

# CHAPTER 1

## *Back To Basics*

*“The LORD will accomplish what concerns me; Your lovingkindness, O LORD, is everlasting; Do not forsake the works of Your hands” (Psalm 138:8 NASU).*

**The Illusion:** I’m in control of my life.

### Day One:

- The motivation behind dating a lot of people or living in fear that you won’t find the “right person” is the incorrect assumption that you’re in control of your own destiny. How do you feel about being in charge of your future?

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Have you experienced the disappointment and hurt of discovering someone wasn’t the person he or she seemed to be? The superficiality of a typical dating relationship is an unreliable environment for discovering who someone really is. The process of going out with numerous people, one at a time, though entertaining, is a time when people commonly camouflage a variety of flaws.

- How will you know if you really like another person if you never see the real person?

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In a relationship, even when you think you know each other, each of you is probably holding back part of who you are. That’s not necessarily bad. Until you know someone is the right person to marry, you should avoid revealing your most intimate thoughts, feelings, hopes and dreams. (This concept will be explored in depth in chapter two, in a discussion of *emotional prostitution*.) God knows what someone will be like next month, in ten years, and throughout life. You are safe when you entrust your future to Him but it’s easy to forget that! Although it often *feels* right to trust yourself, feelings are unreliable indicators of reality. Events, people, circumstances, health and other factors can influence your emotional status. God alone never changes.

- Think about **Malachi 3:6**. What difference does that make in your life to hear God say: “*I the LORD do not change*”?

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While God wants to lovingly protect and care for you, Satan is determined to destroy you. He “masquerades as an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14) in his continual attempts to convince you the world can meet your needs. If you buy his lie, he will dupe you until you even believe you’re in control of how that happens.

When you're not in a relationship, the temptation is to rush to get into one so that you can be "fulfilled," instead of alone. Satan is the master of the quick fix. Well-meaning friends can unintentionally add to your feelings of loneliness with a few simple words like, "Oh, it must be so hard for you! How do you cope with still being single?" If you're relying on yourself or others to meet your needs, you're going to be susceptible to ongoing deception and emotional upheaval.

- How do God's promises in **Matthew 28:20b** and **John 10:10** portray His desire to meet your needs?

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- God is not a cosmic killjoy! He doesn't lead you to do anything unless it's for your ultimate good. After reading **Philippians 4:13**, describe how you can wait for God's best instead of being duped by the world's illusions.

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Consider **Hebrews 13:5**: *"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'"*

- What two things are you instructed to do in this passage?

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- What is God's promise for you?

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Journal: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13: 8). Knowing God is with you and that He never changes, what outlook do you have for your future?

**Day Two:**

**Reality Check:** God, your Creator, has a perfect design for your life.

**“In the beginning God created...”** (Genesis 1:1). Read the first two chapters of Genesis.

Since Scripture is the best commentary on Scripture, read Genesis 1 again. Ask God to show you how His work of creation can impact your relationship choices.

- Write your thoughts below.

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*“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters”* (Genesis 1:1-2). It matters that you know God made the earth from nothing. It gives you an idea not only of how big God is but also of what He is able to do for you. He made you, and He cares about every area of your life!

When there were no people, God made them. *“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground”* (Genesis 1:26-28).

When God gave Adam the assignment of naming all of the animals, He knew Adam would notice that all other creatures came in twos. After making Adam aware of his need for companionship, God miraculously fashioned Eve from his rib. When God the Creator established marriage, He made it clear it was not good for man to be alone.

- How did God meet Adam’s need?

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- Was his problem any bigger than anything you face? \_\_\_

- Will you trust God to meet your needs for companionship? \_\_\_\_\_ Why or why not?

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Your life has significance; your life has purpose. Just as Adam and Eve were commanded to rule



### Day Three:

With the complexities of life today, finding the “right” man or woman seems about as feasible as it was for Adam to find a wife before his ribectomy. Have you experienced the ache of wondering if you’ll ever meet the right person?



Not long ago, Sandy found herself in that position. She began dating in junior high. During the following fifteen years, she was in and out of many relationships. At least ten of them lasted six or more months and seemed serious. Even when she was in her late twenties, she got excited each time she met someone who “had potential,” only to be disappointed later. Well-meaning friends and relatives tried to set her up with every eligible Christian bachelor they knew. The “find a mate for Sandy” campaign really started to heat up after she passed her thirtieth birthday.

Many times, Sandy cried out to the Lord, expressing the incredible emotional pain she had experienced. Eventually she felt like she couldn’t go on with the continual disappointments and heartache of broken relationships. Sadness mingled with a growing contentment at the prospect of never marrying. She grew increasingly determined to be steered by God’s all-knowing hand. Not surprisingly, her heart’s door inched more and more closed to the possibility of yet another relationship. When she met Bentley, starting over again had lost its appeal.

When Bentley and Sandy met, he had been in Colorado almost a year. Bentley had moved to Denver to enroll in seminary after having completed medical school and a family practice residency on the East Coast. Sandy had returned to Colorado after living in another country for several years. Bentley’s normally reserved Aunt Edith began telling him about a “young lady you might want to meet.” Since Bentley had never been “set up” before, he welcomed the chance to meet someone who came so highly recommended.

Sandy’s response was considerably less enthusiastic. She resisted the meeting as long as possible and only agreed to meet Bentley out of consideration for the dear elderly couple. Her attitude no doubt clouded her first impression. “Nice guy, outgoing, but that’s about it,” she mused after meeting him. After all, she was already in the midst of trying to give yet another relationship a try.

Bentley pondered his first meeting as well. In fact, he used the seventy-mile trip back to Denver to formulate a letter to Sandy that he wrote as soon as he got home. At 1:30 in the morning he sealed the envelope containing *his* initial impression:

*...The highly complimentary description [I’d heard] of you was an understatement.... Your contagious laugh and outer beauty are only eclipsed by a deep spiritual life and captivating personality that I fully suspect is a ...treasure worth far more than rubies....*

While making it clear that he hoped to get to know her better, he concluded his letter saying he most wanted *not my will but Thine be done...and in His perfect time.*

Bentley’s resolution to wait for God’s perfect time was tested when Sandy didn’t respond to his letter for over a month. After so many dating relationships, this was not the first romantic letter she had ever received (though few had been as eloquent!). Even when they did see each other again, Sandy made it clear that she thought of him as only a friend. As their friendship deepened, she found herself confused emotionally and resolved to quit seeing Bentley altogether. Bentley came to the identical conclusion and took the initiative to suggest that they sever communication when “just

being friends” no longer seemed possible. Both wanted God’s confirmation before deepening the friendship that had begun. Sandy also needed to know what to do about the other relationship that remained in limbo.

During the next month, Bentley and Sandy didn’t talk at all, but God led both of them very specifically. Sandy broke off the other relationship. Independently, Bentley and Sandy realized they wanted to resume their friendship. Then, their relationship quickly progressed! Sandy’s voice rings with excitement when she describes what happened next, “This was not just another dating relationship. Sometimes we would do something alone, like a walk in the park or a drive around town, but we always did things in the context of my family. In fact, my family knew he was the right man for me before I did!” Developing their relationship in the context of friendship and family set Sandy free from the emotional trauma of previous relationships with other men. After a visit to Bentley’s family in Maryland, they began discussing engagement.

Although they first met at the end of April, were engaged on December 7 and were married March 18, Bentley and Sandy aren’t impulsive people. Because both of them were seeking God, waiting on His provision and willing to yield to His will, they could observe His plan for their lives unfolding. Others also saw God at work in their situation and told them God’s hand and His timing were clearly on display in their relationship.

Bentley and Sandy don’t claim to be a modern-day Adam and Eve, but their relationship does demonstrate God’s work of creation. God’s supernatural intervention proved itself in down-to-earth ways in the lives of two people who strive to live out the words of the Lord Jesus, “Not my will but Thine be done.”



Have you ever wondered, “Who am I and why would God care about me?” If you focus on how God works in others’ lives instead of trusting Him to accomplish His perfect will for your life, you’ll become angry or discouraged. It’s emotionally and spiritually dangerous to adapt the timeline or design of others’ relationships as a model for your own. God has an original plan for your life.

Journal: How you will follow the advice of **Proverbs 3: 5-6**.

After reviewing chapters one and two in Genesis, answer the following questions:

- **Genesis 1:26-27** In whose image did God create man (male and female)?

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- **Genesis 1:28** After God blessed Adam and Eve, what did He command them to do?

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- **Genesis 1:29** How does God show His concern for their physical needs?

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- **Genesis 2:7** How did God’s creation of man differ from that of the rest of His creation?

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- **Genesis 2:8-9** Where did God place man after He formed him?

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- When was this garden planted?

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- What kinds of things did God place in the garden?

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- **Genesis 2:15** What job (responsibility) did man have in the garden?

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- **Genesis 2:16-17** What limitations were placed on man?

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- **Genesis 2:18** Whose idea was it for Adam to have a wife? \_\_\_\_\_

- **Genesis 2:19-20** How did God help Adam see his need for a wife?

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- **Genesis 2:21-22** How did God’s creation of Eve differ from the creation of Adam?

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- **Genesis 2:23** When he saw Eve, what was Adam’s response?

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- **Genesis 2:24-25** Whose idea was marriage and sex? \_\_\_\_\_

- Did Adam do anything to find Eve? How did they know they were right for each other?

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## Day Four:

Are you experiencing purity and simplicity in your interactions with the opposite sex?

In Psalm 119:9, the psalmist asks a similar question: *“How can a young man keep his way pure?”* In the Hebrew language, the word for young man means a boy from the age of infancy to adolescence (and, by implication, a girl of similar age).

The psalmist answers his own question: *“By living according to your word.”* The literal meaning of the Hebrew word translated as “living” is “taking heed,” or “to hedge about” (as with thorns). In other words, “living” means to guard or to protect. Just as a computer must be continually scanned for viruses, your mind needs to be constantly checked and safeguarded with God’s Word.

- According to **Psalm 119:9** and **Psalm 39:1**, how can you experience purity?

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Relationships today are seldom either pure or simple. Our culture has complicated and distorted God’s design, basing intimacy on outward appearance and circumstances instead of inner values and truth. Using our own or others’ bodies and personalities for selfish gratification cannot bring lasting fulfillment. We need to return to God’s design; we need to experience His forgiveness, renewal and purity.

### Definition of Terms

**Pure:** free from moral fault or guilt: innocent, moved only by the purest feelings, marked by chastity: (a pure relationship between the sexes).

**Simple:** free from guile: INNOCENT; free from vanity or conceit: MODEST, UNASSUMING.

Merriam-Webster’s Electronic Unabridged Dictionary ©2000

*Free* is the first word in both definitions above. Living a pure life sets you free to be the person God created you to be! *“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery”* (Galatians 5:1, NAS). If you’ve made choices that have enslaved you, there is hope. God wants to restore you to a life of joy and freedom.

Read the following Scripture passages, and then respond to the questions below:

*“HAVE MERCY upon me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to the multitude of Your tender mercy and loving-kindness blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly [and repeatedly] from my iniquity and guilt and cleanse me and make me wholly pure from my sin! For I am conscious of my transgressions and I acknowledge them; my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done that which is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified in Your sentence and faultless in Your judgment. [Rom 3:4.] Behold, I was brought forth in [a state of] iniquity; my mother was sinful who conceived me [and I too am sinful]. [John 3:6; Rom 5:12; Eph 2:3.] Behold, You desire truth in the inner being; make me therefore to know wisdom in my inmost heart”* (Psalm 51:1-6 Amplified).

*“Search me [thoroughly], O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there is any wicked or hurtful way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”* (Psalm 139:23-24 Amplified).

- Ask God to show you areas in your life He wants to change. Ask Him to forgive and cleanse you.
- Expect God to show you His will; ask Him to lead you in His way.

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:6, 7).

- How can you stop feeling anxious, worried or stressed?

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- Are there any areas of your life that don't need prayer?

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- God promises to \_\_\_\_\_ your heart and mind with \_\_\_\_\_ if you will simply \_\_\_\_\_ .

*“If we [freely] admit that we have sinned and confess our sins, He is faithful and just (true to His own nature and promises) and will forgive our sins [dismiss our lawlessness] and [continuously] cleanse us from all unrighteousness [everything not in conformity to His will in purpose, thought, and action]”* (1 John 1:9 Amplified).

- What are we to do when we sin?

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- What does God promise to do for you if you will trust Him?

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Read **Psalm 119:10-16**.

- How can memorizing and meditating on Scripture make a difference in your life?

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Journal: Write out a prayer praising God for His promises, protection and love.

**Day Five:**

**Living It:** I will allow God to meet my needs.

*“...set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).*

- Is your approach to relationships setting an example for fellow believers? Explain.

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- Does the way you conduct your relationships with others reflect God’s involvement in your life?

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- How will you trust God to provide for your needs—especially when you’re lonely?

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- How will your life be different when you realize that God is in control?

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- What actions will change?

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- Which actions will stay the same?

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- How will knowing God is involved in your life affect your prayers, worries and friendships?

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- What does the Genesis 1 account of creation reveal about God's character?

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- Why do you think Christians struggle with believing that God will meet their needs?

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- List any areas of your life in which you find it difficult to trust God. Next to each, note a Scripture reference that teaches you how to trust Him.

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According to Psalm 139, God intimately knows you, including your hopes, dreams, successes, and failures.

After considering God's unconditional love, will you prayerfully commit your life and future to Him? \_\_\_\_\_

*Lord, I realize You know me even better than I know myself. I trust You and know You love me and care about what happens to me. Help me rest in You, knowing You will accomplish Your perfect plan in and through my life. I yield myself to You. Please show me Your will in all things, including my relationships. Because You sent Your Son to die for me, I am confident that You will daily teach me how to live.*

Date \_\_\_\_\_