I Finally Got the Ring

I would like to share with you a little about the most important relationship in my entire life – my relationship with God. No matter where you’ve been, where you are, or where you’re going, your relationship with your Heavenly Father should be the most important of your relationships. This doesn’t apply exclusively to singles! Regardless of whether you’re a career single, you’re dating, you get married one day…this is something you will always carry with you.

First, a little personal background - I’d say I am fairly independent. I pay my own bills. I take care of my own finances. I do my own home repairs (mostly). I’m built like a linebacker and I can shoot fairly straight (“as long as I don’t have to shoot too far”, as Scarlet O’Hara would say) so I can pretty much take care of myself physically. I have a very fulfilling social and family life. I don’t feel like I need to have “a man”, or that I’m missing out on anything because I’m not in a romantic relationship. All that to say, that I’m very content with my life the way it is, and I have no desire to change it. But as a woman, I still have an innate desire for the three things: pursuit, protection, and provision.

WHAT A GIRL WANTS: I want to be pursued - I want a man that’s willing to climb the castle walls, slay the dragons, and all that good stuff. I want a man that is willing to show me that I’m worth the extra effort. Yes, guys, I know that’s frustrating, and there’s a very thin line between “extra effort” and “restraining order”, but’s that just how it is. I also want to be protected, but not just physically. When I’m beaten down by the world, I want someone who will remind me that I’m loved and I’m precious. Finally, I want to be provided for. Not “kept”, but I want someone who is stable and able to put his “wants” aside in order to provide for the needs of the family.

WHAT A GIRL GETS: When I got married, I thought that I would have all of those things, because that’s just what husbands did – they took care of their families. However, it didn’t work out that way. I received none of those things from the man I married, and I finally left the marriage. Only now, it wasn’t just myself that I had to take care of, but three small children as well. I prayed that God would send me someone that would fill those “needs”. At times, I let the pursuit of that earthly relationship take precedent over my relationship with God – ok, to be honest, a LOT of times. I let the desire for an earthly relationship drive my decisions instead of following God. As a result, those relationships failed and went back through that pit of despair. I remember thinking, “God, if you loved me you would send me someone. Why don’t you want me to be happy? Why do you want me to suffer?”

GIRL HAS A REVELATION: As I began to grow closer to the Lord, it dawned on me one day – GOD PROVIDES ALL OF THESE NEEDS! He had pursued me all my life, and never gave up until I accepted His invitation. He had already proven His love for me by giving His life so that I could have a relationship with Him. Romans 5:8 tells us, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” It wasn’t because He liked the way I looked, or cooked, or laughed at His jokes, or how I made Him feel; it wasn’t for *anything that I did*. He loved me because He loved me. As Rick Warren said, “He didn’t need us. But He wanted us. And that is the most amazing thing.”

He is also my protector. I’m constantly flooded with messages that I’m not good enough in one way or another. But when I open the Bible, there are all kinds of messages from God telling me how much I’m loved and cherished, that I’m His daughter, and a princess. His words are my protection from all that negativity. When David went out to meet Goliath, he said, “the battle is the Lord’s.” When the Israelites were trapped between Pharaoh’s army and the Red Sea, Moses said to them, “The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent.” Every time I’ve tried to fight my battles in my own strength, I’ve struggled. It’s only when I’ve turned it over to God that I’ve been victorious. When we begin to understand just how much is outside of our control and that everything is in God’s control, it only makes sense that we place our trust in Him.

Finally, I began to recognize the Lord as my Provider. He has always given me all the things I needed, even some before I ask. When it came down to deciding which bill I was going to skip paying this month, some extra provision would show up from some totally unexpected source. He doesn’t always give me what I *want*, but I’ve come to realize that when He doesn’t give me the things I ask for, it’s because He has something better planned. Several years ago, I was reading Matt 6:33 (a passage that I had read and sung about all my life) and it finally sank in for the first time: “Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things (food, clothing – all necessities of life) will be added to you.” My Father will see to it that I’m provided for – all I need to do is trust in His ability.

AHA! MOMENT: Once I finally realized all of these things, I experienced such an overwhelming sense of freedom: from worry, anxiety, pressure to perform for other people, and the fear of being alone. Knowing that He had a plan for me, He cares for me, He would provide for me, He was protecting me meant that I didn’t have to do this life on my own, and I didn’t have to depend on another flawed human being with the propensity to disappoint me.

GOD GETS PERSONAL WITH US – As hard as it is to fathom, God sees all of us and knows exactly what we’re going through, and He cares enough to get personal with each of us. As St. Augustine said, “God loves each of us as if there were only one of us to love.”

About four years ago, I had a few years of being single-again under my belt, and I had gone through my wild rebellion stage and settled down in my relationship with the Lord. My kids were young and kept me very busy, I was active in my church, I didn’t really have the time or desire to pursue a relationship at that time. One day during my quiet time, I felt God tell me, “You’re going to stay single.” Even though dating and relationships were nowhere on my radar, this was a little deflating. I guess it was in the back of mind that “one day” I would be interested in remarriage again. But I knew that God’s plans were better than my plans and if His plan was for me to be single, then I was going to be happier and more productive as a single person than I would be as a married person. (This is also a testament to God’s timing – if He had told me this a couple of years earlier, I would have said, “Forget it – I don’t want to serve a God that doesn’t want me to be happy!”)

So, I began to think, “Ok, I can accept this, and I’ll be ‘married to God’ as long as He wants me to be. But it would be nice to have a reminder that even though I may never have a husband to share life with, it doesn’t mean that God thinks any less of me.” Just a few days later, I was helping my brother get his house ready to put on the market. I was cleaning out the kitchen cabinets, picked up a plastic bowl of various little stuff and dumped it out. Out fell a simple, two-toned ring. It was a simple band and looked a little like a wedding band, but not really. Immediately I thought of that token that I had asked for. I picked it up and put it on the ring finger of my left hand. It was a perfect fit. No one had any idea of where it came from or who it belonged to, so it has stayed on my finger ever since, and serves as a daily reminder of how precious I am to God. And when people ask me, “Is that a wedding ring?”, I get to tell them my story!

Ps 37:4 says “Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart.” We come to Him with many desires, but once you start to really seek Him, you realize the He *is* your only real desire. Each of us have a God-shaped hole, but many of us spend way too much time trying to fill it with stuff of this world, including worldly relationships, which only leads to disappointment and frustration.

Some of you reading this may be in a valley right now. Some of you feel like you’ve been in the valley for a really long time; you’ve experienced great loss and you’re hurting. But Joel 2:25 promises that the LORD will restore what the locusts have devoured. If you haven’t come to that point of believing that and experiencing the freedom that comes from trusting in God, talk with someone about how to move to that next step.

My hope for you: Eph 3:17-19: “…that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are you trying to fill your God-shaped hole with?
2. We often say that our relationship with God is most important to us. How is that evidenced in our daily lives? What are some things in our lives that contradict that?
3. Fleshing it out: what can you do to seek a deeper relationship with God?
4. How can you increase your faith that God can fulfill all your needs?