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Encouragement for Today

"The Duet"

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Key Verse:

Genesis 2:24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (NKJ)

Devotion:

Chirp, Cheep, Chirp ... his scarlet-red body hopped from branch to branch as he whistled directions to his lady love on the ground below. From my desk at the window, I watched this pair of cardinals assess the suitability of a nearby shrub for their new home.

Nothing brightens up a dull winter landscape like a cardinal's bright red plumage and many-toned songs. Only the male species is so brilliantly colored - the females are tan with a hint of muddy red on her wings. The male bird is so attractive and enjoyable in fact, that seven different states have adopted it as their state bird - more than any other bird species.

Unlike many other species, the female cardinal can sing just as well as her male counterpart. She frequently sings to him, whistles when she needs him to bring food to the nest, and often chimes in with him to perform a duet. Proverbs 18:22: "When a man finds a wife, he finds something good..." (NCV)

Cardinal couples create and share their own special song phrases. The female, however, will often sing a longer and slightly more complex tune than the male. I guess all females are hard-wired with the gift of gab! Proverbs 12:18: "Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing." (NLT)

If you spot a red cardinal this winter, look closely into the nearby branches, bushes or ground brush for his tan-colored wife, for the two are never far apart. They mate for life. Mark 10:8-9: "The two will become one. So they are no longer two, but one. Let no man divide what God has put together." (NLV)

It seems that the female cardinal is quite content to let her hubby garner the respect and attention. Though she's got skills equally as impressive as his, she seems content to allow him to sing the lead, to wear the bright-red-pants in the family, and to care for both her and their young. Ephesians 5:22-25: "You wives will submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife, as Christ is the head of his body, the church ... And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean..." (NLT)

As I watch them at the bird feeder, dining together on sunflower seeds, they take turns offering each other seeds. Their dark beaks touch briefly, as if in a kiss, as they pass nourishment and sustenance from one to another. They are each selfless, fully connected and committed to one another. Galatians 5:13-15: "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other." (NIV)

During the middle Ages, it was commonly believed in France and England that February 14 was the beginning of birds' mating season. In their minds, this only added to the already established notion that the middle of February - Valentine's Day - should be a day for romance. As Valentines' Day approaches I am thankful for the opportunity to watch this scarlet cardinal and his lady love - and for the visual reminder of what a Godly marriage is to look, and sound, like.

My Prayer for Today:

Lord God, You are Love! Increase my heart's capacity to love as You love. Give me eyes for my husband only, and help me to honor, respect and follow him – as You guide us both. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Application Steps:

Look for ways you can honor your husband today (including your husband, Jesus) and focus your attention on blessing him and following him. Plan something extra-special for Valentines' Day and celebrate your love.

Reflection Points:

Is there something your husband has asked you to do that you have not done?

Does your husband feel respected by you?

Is your focus in the marriage on you, or on what you can give him?

Power Verses:

Ephesians 5:22-33: Wives, be subject (be submissive and adapt yourselves) to your own husbands as [a service] to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the church, Himself the Savior of [His] body. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, So that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, That He might present the church to Himself in glorious splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such things [that she might be holy and faultless]. Even so husbands should love their wives as [being in a sense] their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and carefully protects and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members (parts) of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is very great, but I speak concerning [the relation of] Christ and the church. However, let each man of you [without exception] love his wife as [being in a sense] his very own self; and let the wife see that she respects and reverences her husband [that she notices him, regards him, honors him, prefers him, venerates, and esteems him; and that she defers to him, praises him, and loves and admires him exceedingly]. (AMP)

Additional Resources:

Five Love Languages, by Gary Chapman

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_fiveLoveLang.htm

Love Notes on His Pillow, by Linda Gilden

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_hisPillow.htm

Becoming the Woman of His Dreams, by Sharon Jaynes

http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_becomingTheWom.htm