



A WIFE'S SECRET TO

# happiness

*Receiving, Honoring, & Celebrating  
God's Role for You in Your Marriage*

JEN WEAVER

“So many women struggle with their role as Christian wives, wondering how to achieve the marriage they’ve always dreamed of. With keen insight and compassion, Jen Weaver paints a realistic picture of biblical womanhood as it relates to marriage.”

—**Jim Daly**, President, Focus on the Family

“*A Wife’s Secret to Happiness* is the Christian marriage book for the millennial generation. Jen Weaver’s heart for Jesus filters through each word as she authentically shares what living and loving biblically can do for your marriage. *A Wife’s Secret to Happiness* tackles the biblical principles that are shunned by our culture and demonstrates the beauty of these principles for our marriages today. Throughout the book, Jen weaves the story of her own marriage and others’ testimonies proving the wisdom of God’s instructions for this ordained relationship. It’s a must read for engaged and newly married women. A priceless gift.”

—**Andy Lee**, author of *A Mary Like Me: Flawed Yet Called*

“Jen shares powerful insight into the opportunity for women to see their husbands through God’s eyes and to champion them to live in their God-given identities and destinies. She reveals how aligning our dreams and marriages with God invites an overflow of his abundance, favor, and fulfillment, far beyond what we could conceive or achieve on our own. Jen celebrates the power and relief of surrendering our best to see God’s best unfold in our marriages and lives, and empowers readers to do the same. A beautifully challenging read.”

—**Robin Brady**, MA Psychology, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Registered Art Therapist

“Jen Weaver has written an influential book for wives to know how to pursue and receive the blessings that God intends for them in marriage. She has a hilarious style of writing that’s engaging, while offering insight through her personal hardships. She doesn’t hesitate to share. Jen challenges wives to awaken their hearts to what God is doing in them and their marriage. I find her work to be relevant and encouraging, as both a wife and a counselor.”

—**Ami Evans**, Licensed Professional Counselor, Owner of Ami Evans Counseling, Grapevine, Texas

“Freedom and hope are found in these pages! Reading *A Wife’s Secret to Happiness* felt as though Jen had invited me to sit at her kitchen table and have coffee with her. Jen’s welcoming candor, humor, and courage to address real issues head on is refreshing. Whether you are struggling to stay strong in a broken marriage or you are living in wedded bliss, this book is for you!”

—**Amy Ford**, President of Embrace Grace, Inc., author of *A Bump in Life*

“As a man I want to know who let ‘The’ Jen Weaver in on the secret thoughts and questions all men share about the mysteries related to our wives? Her insight into our world is very telling, and the way she casually demystifies it all in broad daylight is going to strongly help marriages. As a Pastor, I have to say I am very proud of Jen and the work, research, prayer, and reflection she has put into the book; it is filled with good writing, scriptural accuracy, healthy perspective, and positive encouragement.”

—**Allan Kelsey**, Assoc. Sr. Pastor, Gateway Church

“Jen Weaver is absolutely wonderful. I love her heart for marriage and her message in *A Wife’s Secret to Happiness*. The combination of biblical wisdom and practical resources make it a must read!”

—**Alli Worthington**, author of *Breaking Busy: Finding Peace and Purpose in A World of Crazy*

“This book is a beautiful symphony of the practical, spiritual, and applicable. Jen brilliantly weaves practical tips, including quizzes that test your ‘wifestyle,’ with honest examples, spiritual revelation, and realistic expectations. This book also contains amazing articles for application which only enhance the reading experience. As a therapist, many resources only contain pieces or parts that are useful; *A Wife’s Secret to Happiness* is the full package. The reader is able to read any chapter in this book and gain valuable knowledge, insight, and practical application. I am excited to suggest it to my clients!”

—**Cassie Reid**, PhD, LPC-S, Lead Counselor, Cassie Reid Counseling

“This book made me laugh, cry, consider, and challenge myself to celebrate the gift of marriage in new ways. Jen’s voice settles on you like a gracious friend across the kitchen table who loves you just because. Her wisdom, experience, and passion sink deep into the ink of every page, layering this book with the rich soil of God’s loving and life-giving plan for marriage.”

—**Kasey Van Norman**, bestselling author of *Named by God* and *Raw Faith*

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LEAFWOOD  
PUBLISHERS  
*an imprint of Abilene Christian University Press*

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## Introduction

As a reader, I skip book introductions, so it won't hurt my feelings if you do the same. But if you want to hang out and chat a bit . . .


Welcome!

I'm Jen, and my husband, Jared, says I embody the cliché of living life like an open book. I'm doing my best to live up to that reputation in *A Wife's Secret to Happiness*, sharing lessons I've learned as a less-than-perfect wife in a less-than-perfect marriage blessed a hundred times over by the more-than-perfect provision of a loving Heavenly Father.

I've prayed, studied, and consumed concerning amounts of junk food as I typed my heart onto these pages. Punctuated with laughter and bittersweet tears, I aimed to pack truth and encouragement into every paragraph, uplifting your spirit and inspiring your marriage as we unfurl God's plan to empower our lives.

I'll be upfront, though: not all of these topics will taste sweet to your tongue. Some moments I'm sure to make you furious,

especially as we confront societal norms with the truth of heaven's instruction. But to understand the secrets I've uncovered on my journey to happiness, please keep reading. Keep praying. **Ask the Lord what he wants you to receive, because there's a reason this book ended up in your hands.**

We welcome the Lord's provision through doing, not just reading, so please take notes. Make plans. Scribble all over these pages with reminders of what God stirs in your spirit as we explore **eleven specific blessings** he longs to gift to your life and marriage. We'll find **tips for practical application** as we compare conflicting **wife-styles**—the patterns that mark our tendencies as wives—and trade harmful habits for healthy ones. **Fun quizzes** and **discussion questions** personalize each theme and can aid your conversations with God, and perhaps with a book group, about how this content applies to you. Every chapter ends with a **powerful testimony from another real life wife** as she shares the freedom she's found by living according to the truth discussed in that section. In addition, anytime you see this icon  there's **exclusive bonus content** to download with worksheets and beautiful printable guides to use as you develop your wifestyle in accordance with God's Word.

Stepping from where we are today into the favor God supplies for tomorrow, next week, and next year requires intention and practical application. You carry powerful, purposeful dreams for your family's future. And the fulfillment you seek is precious and fathomless, not surface level.

I'm talking happiness more vibrant than the pleasant greetings and candle-blown wishes of a birthday. When we throw parties and eat cake, only to go back to regular life with work and chores, and pants that don't fit quite right because of yesterday's celebration.

Happiness more radiant than a wedding day. When blissful moments blur in the speed of the ceremony's passing. The



commitment is real, but few wedding day moments resemble actual daily life.

No, for me and for you, I believe God offers joy that lasts. As we progress through the book, it's rare I even use the word *happy*. We can all relate to the desire for marital bliss, but I've found it's more accurate to label this yearning with stronger words. Unity. Provision. Safety. Intimacy. Partnership.

Contentment in these areas sneaks up on us. We're not standing outside any longer, nose pressed up against the glass, wishing we too could enjoy what others seem to have. No, we're busy getting involved in what Jesus calls us to—receiving, honoring, and celebrating his instruction so much that the sudden deep-rooted sense of satisfaction catches us by surprise. It's happened to me a thousand times, and God willing, it'll happen a million more. I live life as a wife through big, bold acts of faith and tiny little steps of obedience. And every once in a while, I look up and realize I've somehow walked myself into crazy favorable places, surrounded by the presence of Jesus.

# The *Blessing* of Three Strands

“A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

*Ecclesiastes 4:12 NIV*

Picture me wearing Manolos.

Yep, that’s right. Bold. Modern. Romantic. I pair the gorgeous shoes with killer abs in couture gowns. My prince brings treasures from afar as little woodland creatures do my housework. Even my morning bedhead radiates beauty.

Do you ever wish married life worked like a fairy tale? Yep. Me too.

I chuckle as I write these words, cuddled on the love seat in my Texas-sized bedroom. Barefoot in shorts and a T-shirt, with two-day-old hair and an empty bag of mint chocolate Milanos. Hey, that’s close to Manolos, right?

We know not to trust the fantasy of carriages and horsemen. Yet somewhere in our relationships, we've felt the draw to something more. Not something prettier—although we wouldn't mind—but something deeper. As a wife or bride-to-be, you've already heard the whisper in your spirit—the call to a marital experience different from what you've seen so far.

Maybe the rumble comes from places of disconnect. Knowing married life *could be* more—dare we believe, *should be* more—than the common parade. I'm talking about big things, finding commonalities past the shaky ground of shared interests. Life with a partner, not a roommate, and enjoying every aspect of intimacy—to intercourse and beyond.

We long to build marriages we love in the small moments. Not romanticized tales of perfect hair, homes, and husbands—because who can live up to that? I disqualify myself from my own daydream when he leaves dirty clothes on the floor or releases air biscuits in his sleep. We pretend not to notice these things, until pressure-cooked words erupt like Mount Vesuvius. Or maybe that's just me. We're looking for genuine joy in the middle of the mess and learning to make peace with each other's . . . quirks. Sound like something you want? Yep, me too. We need God's presence as the blessing of the third strand.

We're looking for genuine joy in the middle of the mess.

Instead of moving toward it, we see God's plan for marriage fade into the distance. Our relationships are like boats out to sea without paddles, much less engines, adrift and taking on water. Every day I hear stories of betrayal, relationships heavy with anchors of broken promises. Once upon a time, they too wore love goggles. *Is it naïve to think my marriage will be any different?*

The question sticks in my throat, caught in the space between a wandering thought and legitimate concern.

I know we're created for something more. However, I still question it. Even my typing is timid. I place words on the page like fragile kisses when I want to engrave deep, permanent carvings. Our spousal relationships are crafted for divine callings, with purposes not relegated to powerless acts of contrition or the monotony of a somewhat satisfactory union. Not for painted on smiles and fake-it-till-you-make-it-or-die happiness, but life-giving communion with our husbands. We can experience joy even on days when we miss wedded bliss. The Lord wants that for us. Any promise in Scripture, all hope-filled encouragement found in Christ's love, is designed for his daughters, to move us from strength to strength.<sup>1</sup> Protected. Purposeful. Powerful.

In God's presence, we swap burdens for freedom.<sup>2</sup> We join the repetitive exchange of fears for faith, doubt for belief, and insecurity for confidence until we have nothing to trade any longer. A fullness we can't imagine.<sup>3</sup>

I hope you feel it—the freedom of God's plan as he etches it onto the tablet of your heart.

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified . . .  
for *the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.* (Deut. 31:6 NIV—emphasis mine)

My prayer is that the Lord shares his vision for your marriage through the pages of this book, just as he has with me.

If these words excite tingling nerves in your spirit, know I'm here with you, proclaiming, "Yep, me too!" God keeps talking with me about it—about the plan he has for marriage. An infusion of his power in a woman's connection with her husband, the way an electric current revives a lifeless heart.

I seek his voice because he promises to be found.<sup>4</sup> God will not call us anywhere his presence will not go with us. He won't ask us to do what he has not equipped us to complete. The Lord longs to lead our marriages into spacious places, interwoven with his peace and strength. God is the blessing of the third strand.

## What Is a Third Strand?

You've no doubt heard of this illustrious fiber. A bond between two people may shatter with ease but "a cord of three strands is not quickly broken."<sup>5</sup> We often acknowledge the presence of the third strand through unity candles or comingling elements on a wedding day, but we miss the grandness of this coupling if we relegate it to a symbolic act. Marriage is more than a ceremony. Gloriously more.

God wasn't a guest at your wedding. The day you made your vows, he participated in active agreement, invisible yet majestic in glory. If a pastor officiated your ceremony, he or she said something like, "Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today *in the sight of God* and these witnesses to join this man and this woman in holy matrimony." You stood with your man just as I did with mine. By our actions we said, "God, he is the one." And the Lord joined us to our husbands.<sup>6</sup>

The Almighty wasn't distracted by my grandiose daydreams of life as a wife. He knew all the hard times to come, the difficult conversations and painful circumstances. The Lord saw the days when I wouldn't want to consider Jared better than myself,<sup>7</sup> or forgive as I have been forgiven.<sup>8</sup> Yet he stood as witness to our union, providing a resounding "so be it" in the heavens as we vowed to honor and cherish for as long as we both shall live.

The threads of his tapestry hold our marriage together when everything else unravels.

My vows weren't foolish promises, although in challenging moments I question my sanity. God's third strand compensates for where we lack. The divine design of marriage necessitates his daily involvement because we can't uphold our solemn words without him. The threads of his tapestry hold our marriage together when everything else unravels.

To prepare for our pending nuptials, Jared and I wrote our own wedding vows. I spent hours guzzling lattes, making every attempt to draft passionate yet feasible affirmations. Noble, heart-moving words felt most appropriate, but I had a better chance at becoming Wonder Woman than fulfilling lofty proclamations.

"I will always honor and respect you." *Always? Maybe sometimes.*

"I will submit to you joyfully as the head of our family." *Umm . . . I'll try not to fight against your leadership? Yeah, that sounds encouraging.*

Expecting to fail was to admit defeat before we even began. But to preface each vow with "I will try" was a worse alternative. With flushed cheeks and a diverted gaze, I admitted this concern during premarital counseling, hoping for supernatural insight, or at least a superhero cape.

"Vows are hard," our pastor said.

A wedding happens once. Each day afterward is an opportunity to say, "I *still* do." Choosing permanence in our marriages and proclaiming "Amen and Amen" to ourselves when it comes time to practice the promises we made. Vows represent what we work toward and strive for throughout our entire marriage. Some promises are all or nothing—you either protect fidelity or you don't. But others endure as works in progress as we learn to love and honor each other. No wonder we need God's company.

When two work together, we get a better return.<sup>9</sup> We share strength and warmth. But what happens when the bed is cold?

When one falls because the other pushed them, or isn't around to help them stand again? When a bride works on her marriage solo, her nerves and energy soon fray. As I walked down the aisle on my wedding day, I didn't picture "becoming one" with my husband through terse conversations and irrational reactions. That's the value of the third strand—when one or both of you fail, God picks you up. Even better than the *important* faith-filled loyalty one spouse shows another is the Lord's faithfulness to your union. You are not alone. He longs to hold the fragile moments of your relationship, to fortify delicate bonds with the tight-knit fabric of his presence.

## The Invitation

God wants to be involved in our marriages—praise his holy name!—but we must *include* him. In the same way he grants free will to receive salvation, he will not force his involvement in our homes. As a Gentleman, the Lord waits for me to invite him into my relationship. And I'm good at shutting the door in his face.

Remember that glimpse into my life from earlier? Me curled on the sofa in desperate need of cookies and, someday, a nice long shower? I'm still here, but this time I'm pouting. Not that immature jutted-chin-and-diva-hair-toss petulance. The justified kind—if there was such a thing. I mumble complaints about "Jared doesn't notice" and "Is he listening?" and defend my quiet protest as "prayer." Who else would I be talking to, sitting in a room by myself?

Then I hear Jesus. His voice echoes down a long corridor because sometimes I need the *dramatic* so I'll pay attention.

"I'm waiting in the hallway. Are you done, so you can let me in?"

Now, I know God is everywhere. He knows all things, discerns all thoughts, and hears every word.<sup>10</sup> But I also know that thinking and talking are different than praying. Scripture tells me that God gives good gifts to his kids.<sup>11</sup> Better than blue Tiffany boxes or fancy

cars. *Good* gifts. The kind only he can give. Peace beyond understanding,<sup>12</sup> hope without measure,<sup>13</sup> and supernatural provision. Blessing a marriage with sincere harmony and happiness.

He says I don't have because I don't ask. Or my requests are selfish, looking to spend his generosity on my own pleasures.<sup>14</sup> He's right. I default to depending on my strength, advocating for my preferences, and I work hard to achieve my own results. It takes such arduous efforts to "fix" my marriage, to set us up for *my* version of success:

- Tearing down molehills to prevent future mountains
- Exhaustively talking through problems with few results
- Feeling like I'm the only one trying—and if I let go it will all fall apart

I catch some soft murmurs of "Yep, me too." While I'm sorry for your pain, it's good to know we're not alone. No one signs up for this hardship.

We crave rare and exquisite marriages, spilling over with knowing and loving and being together. Not standing in proximity, but cherished in unity. Instead, bone-weary women experience great loss. We're at a loss for words. For strength. For direction and resources. Whatever we achieve is held with beautiful vise-gripped hands, fingernails digging scars into our palms for fear that we'll lose what we fought so hard to gain.

We must let God be the third strand.

The Lord's presence changes my marriage,  
and I am a gatekeeper.

The Lord's presence changes my marriage, and I am a gatekeeper. I hold keys to offer him access not just to the *ceremony* on the first day but to the *relationship* for each day that comes after.



No fiber of God's Holy Being is passive. To include his strand in my relationship cord means I receive him as my Leader. He goes before to prepare the way. God isn't that lame camp counselor that shouts instructions from the shaded picnic bench as you sweat out the obstacle course on your own. The King of Heaven, Creator of the universe, invests his power and authority in our marital success. He blesses our union in ways that far surpass human ability or achievement.

## Receiving the Blessing

But here's the deal. In the same breath as "Please, God," we say, "No, thank you."

"Oh, *that's* your plan to bless my marriage? Never mind."

We make the same mistake as this guy Naaman<sup>15</sup> in Scripture, although here I take some creative liberties with his story.

In the days of 2 Kings chapter 5, #Naaman is always trending. A Syrian army commander in high favor with the king, God grants him success in his military career. He has a wife, servants, and a prestigious job, so I imagine his life is pretty lavish for his day. Plus, his subtitle is "mighty man of valor," so you know he has things going for him.

But Naaman also has an itchy and rather painful affliction, plagued by an embarrassing skin disease that no lotion, potion, treatment, or doctor can rid him of. He tries to conceal the discomfort, but everyone can tell. We're not talking dandruff or the occasional sunburn; Naaman's skin oozes grossness.

As days turn to weeks, then months, Naaman continues through the stages of grief as he accepts this health issue as a way of life. Then he hears of a supernatural cure. The God of Israel can heal him through his prophet Elisha. Well, Mr. Man of Valor knows some people who know some people, and gets himself invited to meet the prophet to be healed. Naaman marvels at his good fortune

on the journey from Syria to Israel, grateful that his friend, the king, can apparently call in favors with the God of the Israelites.

His processional makes the final turn in front of Elisha's house, with rows of regal chariots pulled by his most elegant horses.

Picking at a scab on his arm, Naaman mutters to himself, "I overdid the entourage, but I want to show this guy that I'm worth his time."

He folds himself out of the chariot and stretches. The stress of a long journey shows on his face, but his weary eyes gleam with excitement. This is his moment. His miracle.

The best way to describe Naaman's attire is *luxurious*. Picture Prada for the biblical era. Naaman looks good, and he knows it. He straightens his garments and struts up to the house with the same victory swagger as when he's victorious in battle, tired but eager for whatever fantastical display of power awaits.

The doors fling open and out steps a servant, sent by Elisha. Naaman's expression tightens, but he holds his tongue. He is the commander of the Syrian army, and this prophet dares to send a mere servant!

One sentence is all he's given: "Go wash in our river."

Naaman storms away from the home, fists clenched and shouting things I won't repeat. Dirty river water is not the wondrous sign he expected. He could have bathed in a bunch of rivers back in Syria. He came all this way, to this God, for something dazzling, not something dull. Definitely not something degrading.

Thankfully, Naaman's servants encourage him. "What if the prophet had told you to do something great? Wouldn't you have done it? Climbed a mountain. Fought an enemy. Traveled the world for the right ingredients to craft a new lotion. Fasted and prayed and wept and worshiped. Those things might not have worked anyway. Why not do this thing?"

When Naaman finishes his swim in the Jordan River, he's healed, and God creates the first antiaging treatment known to man.

Good times, right? Such an extraordinary outcome for an ordinary action. Similar to Naaman, we too can become unreceptive to God's offering of healing and blessings in our lives. While we want God's presence and leadership in our marriages, with the high rate of divorce and the even higher number of troubled relationships, the odds of a happy marriage are stacked against us. We long for confidence in our spousal connection, free from doubt or fear. We pray for godly husbands to offer safety and security in our homes. For God to fulfill our dreams and callings. To live in complete unity with our mate, enjoying the haven of the most intimate human relationship God created. We ask to have his blessing run to and through our marriages, and his affirmative answer is as undesirable and undeniable as a call to jump in the Jordan River.

Here comes the choice: to let in the blessing of the third strand, or to put him back in the hallway.

You may choose to leave the Lord in the entryway from time to time as he reveals his design for marriage with your husband as the leader in your home. God wants your relationship to start and stay on solid ground, but when we talk about the dirty "S" word of submission, you may consider leaving me out in the hallway, too. Public opinion distorts many truths in God's Word. Submission is divine empowerment that culture has confused and the enemy has contorted to mean oppression. Its blessing is misunderstood and refused by those who've never seen God cleanse the skin of a leper in the murky waters of a riverbank. But what happens when we choose the blessing of the third strand by submitting to God and also to our husbands? Are you willing to follow God on this new adventure? To receive his blessings for your marriage? Yep, me too.

### **Building Wifestyle Habits**

Every choice contributes to our “wifestyle”—the pattern we establish for ourselves as married women. If we don’t live with intention, our wifestyle can become . . . unbecoming . . . as we develop unhealthy perspectives, attitudes, and habits in interactions with our husbands. Obedience to God’s instruction aligns us with his will, allowing us to receive the blessings he desires to impart in our lives. Disobedience earns the opposite result.

In the pages ahead, we’ll look at redefining our wifestyles by establishing healthy habits to align ourselves with God’s blessings for our marriages. Jesus has plans for your husband, and an anointing to place on your life as a wife.

### **Wifestyle: Frayed or Braided**

The frayed wife is often worn-out. She finds it difficult to include God in the day-to-day circumstances of her marriage and wishes he’d just show up rather than wait to be invited. Her husband may resist her efforts to improve their connection, leaving her feeling lonely and underappreciated. She’s determined to have a happy marriage and sees every issue as an obstacle to struggle through and overcome. The frayed wife is strong and resolute but finds minimal results.

The braided wife chooses a marriage interwoven with the presence of Jesus, even when God’s instruction, circumstances, or even her husband prove difficult. She views Christ as an integral and practical part of interactions with her spouse. While her marriage

requires hard work, she sees it as a joy and as a partnership with both God and her husband. Peace and prayer mark her approach and interactions. Her spousal connection carries God's grace—making it easier to work through the hardest circumstances.

### Is Your Wifestyle Frayed or Braided?

Complete this wifestyle quiz to personalize the themes of this chapter in a practical way. Please circle the responses below that best represent your answer to each question.

Our development as believers and as wives is a lifelong process, and you may find yourself at different points in the wifestyle spectrum. This isn't a grading scale—I'm talking to you, fellow Type A personalities. We are all a mix of both wifestyle habits. Don't read them like labels or boxed-in categories. The goal is to provide tangible markers to help us identify and improve current habits and perspectives.



**BONUS:** Would you rather not write in your book?  
Download printable versions of the wifestyle quizzes at [thejenweaver.com/wifestylebonus](http://thejenweaver.com/wifestylebonus)

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
I find it tiring to work on my marriage.	True	False
When I consider the past week, I've spent more time <i>talking</i> about issues in my marriage than <i>praying</i> about them.	True	False
I struggle to make intentional choices to rely on Jesus when interacting with my husband.	True	False

	A	B
I frequently suggest ways my husband can improve his bad habits.	True	False
Please circle words in each column that best describe your recent attitudes or behaviors. Circle all that apply.	Complaining Pouting Frustrated	Grateful Prayerful Renewed

Please tally your results. If you have more “A” answers, you exhibit a frayed wifestyle. “B” answers show a braided wifestyle.

If you sense even a hint of condemnation during this exercise, that’s not from God. Squish those lies with the truth of Jesus. Roll the book up and use it like a fly swatter if you have to.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 8:1)

Condemnation brings guilt and shame. Conviction brings repentance—the opportunity to think again and choose a different course. That’s what we’re doing: thinking again and choosing differently. Wash. Rinse. Repeat.

### Ways to Grow as a Braided Wife

A braided wife can use the following steps to live with God’s third strand as an integral part of her marriage:

- Spend time in prayer. When you’re tempted to grumble to yourself or complain to another person about issues in your marriage, choose to pray about them instead. Consider carrying an index card to write your prayer list for later.
- When your husband annoys you most, ask God to bless him. I don’t mean, “Lord, let him get what’s coming.” Pray

for every blessing you can think of: his health, job, ministry, and spiritual walk. Pray for the acne on his face or weird patch of hair on his back. Let grace and gratitude replace any negative emotion.

- Create reminders for yourself to keep the door open for God's presence in your marriage. Use sticky notes to put verses with God's promises in strategic places for you to see throughout the day. Schedule time to talk with God about upcoming decisions, or set alarms on your phone to check your wifestyle habits and God's leadership in various moments. Are you #wifestylin right now?
- Write out the top five pain points in your marriage. Ask God to talk with you about why they hurt you and what he wants to do about them. Gain insight from the Lord about how he sees these problems; *then* petition for God's help according to his plan.
- Make intentional choices to build trust in God's leadership. Read Bible verses outlining his promises. List ways he's been there for you. You may want to read the Scripture references noted in the endnotes for this chapter. Ask God to continue talking with you about the blessing of three strands in your marriage.

## What Do You Think?

- Is married life what you thought it would be like when you were dating or engaged? How is it the same? In what ways is it different?
- Between frayed and braided, which wifestyle is dominant in your life right now? How is this evidenced in your daily life?

- Is God convicting you about anything that you'd like to repent of? What is the different choice you will make moving forward?
- What excites you most about the blessing of three strands?

### **Real Life #Wifestylin: Lori's Story**

John and I officially began our relationship in August 2007. He proposed in December 2008 and the wedding was set for July of 2009—our life was to grow together from that day forward. Marriage, home, and babies . . . I had it planned. Problem is, life doesn't always go as we plan. A month before he proposed, John got a fabulous new job in Houston, Texas. He felt taking this job was the right decision, even though I was still in nursing school, stuck in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. So I chose to trust God and follow my soon-to-be husband into the unknown.

We married in July (as planned), but there was no moving in with my life-mate. I stayed in Baton Rouge for the first six months of our marriage, trusting God and walking by faith that he would strengthen a marriage established apart and would reward us for following him. In December 2009 I graduated nursing school, and after months of tears and trusting God, we were finally together . . . sort of. John's job required him to travel Monday through Friday every week. I thought the tears had ended when I moved in, but they only increased. Here I was in a new city, in a new church,



with no friends, and all alone. I was so frustrated, yet in prayer we knew we were walking the right path.

God proved faithful! We bought a house and had two beautiful children. God became ever more real and close as my dependence shifted from my husband to my Heavenly Father! I learned to find my strength in God. In giving God my marriage and submitting to my husband's leadership for our family, I became a stronger individual. Here I stand, closer to God, stronger in spirit, happy, and filled with life. The road has been long and hard, but I wouldn't change it. I could have quit, or made John quit to please me, to stay where I was "comfortable." Instead, I chose to follow my husband and place my life, marriage, and family in God's hands. Standing on the other side, I am a woman blessed beyond measure!

*—Lori, married in 2009*

Perhaps you can relate to Lori's struggles when circumstances didn't match her idealized life plan. God's ways are *always* better than ours, but we must choose to put our dependence on him to receive the blessings he has in store. My prayer is that you will also connect with Lori's victories as the Lord functions as the third strand in your marriage.