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Encouragement for Today

“To Have and to Hold from This Day Forward”

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Key Verse:

John 14:3, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” (NIV)

Devotion:

2005 was a year of weddings. It seems all the cousins, nieces, and young friends came of age at the same time. Having found the love of their lives, each couple set about to plan a wedding that would celebrate the beginning of a lifetime together. Even my immediate family participated in nuptial plans.

In late March, my son announced his desire to marry. This truly didn't come as a surprise to me or his dad because Aaron had spotted this pretty little girl in the halls of his elementary school in the fifth grade! He never lost interest. The two shared their school days for seven and a half years before she accepted a date to dinner. Thus began their journey.

After attending college and experiencing several separations – family moves, separate universities for a season, study abroad, illness – my son came to the conclusion they could no longer stand to be apart. Once again it seemed each was destined to go a separate way – she to medical school and he to law school. The thought of a three to four year parting was killing them and so Aaron came up with a plan. He approached his dad, asking for advice. Together they decided that Aaron would have to make a sacrifice in order to marry Kara. It was then that he realized he would have to forego his graduate school education for a few years. He felt that being with Kara was worth the wait.

That decision made, Aaron's father encouraged him to go get his bride. In no time Aaron approached his future father-in-law and asked permission to marry his daughter. The blessing given, Aaron proposed.

Suddenly every day seemed to be filled with the joy of future wedding bells. Certainly the excitement of planning a celebration began to consume all involved. While she chose flowers and sent invitations, he secured an apartment and found work. More importantly, the two who prepared for marriage were thrilled to finally feel secure in their future – they would be together regardless of their circumstances.

Looking on as engagement plans unfolded, planning a wedding, and participating in marriage vows gave me a new perspective on life, especially in light of the many catastrophes experienced over the past 12 months.

I know I am not alone when I wonder, “We are living in an era of never-before-experienced catastrophes. What will be next?” Regularly I get questions like, “Are we approaching the end of time?” or “How can we prepare for the future?” I have friends who have purchased ‘catastrophe ready’ backpacks – one for each family member. An acquaintance lives in constant fear. She regularly scans the daily paper and the Internet, searching for positive reports in hopes of finding news predicting peace and prosperity instead of terror and tribulation.

Like Aaron and Kara, we may be unsure about tomorrow, especially if we feel alone. We may regularly experience fear. Maybe our lives are consumed with a deep desire for promises of security, wishing there were absolutes concerning uncertain circumstances. One thing is sure: there is a Bridegroom whose heart is broken when His bride is separated from Him. This Groom has spoken to the Father. Together they agreed that a sacrifice is necessary for Jesus to spend

eternity with His beloved. Jesus accepted the fact that He would give up His life, so we could live fulfilled lives in communion with Him. He came to earth, called us to become His pure bride, and promised to take us to His house to live with Him in eternity.

The weddings I attended last year overflowed with loveliness, romance, and true love. Each celebration became more and more meaningful as I reflected on the fact that, although there is great joy when two who love each other come together and commit their lives to one another, nothing takes the place of Christ's devotion to us.

Our fears and insecurities concerning the future can be resolved. Christ stands at the door and knocks, daily proposing. By saying, "yes" to Him, we step into a relationship that will last forever. If you doubt that your future is full of hope remember Jesus' presence in your life brings peace. His salvation gives comfort. His promises supply joy.

My Prayer for Today:

Father in Heaven, Sometimes I am afraid at what the future holds. I think that I am alone, I wish for someone to share my life, I wonder if I am an overcomer or a loser. Your Word tells me that You will take care of me and I don't ever have to be alone. Father, help me to believe in Jesus' presence in my life so I won't have to experience loneliness and fear. I ask these things in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Application Steps:

Whenever you feel yourself longing for stability, fearful of the future or all alone in your world, reach out to Jesus in prayer and through His Word. Accept His proposal. No one on earth can provide for you the way He is able.

Reflection Points:

Have I developed a regular "date" with the Lord to tell Him He is all I long for in life?

Do I live my life as an expectant bride, waiting for her groom to arrive and take her away to enjoy a lifetime of purpose and joy?

What steps can I take to live a life focused on God's favor rather than on grief and fear?

Power Verses:

Mark 5:36, "Jesus said ...'Do not fear, only believe.'" (ESV)

Matthew 22:2, "The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a king who prepared a great wedding feast for his son." (NLT)

Matthew 25:10, "And... the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast..." (NASB)

Revelation 3:20, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." (NIV)

Revelation 19:7, "Let us be full of joy and be glad. Let us honor Him, for the time has come for the wedding supper of the Lamb. His bride has made herself ready." (NLV)

Additional Resources:

Becoming a Woman Who Listens to God, by Sharon Jaynes

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

What Happens when Women Walk in Faith, by Lysa TerKeurst

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

Do You Know Him?

<http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/knowHim.htm>