



Prayers for new Brides

Putting on God's Armor After the Wedding Dress

❧ Jennifer O. White ❧

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A Note to the Reader

Dear Bride,

I am not writing this book because I have life with God and marriage all figured out. I am writing to you because as a wife, I have learned how much I need God.

Forty brief chapters await you. Each chapter is packed with teaching, life experiences, prayer prompts, and Scripture references. Hang on to it and refer to it as your marriage enters new stages and challenges.

If you love to conquer a book, then start at the beginning and read straight through. Then go back to the beginning and tackle the “A Wife’s Call to Action” assignments at your own pace. If you savor Bible studies like a five-course meal, then divide these 40 chapters into 8 weeks. Five chapters a week will give you plenty of time to digest the concepts, dig into the Scriptures and journal your thoughts.

I’ve read just a few chapters of a book and experienced real life transformation. If you are just unsure about tackling this whole book, scan the table of contents for a chapter that speaks to your situation. Start there. Don’t get wrapped up in doing it “right.” God can use one phrase to minister to your heart.

As you read, you may find yourself wondering, “What about my husband and his responsibility?” He has plenty. But this book is focused on you and yours.

It is never too late to arm your marriage with prayer. While this book is written to a new bride, I believe every bride will find it helpful. As I reread the words of this book, I find God is reminding me and encouraging me.

My words to you assume you and your husband have a relationship with Jesus Christ. If that is not the case, I invite you to keep reading.

God is patient, gentle, and kind. He is a gentleman who never forces Himself into anyone's life. His hand is extended to you and your husband through His Word. Let this book, which is filled with His Word, give you a fresh glimpse of who He is and what He can do in your hearts and in your life together.

Your friend,
Jennifer O. White

A decorative graphic at the top of the page features a central stylized flower with five petals and three leaves, set within a circular frame. This frame is surrounded by intricate, symmetrical scrollwork and floral patterns in a light gray color.

Part I

A Call to Battle

Introduction

You didn't dog-ear a page in the bride magazine featuring a warrior bride holding a shield in one hand with a sword in the other, did you? Admit it, the only armor you considered buying for your big day contained spandex, padding, and underwire.

Why would you need to wear armor now?

The fight to become someone's bride is finally over. It's all romantic date nights and magnificent dreams come true from here on out — right? And what is so attractive about wearing armor “over” the wedding dress? Nobody you know is pinning that picture on Pinterest!

Maybe you do have marriage all figured out. You've counted the cost of serving one man for the rest of your life and said, “I'm a great giver. I will always want to put him first and submit to him in the scariest of days. That helpmate thing . . . I've got that. On his worst day, he will be the one I will want to stand next to.” You know there will be tough times, but they could NEVER compare to how

much you want to be with him every single day! And he loves you unconditionally . . . right?

I don't want to bust your happily-ever-after bubble. But, here's the truth. Your earthly marriage will NEVER be perfect. There will always be two imperfect humans in your holy union. Say it with me, "I am not perfect and I do not have what it takes to be a perfect wife." And this guy you married — guaranteed to miss the mark as well. You said "I do" as two sinful (sin-filled) individuals who are on a quest to work out the oneness of marriage. As hard as you both try to love each other completely, you will struggle a bit. Why? Because until death parts the two of you, the battle between good and evil will follow your relationship. There is a war, and you, my friend, are in it.

The Bible promises that God's goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life (Psalm 23:6). You are never without the benefit of God's wild pursuit to guard, guide, and protect you. He is an experienced, victorious warrior and He is fighting for you.

He warns us that Satan is prowling the earth looking for opportunities to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:10). Don't kid yourself. Satan is very aware of you and your marriage. Marriage is one of his favorite targets. The divorce rate is evidence of that. Take two minutes and count the divorces in your family, your neighborhood, and in your church community. Those couples all said "I DO" with intentions to live happily ever after — just like you.

You have to fight to stay married. And I don't mean fight each other. You are suiting up to fight your own selfish thoughts, expectations, and every social norm that does not honor God and His ways. Discouragement will certainly be knocking at your door. The temptation to give up when things are really hard will knock, and well-meaning people will be there to help you open that door.

This fight is God's fight. He is able to successfully defend you, your husband, and your marriage. But he won't force you to let Him lead the way. It's your choice to surrender to God's authority in your marriage.

Thick, invisible walls in my heart kept me from embracing a life and marriage surrendered to God. Layers of fear, doubt, and self-protection kept me running my own life and taking advice from

people who had not experienced God's love and protective nature. All the while, He was standing there waiting for me to see Him loving me, ready to help me, if I would only ask.

My first marriage ended. I pulled the plug because I had not seen God. I had heard about Him my entire life. I talked about Him, taught lessons in Sunday school, lead the Fellowship of Christian Students, and joyfully served Him as a preacher's wife. But I had not experienced the reality of Him. I did not know God could save my sacred union to Michael. I did not know Jesus as the Savior of marriages.

Within a few years of my second marriage, I found myself crying out to God with a 911 plea for help. And God came to my rescue. Through Bible study and prayer, He revealed Himself to me, nurtured my wounded heart, and helped me to see more of my life from His point of view. Over time, He has convinced me of His faithful love and given me the desire to stay under His leadership. The "help me, Jesus" cries of my heart resulted in extraordinary miracles in my life and greatly affected my now-thriving marriage to David.

I'm a bit of a mother hen. I want to protect you. I want you to be prepared for the war against your marriage. I want you to begin your marriage knowing that God is your "go-to" guru for enjoying your long life together. I want you to see how marriage relates to the gospel of Jesus. I want to encourage you to let Jesus be your model for loving your husband.

This book is what I would share with you if we could sit together for a few hours and talk about marriage. I've packed it with how I've learned to let God lead me as David's wife. There are prayer prompts to guide you in surrendering your way for His ways. And I'm giving you tactical missions, *A Wife's Call to Action*, to help you fortify and act on your faith in God.

Your marriage journey can be a light to the world, a city on a hill where people see God. I would love to hear from you and learn from your experiences too. Join me at prayersfornewbrides.com.

But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one (2 Thessalonians 3:3).



Marriage:
A Battle Worth Fighting

Marriage is so much like salvation and our relationship with Christ that Paul says you can't understand marriage without looking at the gospel.¹

— Timothy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage:
Facing the Complexities of Commitment with
the Wisdom of God*





The Significance of Your Marriage

The act of marriage is God's idea. He planned this beautiful union between Adam and Eve and brought it to life. God, your Creator, did not waiver as He spoke life into their bodies and into their holy "ever after" relationship. His Word paints the true picture of marriage and shows us how significant married love truly is.

God designed marriage to reveal His relationship to the Church. With deep and lasting love, God has promised to remain faithful to His people (you and me). His kindness and mercy for His Bride is constantly renewed despite the many faults of every Christ follower. Can you see, in His unconditional love, a neon sign pointing to a marriage that endures for better or worse?

Like the gospel of Jesus Christ, the relationship between husband and wife is simple and yet enormously important. Your sacred union should reflect the faithful, serving love of Jesus toward His Church. The Body of Christ represents the unity created between Jesus and the redeemed. Jesus' giving, others first, and love "no matter what" attitude is required to fulfill the covenant between man and wife.

Being married is beautiful. The idea of two people becoming one is full of mystery and intrigue. It involves more than this book could begin to describe. And you get to explore it from now until forever.

You've stepped into a drama, a comedy, and a thriller that will transform you and your beloved into one entity. Life together is unpredictable. It will offer you plenty of suspense. There will be beautiful scenes, romantic moments, pandemonium, and edge-of-your-seat situations. All of these are best viewed through the lens of God's manual for living and loving. Otherwise, they will cause a drift that will lead to worshiping someone or something other than God.

Adam and Eve found themselves worshiping their own desires, and the consequences were huge! You've been exposed to people who do not fully embrace God's plan for marriage. In the media and in your community, you've witnessed the attack on marriage. Imperfect people sometimes choose to solve problems with adultery, abuse, addictions, pornography, same-sex relationships, and divorce. Our self-obsessed culture struggles to choose the selfless ways of God's Son.

The evil influence has been subtle, consistent, and pervasive. The end game is to have you desire the opposite of what God calls beautiful. How will you and your husband hold fast to God's plan for a beautiful and lasting marriage? Do you believe it's possible to remain faithfully married and enjoy life together as God intended? Today, I believe it wholeheartedly. But I have fought hard to believe God over the other influences in my life. I've passionately and desperately pursued God's will over my own by praying His Word back to Him.

My heart's desire is for you to proactively wrestle your will to the ground and allow God's will to be the strength of your marriage. Knowing Him and embracing His plan are the epic ingredients to accomplishing this necessary duty. It took me several years into my second marriage and a significant crisis to become someone who yields to God instead of being the captain of my own ship. Today, I am celebrating that you have the opportunity to be far more prepared.



God, I celebrate that You are my creator and the author of marriage. I'm so grateful that You've explained Your plan for marriage throughout the Bible (Genesis 2:22–24).

Today, I confess that I have much more to learn about it. I want to be a student of marriage as You created it. I invite your Holy Spirit to teach me the truth and to convict me of my vain notions regarding life as _____'s wife (Psalm 119:105; John 14:26; John 16:8).

I am determined to honor marriage and You, Lord. Help me (Hebrews 13:4).

In Jesus, I pray.

Amen

~ A Wife's Call to Action ~

Read over the origin and purpose of marriage in Genesis:

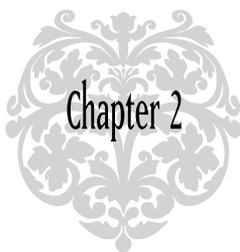
And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper for him. . . . But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up the place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh (Genesis 2:18–24).

Process that truth with the following questions and comments.

As a wife, what need(s) do you fulfill for your husband?

Take a bold step in preparing to be led by God in your marriage. Grab your husband's hand and pray this prayer or your version of it.

Lord, help me to meet _____'s needs. You have declared that we are one flesh. Help me to express the beauty and glory of that one-flesh relationship with _____.



You Are a Radiant and Beautiful Bride

Your beauty is a big deal. We all think about it, right? At 45 years old, I am still using concealer to cover up blemishes on my face. While I had hoped for perfect skin, I still face the reality of my imperfect skin. What do you see when you look in the mirror? Do you focus on the imperfections you see? It's hard not to, isn't it? Our minds tend to feast on what we can see. Thankfully, God sees us very differently.

For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

You are a living in a temporary physical body in an unending spiritual reality. God has given you an earthly beauty and Jesus has secured your spiritual beauty.

Accepting Jesus means you died to sin and became new and one with Him. You are one with the very perfect One. Jesus became a spiritual concealer of your emotional, physical, and spiritual blemishes. You now share His radiance and His inheritance. God looks

at you and sees Jesus. All the goodness of Him covers over the best you can do and the worst you will do. In unity with Jesus, you are absolutely radiant.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:25–27).

When you married, you became one with your spouse. You left a life of dependence on your parents. You left a life of independence. You chose a life united with this man until God calls one of you home to heaven. You are no longer your own.

Did you bristle when you read that last line? Before you dig your heels in on this one, give me a second to explain. Unity in marriage is very different than the dependence of a child to a parent. The union of your marriage is a choice to comingle your life goals and choices to include the needs of your spouse. The choice to think of his needs alongside of yours is a beauty treatment for the married soul.

Just as Christ chooses to unite Himself to the church, you have chosen to unite yourself to your spouse. Your unity with Christ will empower your own selfless love — a critical key to loving your husband. As His love radiates through you, you will SHINE! You are the beautiful bride you've hoped to be.

You are enabled by Jesus' Spirit living in you to love him for better or worse, rich or poor, in sickness or in health — the way Jesus has loved you. Because of Jesus, you do not have to earn God's love. Therefore, your husband does not ever have to earn your love. You have chosen to love him as he is. The gift of your steady stream of faithfulness and kindness toward your husband will add to your beauty in ways that you have never imagined.

You may be overwhelmed to think of how much Christ loved you regardless of your faults. You might be nervous, thinking,

“There is no way I’m going to be able to love my husband if he betrays me or hurts me like I’ve done in my relationship with God.”

Do not worry, dear friend. Christ in you means that His power, love, and sound mind have become yours (2 Timothy 1:7). His Spirit lives in you, His radiating beautiful bride, to love your husband. Depend on the One who is love to use your mind, your heart, and your body to love your chosen life mate the way he desires to be loved.

Ahh, and His Spirit is in your husband to love you the way you desire to be loved. Imagine the One who created you and knows you from head to toe, inspiring your husband to love you. God knows your needs better than you do. He will supply your needs out of His enormous love and wealth, and He uses the Holy Spirit of Jesus to do so (Philippians 4:19). God is more committed to you, His radiant bride, than you ever dreamed.



Oh, God, I am trying to absorb this reality of how You see me. I long to see myself the way You do, the radiant bride of Christ (Isaiah 6; 2 Corinthians 11:2).

You know how I think of myself. I surrender it all. Let Your truth guide my thoughts, emotions, and actions. I want my spiritual reality to determine my physical world and especially my marriage (Hebrews 4:13; Ephesians 1:3, 2:22).

I am delighted to be the righteousness of Christ. I want to treat my husband, _____, with the same respect. Help me, Lord (2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 5:33).

In Jesus, I pray.

Amen

❧ A Wife's Call to Action ❧

Choose to Wear White

Wedding etiquette suggests that only a virgin wear a white wedding dress. Jesus has ensured your purity and your white wedding wardrobe.

He has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness (Isaiah
61:10).

With a pencil, write three of your big mistakes next to your name on a piece of paper. Thank God for sending Jesus to cover them.

Now erase those mistakes and look at yourself in the mirror and say, "God sees me without those mistakes. Thank You, Jesus!"