

All Settled? By Laura Shaw

Try to remember a time when you were so comfortable that you drifted off into a half-sleep. This happened to me often in church as a kid. It was the one place where I felt so at ease and warm inside that sometimes I would almost fall asleep. If it hadn't been for the fear that people would judge me for dozing off all the way, I most certainly would have! It was a horrible feeling being in the middle of awake and asleep, though,... especially when the pipe organ chimed at the end of the service, and I would get a jolted tingle from head to toe as I tried to look awake to all those around me.

God has been so good to sound the pipe organ as I've needed it throughout my life—not just the ones in church, but also those in my spiritual life. Recently, the Lord chimed into my head the desire to ponder my role as a wife. I have a good marriage, but is it all it could be? I wonder if I've become content with patterns or attitudes that I shouldn't be? In many ways, I contribute a great deal. In other ways, I've become too comfortable and nodded off. Have you who are married reflected upon this lately?

We all know the cliché about “settling down and getting married.” Well, what happens if you settle down to get married and then somewhere down the road, you just settle?!? Let me explain. I've recorded some of the things I've either said to myself or have heard others in marriage say over the past year or so (bear in mind these are usually from people who have been married for 10 or more years):

“I want us to be closer, but it's just so much work!”

“We don't have anything in common anymore.”

“He says I've 'let myself go.'”

“We stopped trying to pray or read the Bible together, because we end up arguing.”

“I pray for him, but nothing ever changes.”

“I'm so tired of hearing him complain about his work. Can't he just be happy?”

“I can't ever do anything right in his eyes, so I've just quit trying.”

“He has his TV in the den and I have mine in the bedroom....that way, we both watch what we want to watch.”

“He wants more of me than I have to give. I'm tired after being with the kids all day.”

“I like working because I get praise there. That's more than I can say for home.”

“He can just forget about having sex more than once a week. That's enough as it is.”

Ok, I'm stopping, just in case you're getting uncomfortable. I could probably fill up an entire page with comments just like these. Don't get me wrong; I'm not talking about major problems in marriage, just the normal everyday stuff. Unfortunately, if you settle in the small areas every single day, the potential is greater for large issues later.

Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

My paraphrase for this subject: “He gave us marriage that we could have one life together, and have it to the full.”

I want to experience His fullness and abundance in my marriage, as much as it is up to me, don't you? That means we need to pray and then respond as He leads us...He will do the rest. For me, that may mean watching a motorcycle race on TV instead of Law and Order. It may mean caring enough about my husband to truly listen to him, even if I'm I've used up all my energy for the day. It may mean getting out of my stretchy shorts before he comes home so that I can look beautiful for him. For you, it might mean returning gentle words instead of harsh ones...or maybe trading Nagatha's hat in for Carissa's! ☺ Have you thought about the things that matter to your spouse lately? Do you pray for him daily? No matter the issues, we all could use this piece of advice from Philippians 2:1-5 to help us stay awake in our relationships:

“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:”

Somehow these verses are easier live out with our friends or co-workers, but God desires our marriages to honor Him, “*shining like stars in the universe as we hold out the word of life.*” So, dear married friends, as much as it is up to us, let's pray together that the Lord would settle us on the firm foundation of His plan for our part in a God-honoring union—not for the norm in this “crooked and depraved generation.” Stay in the Word, and it will guide you how to live and love less selfishly, more deeply, less casually and more fully...may we never settle for less!