. For those guests that I struggle to pray for, please do a work in my heart that would free me to rejoice for them. Bless each guest, Lord, in the unique ways that they need. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Staying disciplined

The Beauty of a Sabbath

"Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even in plowing time and in harvest time you shall rest" (Exodus 34:21)

God was serious about the Israelites taking a Sabbath. God Himself took a Sabbath, even though He's God and doesn't need to rest. There is clearly something important to God about taking a day to rest from work.

The Israelites were not even allowed to light fires for warmth in their homes on sabbaths (Exodus 35:3) or pick their crops during harvest time. Farming was their livelihood; it was how they ate and earned a living, yet God said to take a day off even when there is risk that the crops might spoil from not being harvested in time. Under the Mosaic law, the penalty of not taking a sabbath as a holy day of complete rest was death (Exodus 35:2). This was a big deal!

Jesus' death and resurrection redeemed us from the penalties of violating the sabbath. Jesus tells the Pharisees, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28). He points out to us that sabbaths are for our benefit. Especially in our era of busyness, a sabbath is a gift.

Though we are freed from the penalty of death if we violate a sabbath, the importance behind a sabbath is no less than what it was for the Israelites: our bodies, minds, hearts, and souls need rest from the routine of our earthly vocations, and we need to seek opportunities to trust God.

You have a great opportunity to trust that God will orchestrate your wedding planning even as you take a day off to rest. Not only does taking a sabbath from wedding planning allow more opportunity for God to work out the details, but it also keeps you from burning out when the planning intensifies.

Do you take time to rest?

If not, what is preventing you from doing so, and are those reasons sins that need to be dealt with? If you did keep a weekly sabbath, what would God have to do for you in order to keep your wedding planning on track? Do you believe that He can? In what ways do you commune most intimately with God? What strategies can you implement to protect your time with God, both alone and also with your fiancé?



Lord, You are the author of time. You modeled rest for us because You knew how much we would need it. I confess that when I get busy or stressed, I can talk myself out of taking a sabbath. Forgive me, Lord, for not trusting You in those times. Please help me to honor You with my time—that in which I am working, and that in which I am resting—and let me treasure this process in my heart by slowing down enough for me to take it all in. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Beauty of Celebration

"Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord, 'I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea'" (Exodus 15:1)

The first recorded response by Moses and the Israelites to God's parting the Red Sea and drowning the Egyptians was to sing! They sang a song to God about how great He was.

Celebration is all throughout Scripture: after victory in war (Judges 5), after being saved from danger (2 Samuel 22), after being in the presence of God's glory (2 Samuel 6), even after great loss (Job 1:21). Celebration is simply taking the time, no matter the circumstances, to praise God for Who He is, to thank Him for what He has done, and to claim joy in the circumstances. Sometimes this is our natural reaction; other times, it is a discipline that feels counter to our emotions.

As you cast a vision for your wedding and marriage, and as you see the pieces come together, take the time to celebrate the little victories! Even when stress peaks its head or decisions don't seem to be as easy as you had hoped, take the time to celebrate the opportunities.

It's a perspective shift. When you and your fiancé are at odds, thank God for the fact that you have found someone you want to marry. When you are torn between flower choices, marvel over how creative God is to design so many beautiful flowers. And if you get flack about your bridesmaids' dresses, praise God that you have clothes on your back.

Whether your moments in the planning process are naturally joyful or increasingly stressful, God is always Who He says He is (James 1:17), and because you love Him and are called according to His purposes, He will use everything for good (Romans 8:28). Trusting in God's promises means there is always cause to celebrate unto the Lord!

Is celebration a discipline or an instinct for you?

In what ways do you celebrate? How can you incorporate that into the planning process? Have you ever lost sight of the blessings in your relationships with your fiancé or with God in the midst of focusing on the planning? Why is celebration important? How can you choose a spirit of celebration even when your emotions are full of grief, anger, weariness, or stress?



Lord, You are the source of all joy, and You never change! No matter what my circumstances are in the moment, I want to have a singing heart and a dancing spirit like so many of Your children have in the Bible. You deserve my gratitude and my praise, and I want to be faithful to give it. Teach me to celebrate, and strengthen my relationship with You and with (fiancé's name) because of it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Beauty of Solitude

"In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do'" (Mark 1:35-38)

Jesus was in high demand. The very words from His mouth changed lives and souls, so His daily agenda was crucial. He was a man with a mission purposed by God, yet He never lost sight of what was most important: God.

It can be so easy to put our focus on the goal or the process such that we miss the person of God behind it all. But Jesus, after an exhausting day and night of healing hoards of people and casting out many demons, carved out time to be alone with His Father in solitude. He protected that time, no matter how busy He was or how important His work was. And when Jesus' disciples found Him, He was then ready to go. His solitude was finite, intentional, and vital to how He accomplished His mission.

In life, let alone in wedding planning, we can get so busy that our agenda becomes filled with the urgent at the expense of the important. God is the most important part and purpose of your life, so no matter how close the deadlines are coming, no matter how close to the red line your budget is dropping, and no matter how full your heart is with joy for your wedding, God needs to be put first.

One of the best ways you can protect your time with Him is to withdraw in solitude as Jesus did. Just you and God. Cozy up on the couch in the early morning with your favorite cup of tea and listen for God's voice. Or take a walk under the rustling leaves and dwell on your favorite aspects of God.

Sometimes withdrawing from the hubbub and into the Spirit is the only way to truly gain perspective on how great a plan God is unfolding right then and there. Taking a step aside can allow you to look with fresh eyes and see God's presence where you otherwise might have missed it. These moments of solitude, whether 5 minutes or several hours, can invigorate an exhausted or overworked spirit, allowing you to step back in to your wedding agenda with renewed purpose and perspective.

Are you taking time out to spend with God?

Is God the love of your life? Are you able to discern between urgent and important? Is there someone you trust who can help you take care of the urgent details so you can focus on the important ones? When you are alone with your fiancé, what does he say or do that makes you feel intentionally loved and valued? Have you tried saying or doing those things to God in your solitude with Him?



Lord, You are enough. Help me to live that out by faith. Please take care of all the busyness and urgency that stirs around me so that I can pull away a little bit each day and marvel with You about the great things You are doing and the awesome person You are. Refresh me as I withdraw, and suit me up so that I can jump right back in to the mission at hand. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Beauty of Prayer

"I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name, you ask me for anything, I will do it" (John 14:13-14)

Such unbelievable events happened in Scripture when someone prayed. When the Apostles prayed, signs happened, and people were converted (Acts 2). Hezekiah prayed and his fatal illness was healed (Isaiah 38). Jehoshaphat prayed for guidance in the face of pending war, and God fought and won the war while Jehoshaphat and his people slept at night (2 Chronicles 20). Hannah prayed for a son, and God opened her closed womb (1 Samuel 1). Elijah prayed for rain to stop and start again, and God commanded the weather to do so (James 5).

God can do anything. He doesn't need us to pray in order for Him to do miracles. Like He did with the plagues, sometimes He shows His glory on His own agenda. Other times, however, He heeds our prayers. When He answers a prayer that we have asked for, He validates our faith in Christ and He confirms His promises that He hears and answers prayers made in His name.

Even if you never prayed for the decisions in your wedding planning, for your guests, or for your marriage, God could still mercifully bless them. He could still use them for good. And He could decide to use them in astounding ways for His glory. But to do so without your asking Him would rob you of the blessing that comes when your specific cries have been directly addressed. You would miss the chance to talk to God about what His perfect will for your wedding and marriage is.

Prayer is a gift from God that changes our hearts and draws us into intimacy with Him. Taking the time to pray over the big picture and the minute details of your wedding is not to be a burden, but an honor and a privilege, especially when you can pray together with your fiancé.

What can you pray about today as you work on wedding planning?

Do you believe that God hears and answers your prayers? In what posture, environment, and manner do you pray best? Have you ever seen evidence of God's faithfulness in your prayer life before? Have you and your fiancé spent time in prayer together for your wedding and marriage? What hinders you from praying, and how can you throw off what hinders?



Lord, You are the creator of the universe who knows the name of every star and the number of every grain of sand, yet You care so much about me and even the little whims of my heart! Forgive me for all of the times that I have not turned to You. Teach me to pray in all that I do. Build up the intimacy between You and me, and whisper to me Your good, perfect, and pleasing will so that You would be glorified and I would be blessed in all that I do. Use my prayer time with (fiancé's name) as one that leads us towards oneness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Beauty of Scripture

"Indeed, the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account" (Hebrews 4:12)

Both Scripture and Jesus are the Word of God. Both are living and active. Both penetrate through the junk in our hearts and minds, leading us into a deeper relationship with the Father.

The Holy Spirit empowers us to transformation through the Word of God so that we can become more like Christ even as we live our earthly lives. This whole process of transformation is done by God. We can no more make ourselves like Christ than we can create an organic solar system, and yet, despite our powerlessness, we can hinder the process. Or we can enhance it by opening ourselves to the process, by actively engaging in Scripture, by faithfully praying in Jesus' name, and by all other means of spending time with our Lord.

It can seem like the Bible would have nothing to say about the decisions you are making for your wedding, but the truth is, it has everything to say about your heart, mind, and spirit as you make these decisions. God cares about you. He cares about money, hospitality, marriage, worship, celebration, and organization, and He talks about all of those things in Scripture.

By spending time in Scripture and with Jesus, you will know God better. The more you know God, the more you know what His will is for you. The Bible is your most powerful wedding planning book because it will transform your wedding into a vessel for Christ's glory!

Are you looking in God's Word for answers to your wedding planning questions?

Do you believe God has anything to say on the matter? How has God interacted with people in the Bible in ways that remind you of His faithful character? What verses in Scripture light a fire in your heart? Do you pray for the Holy Spirit to make Scripture come alive to you when you read it?



Lord, Your thoughts matter to me! Help me to hear You and to engage faithfully in daily time with You and in Your Word. Direct me to stories or verses that will help me understand what You think about the different aspects of my wedding, and please use Your Word to keep my heart pure and in love with You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Beauty of Fasting

"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might deny ourselves before our God, to seek from him a safe journey for ourselves, our children, and all our possessions. [...] So we fasted and petitioned our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty" (Ezra 8:21, 23)

We see fasting in Scripture that is meant for many different purposes. Esther has her people fast for her preparation before she entreats the king (Esther 4). King David fasts in grief for God's mercy (2 Samuel 12). Ezra and his people were fasting for protection.

King Artaxerxes had just given him permission to take his people, along with hoards of money, back to Jerusalem from Babylon where they were living in exile. This was a major deal! Because the whole premise of the king's allowances were made on the notion of a powerful, righteous, and faithful God, Ezra was ashamed to ask the king for military protection on their journey. Instead, he and the families who traveled with him, entrusted their protection entirely to God. God answered favorably.

Fasting is a powerful way of demonstrating to God that you are serious about your petitions. It demonstrates a desperation for God and a reliance on Him. Fasting is not a dieting gimmick or a manipulation tool but rather is a finite time period in which to empty yourself before the Lord so that nothing stands in the way of your petition to God. Every time your tummy growls, you are reminded of God's goodness to provide for you, and you are prompted to ask Him again for what answer or blessing you are seeking.

Fasting doesn't always have to be denying yourself from food. Denying yourself of a distraction opens your ears to the Lord more. It can be from anything that is blocking your communication with God. For example, if doting on wedding magazines is encouraging materialism or greed in your heart, you might consider a magazine fast, or even a media fast, while you are planning your wedding.

If you are at a major cross-roads in your wedding planning, consider fasting in order to open your ears. Or, like Esther, if you want to prepare yourself fully for what it means to vow before God to be a wife, consider fasting in preparation. Or fast on behalf of your guests who might hear Good News for the first time at your wedding.

Have you ever fasted before?

What makes you nervous about fasting? Have you talked with God about those concerns? Is there anything weighing on your heart that needs deep petitioning to God? Is anything standing in the way of your communication with God?



Lord, You are the provider of all things necessary and good. Show me the decisions for wedding planning that need intentional petitioning, show me on whose behalf I can petition, and show me that which I need to deny myself in order to be fully available to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Beauty of Tithing

"Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, 'How are we robbing you?' In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you! Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing" (Malachi 3:8-10)

Tithing was God's beautiful way of allowing His children to support His Church. When inheritance was apportioned to the tribes of Israel, the Levites—the priests—were given no land, but they were given tithes from the other tribes. This was their inheritance. The non-clergy people of Israel were supporting the clergy. The Levites depended on this support, and the people were cheerful in giving it because it was the design of the Lord.

Over time, tithing became a burden because of famines, corrupt officials, idolatrous clergy, and general ramifications of sin. Even those who were giving tithes and offerings were not giving with a pure heart. So God rebuked them through the prophet Malachi. God condemned His children for robbing Him of what is rightfully His. Then, God challenged His children to trust Him so that He could bless them abundantly.

All of our money is on loan from God, so giving it back to Him is a response of stewardship rather than ownership. Giving ten-percent (or more) of your money, time, and talent to the church is a challenging commitment, but it is a vital discipline to the health of your faith and of the Church at large. Tithing starts with the time, money, and talent that you have now, not what you anticipate having later.

Wedding planning is a time of great output: money, time, and creativity. If there is any time that might feel justified in skimping on your tithes, it would be now, but do not be fooled. Your faithfulness to tithe even when it feels like you have nothing to give is often when God pours out abundant blessing. He honors His children's trust in Him, and He loosens our hearts from bondage to money, busyness, and indulgence. Your wedding planning time is a great opportunity to create a foundation for tithing with your fiancé.

Do you tithe consistently?

What obstacles challenge your faithfulness to give? Do you have an easier time giving your money, time, or talent over the others? Do you and your fiancé share a Biblical perspective on tithing? If not, how can you learn together in order to be unified on this discipline?



Lord, all that I have comes from You. When Jesus returns, all of my possessions will pass away and all of my time and talent spent on my own behalf will be wasted. Help me to see life now with eternal perspective. Help me to give to You of my first-fruits and not to hold anything back, even when I'm scared to give. Please use what I have for the good of Your kingdom and bring me abundant blessing in return. Thank You, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Beauty of Remembrance

“Then those who revered the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who revered the Lord and thought on his name. They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as parents spare their children who serve them” (Malachi 3:16-17)

Often we are quick to forget. Whether it's our resolutions, a trauma, the upside, or any other host of details, we can either block out or overlook details that greatly affect our outlook on life. While some things are better left forgotten, most things are worth remembering. Even the “bad” can point towards the Lord’s grace when you reflect on it.

Your wedding day is an incredible opportunity for joy and wonder. If someone hasn’t already told you, it goes by so quickly. It can feel like the details that you have labored on slip away against the magnitude of the emotional experience you will have that day.

Like the Lord, however, you can practice remembrance during your wedding planning and wedding day. The Lord paid attention to what people were saying in order to note those who were revering Him with their words. He treasured those names and stored them away for later when He would judge the world.

Your remembrance holds less eternal consequence than God’s, but practicing remembrance as a discipline opens your eyes ears to pay attention to what matters. It also gives you access to these details down the line when you are ready to recall them.

Whether hiring a photographer, transcribing your vows, keeping a prayer journal, or planning reflective worship, you can intentionally record details that will direct your heart into worship now and in the future. Even the disappointments might reveal themselves as blessings in disguise when you are able to look back on how God has used them for good.

Do you take the time to remember?

Have you ever kept a journal or a prayer journal? If you have hired a photographer/videographer, have you made a list of the kinds of shots you want them to capture (family portrait, table set up, holding hands, etc.)? Are you typically a glass-half-full or glass-half-empty person? Would you consider pausing at the end of the day to give thanks for the positive and to release the negative? What change in your heart or mind is necessary for allowing remembrance of both disappointments and wonders to be a vehicle for worship?



Lord, You have the eyes to see what truly matters. Help me not to miss any of it! By the power and grace of Your Spirit, help me to see with Your eyes what would draw me closer to You. Show me how I can best record these memories for the times in the future when You want to show me something related to them. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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