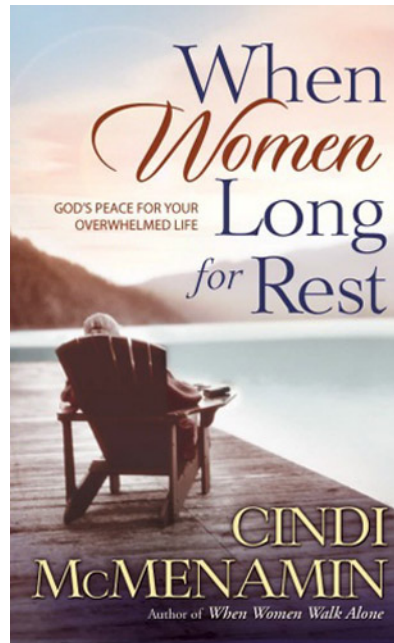


# *Choosing to Live a Simpler Life*

IT'S ALL ABOUT COLLECTING "THE RIGHT STUFF"

BY CINDI MCMENAMIN



I'm a collecting addict. I should say, a recovering collecting addict. For as long as I can remember, I've collected stuff. At age five, it was Raggedy Ann dolls. Then it was cat figurines. By the time I was 10 or 12, I was collecting just about anything I came across: rocks, stamps, marbles, postcards. Believe it or not, I even collected bubble-gum wrapper comics!

Today I've limited my collecting to Cinderellas. Dolls, ornaments, figurines, and clocks take up every bit of space in my seven-foot-high, five-shelf curio cabinet. And they make me feel good. They remind me that I married a prince – that my dreams and wishes have come true. And since most of them have been gifts, they remind me of people who love me.

But lately, my collection has become a bit of an inconvenience – and a bit convicting.

My collection is inconvenient because, every few weeks, I have to dust each piece. Plus, the more Cinderellas I acquire, the less room I have to display them; they begin creeping into other parts of my house.

There's a bigger problem, though: It's the anxiety my collection is producing.

A few months ago, I awoke from an earthquake jolt. I jumped out of bed and ran to my curio cabinet. With feet apart and both hands out in front of me, I prepared to brace my body against the 250-pound shelf to keep it from falling over should the shaking increase. As the house stilled, I remembered my six-year-old daughter, who was sleeping soundly near a shelf that could have toppled onto her! And my husband, who was still dreaming beneath a large picture frame that now hung crooked. And there I was protecting Cinderella! My concern for my collection had outweighed my concern for my own family. My "treasure" had gotten a little out of hand.

Jesus once said that my heart would be where my treasure is (Matt. 6:21). I thought of how good it would feel not to worry that an earthquake – or fire or robbery – would destroy my “treasures.”

When my husband and I first married, we had few possessions of value. And you know what? We didn't worry about a thing when we were vacationing or away from home all day. If someone were to break into our one-bedroom apartment (and we lived in an area where it happened quite often), we wouldn't lose much. There was literally nothing worth taking. Some old furniture. A few basic appliances. Nothing costly. Nothing valuable. Somehow, it was comfortable to live so simply.

Today, I fear my Cinderella collection will break the next time another five-point quake rolls in. I fear my laptop, DVD or CD player/stereo might be taken the next time I forget to lock the back door.

Jesus' advice in Matthew 6 was more practical than I realized. To store up treasures in heaven rather than in my home means I never have to worry that they'll break or be stolen or destroyed. And treasures in heaven will greet me someday when I arrive; my trinkets on earth will not.

Heavenly treasures are the things that last forever. According to Scripture, only two things are eternal: God's Word (Isaiah 40:8) and people (Rev. 22:5).

How do I invest in God's Word? By studying it, applying it, memorizing it, teaching it, allowing it to transform my life.

How do I invest in people? By loving them, showing Christ to them, discipling them in the faith, helping them turn from a life of sin, having a hand in transforming their lives.

Such investments are spiritual and often cannot be displayed here on earth. In fact, the more we let God do the accounting and displaying the more we have that we probably didn't realize!

If you like the idea of storing up heavenly treasures instead of earthly trinkets, here are some ideas for your collection:

- All nine fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23)
- Scripture verses you have memorized (Psalm 119:11)
- People with whom you've shared the gospel (Mark. 16:15)
- Children you've loved and cared for, or widows you've “adopted” as grandmas (James 1:27)
- Leaders you've trained in ministry (2 Tim. 2:2)
- New believers you've helped usher into the kingdom and disciples who've learned to walk with God from your instruction and example (Matt. 28:19-20)
- Lives that have been touched by your encouragement (Eph. 4:29)
- Worn-out, read-through, marked-up Bibles, full of your own study notes (2 Tim. 2:15)

Are you starting to get the idea? Then go ahead and start storing up. And experience the joy of collecting the right stuff.

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This article first appeared in the July/August 1999 issue of *Discipleship Journal* and is expanded upon in Cindi's book *When Women Long for Rest*. Order it at her website today at [www.strengthforthesoul.com](http://www.strengthforthesoul.com).