

QUIET
TIMES
FOR COUPLES

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JANUARY 1

Be still, and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10).

Stillness.
Quiet.
Silence.

Do you ever hear the sounds of silence? They are there. In their own way they speak loudly. Quietness for some is a way of life. Quietness for others is uncomfortable. It can be a time to reflect, a time to create, a time to recover, a time to grieve, a time to rejoice, or a time to listen to God.

Quiet time for a married couple can create a deep bond of love and closeness. It is a time to share the deepest kind of intimacy possible in our humanity: spiritual intimacy.

No one said that it would be easy or comfortable to be quiet together. Barriers to this time will have to be confronted. Time schedules will have to be juggled. Outside interruptions and intrusions will need to be blocked so they don't control you.

Reflect for a moment. Don't share your answer with your spouse immediately, but sit and think about each question.

What are the times of quiet you value most?

What do you think about when you are quiet?

What feelings do you experience when you are quiet?

How does God speak to you when you are quiet?

The psalmist tells us to be quiet for a very specific reason. When we fill our lives with activities and busyness, it's easy to forget our Creator. There are times in the midst of the most hectic day when we need to close the door, unplug the phone, sit down in a chair, lean back, and close our eyes. The busiest day of your life is the best day to do it; it is the time you need it the most. Take time each day to come together as a couple expecting God to speak to you. Even 60-90 seconds of silence as you sit together can be a time for God to speak to you. Share with each other what He is doing in your life. And share together your answers to the four questions you considered above.

JANUARY 2

For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh (Genesis 2:24, NASB).

L *leave* and *cleave*—different words, significant words.

When you exchanged your wedding vows, these two words became part of your life. But do you understand them? To leave means sever one relationship before establishing another. This does not mean you disregard your parents. Rather it requires that you break your tie to them and assume responsibility for your spouse.

To cleave means to weld together. When a man cleaves to his wife they become one flesh. This term is a beautiful capsule description of the oneness, completeness, and permanence God intended in the marriage relationship. It suggests a unique oneness—a total commitment to intimacy in all of life together, symbolized by the sexual union.

Years ago I heard a choice description of the coming together that is involved in cleaving. If you hold a lump of dark green clay in one hand and a lump of light green clay in the other hand, you can clearly identify the two different shades of color. However, when you mold the two lumps together, you see just one lump of green clay—at first glance. When you inspect the lump closely you see the distinct and separate lines of dark and light green clay.

This is a picture of your marriage relationship. The two of you are blended together so you appear as one, yet you each retain your own distinct identity and personality. But now you have a marriage personality which exists in the two of you.

A Christian marriage, however, involves more than the blending of two people. It also includes a third person—Jesus Christ—who gives meaning, guidance, and direction to the relationship. When He presides in a marriage, then and only then is it a Christian marriage.

Since your wedding, how have you handled leaving your parents? How have you become one flesh, coming together and yet retaining who you are as individuals? Why not talk about it?

JANUARY 3

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18).

God created marriage for companionship. As John Milton observed, "Loneliness was the first thing God's eye named not good." Loneliness and isolation are contradictions to the purpose of God's creative act. God made man to live with others, and the first "other" was woman.

God also created marriage for completeness. The woman was to be "a helper suitable for him." The woman was created to be a complement or counterpart for the man. Woman assists man in making his life (and hers, too) complete. She fills up the empty places. She shares his life with him, draws him out of himself and into a wider area of contact through the involvement they have with one another. The partners in a marriage relationship are actually fulfilling God's purpose of completeness or wholeness in life. They belong together.

Dr. Dwight Small describes the relationship in this way:

When a man and a woman unite in marriage, humanity experiences a restoration to wholeness.

...The glory of the man is the acknowledgment that woman was created for him; the glory of the woman is the acknowledgment that man is incomplete without her. The humility of the woman is the acknowledgment that she was made for man; the humility of the man is the acknowledgment that he is incomplete without her.¹

Marriage brings with it the opportunity for either competition or completion. Completion is God's plan. Have you made the rich discovery of completeness as man and wife?

It takes humility to say to your partner, "Let me share with you the ways in which my life has been made more complete and full by being married to you." Try it. You might just like it!