

*A Little of This
and
A Little of That*

*For the Woman
Who Loves the Lord*

Volume 1

*by
Susan Zakula*

Keepers of the Faith®

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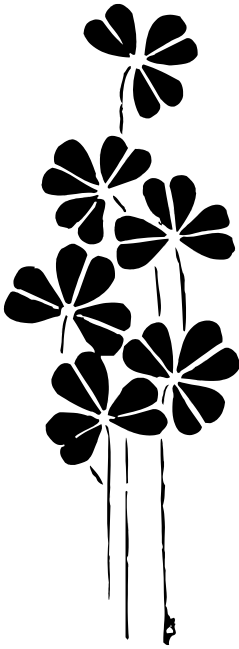
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A Little of That

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Greetings to you, my dear sisters in Christ!

I am so excited to finally be writing this to you! So many women who have written or spoken with me over the phone have asked me to continue writing, as they have sorely missed the articles in “In Keeping With the Faith.” I have longed to do so, and prayed much over it with my husband. Time constraints have been very pressing, and then I, too, must remember that I have a husband, children, grandchildren, and others, whom the Lord has given me to minister and serve. So, the writing was placed on a back burner for whenever the Lord would lead. We were also concerned about just how I could write, and yet not take on any added pressures of additional workload or deadlines.

The intervening years since we ceased publishing “In Keeping With the Faith” have been busy ones. There have been “homegoings,” sicknesses, trials, and valleys, but as the Psalmist says, “For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone,” and we can see the Lord’s hand in everything.

And then I thought I really would not write at all, until a dear lady phoned one day and asked me why I was not writing. I explained that I was just not sure if I should, and besides, there were scores of women writing and speaking, and who was I that I should write? She said, “Susan, they are writing for the multitudes. We are not interested in them. Can you not write just for the few? Please pray about writing for the few of us to encourage us.” And those words, “Write just for the few,” stayed with me for days and months. I knew then that the Lord wanted me to continue to write “just for the few.” Who are the few? They are those who want to walk the straight and narrow way, His way, the way to everlasting life through Him, Christ Jesus.

And so this little volume is a small beginning. It is a collection of articles,

poems, thoughts, and ideas. It is not conclusive on any topic, and many topics will continue from issue to issue, and each issue will come as the Lord leads and time permits. Perhaps there will be one a year, or perhaps more.

I sincerely pray that if you are one of the "few," you will be blessed and encouraged, and my time will have been well spent. Please write and share if you have been blessed, or write to tell me of topics you would like to see addressed, or questions you would like answered.

Sincerely,

Susan

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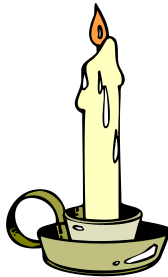


Lighting Our Paths

Every answer to every question or problem can be found in God's Word, the Bible. *Seek and ye shall find.* Do you believe it? I do. I have found it to be true. If we seek for God's wisdom as we would seek for hidden treasure, we will find it. He will give it to us when we seek after it with all the longing of our hearts.

Where do you look for answers to life's problems? Do you look to friends, best-selling books, blogs? There are those who are always seeking and yet never finding truth. They go from thing to another. They go from one idea to the next—until one day they wake up and realize that life is nearly over, child rearing has ended, and it is too late to get it “right.” Life cannot be lived over—we only have one life, one chance to live it right.

My friends, Jesus has *all* the answers, and He is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. He is the Light of the world, and the Light of *your* world. I encourage you to read the Word, His Word, and let Him lead you through this life. In this little endeavor, *A Little of This and a Little of That*, a great deal of Scripture will be used to make our path plain. Shall we walk it together?



*"For thou wilt light my candle: the
LORD my God will enlighten my
darkness." Psalm 18:28*

To Whom Are You Sent?

“And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” —Matthew 15:22-24

This is such a wonderful passage for a woman to meditate on, for it sheds light on our path. As we reflect upon this passage, we realize several things. We notice that God had given Jesus a particular job to do; Jesus had a limited amount of time to accomplish His job, and Jesus knew *to whom* He was sent. Have you ever thought about what would have happened if Jesus had decided not to do His job? What if He had squandered His time doing other things, or had spent His time with the Romans instead of the Jews? Suppose Jesus changed His mind about doing the job at all because He wanted to enjoy this earthly life a little more than He was? Suppose Jesus thought He knew a better way to accomplish the job than His Father and decided to do things a little differently? Suppose . . . Oh, well, we can go on supposing for a great while, but rather, let us see if we cannot make a practical application to our own lives.

To whom are you sent? I know to whom I am sent. His name is Jeff, and he is my husband. No other woman has been sent to him, just me. God has given me the job of helpmeet, friend, caretaker, lover, partner, companion, and more. I wish I could say that I have been an excellent helpmeet, but I cannot. I would like to say that I have been a good one, but I am not sure I can say even that. I am his, and I would like to do well the job God has given me, so I am constantly searching Scripture for help in this direction.

I also am sent to my children. They have no other mother but me. No other woman will pray for them, care about them, or love them as I do.

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I am also sent to my grandchildren, and as of this writing, there are sixteen precious souls to whom I have the privilege of being Grandmother.

To whom else am I sent? Yes, there are brothers and sisters in Christ, friends, neighbors, and others the Lord sends my way. However, when we look at these verses and see how Jesus handled the other requests for His help and services, we notice that He kept His focus on the lost sheep. His work involved them, but when occasion demanded it, He helped others along His path of following the Father's will. He denied Himself much earthly pleasure in order to accomplish the job He was given in the limited time He was given. Jesus could not do everything and neither can we.

To whom are you sent? Are you a wife? Are you a mother? Are you a grandmother?

We have a limited amount of time to accomplish our God-given jobs. Life is short and flies by so quickly. Life is also full of decisions. Women are constantly bombarded with scores of choices on how to spend their time, which is their very life. There is a pull to work in the workaday world of business and career, a pull that tears a woman away from her husband, family, and home. There may be calls to community service, outreach ministries, committees, etc.—all pulling a woman's thoughts and time away from those *to whom* God has sent her. There can even be a personal love for fellowship with friends, studies, crafts, hobbies, e-mail lists, reading, and more which can captivate a woman's mind and steal her time away in activities that mean little to those *to whom* she has been sent.

The evil one does not care how we spend our time. We can spend it in good, worthwhile activities, as long as we do not spend it on those *to whom* we are sent. For if we do not spend it on them, no one else will. Oh, excuse me. I am wrong about that. I should say that because we are too busy doing other things, the devil will be sure to send people to those *to whom* we were sent. They will be able to do their job for the evil one because we were not on our job, the job God gave us. We were not with those *to whom we were sent*.

Oh, my! I think that, at the end of our lives, when we look back and God shows us all of our wasted opportunities, we will hang our heads in shame.

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Even worse, we cannot undo what we have done. We cannot reclaim the time. It will have been spent. The lives of our children may be ruined, maybe eternally so, and we will be to blame, for we changed our focus, squandered our time, did things other than those God wanted done, and forgot or chose to ignore those *to whom* we were sent.

Dear ladies, it is never too late to begin doing the job God has given us. We can begin today to focus on those *to whom* we have been sent. Make the necessary changes to begin following the pattern of Jesus. Concentrate now on being the best helpmeet and companion your husband has ever dreamed you would be. Love your children, and teach them day and night through word and example. Get rid of the things which keep you too busy to do a really effective job for God. Know in your heart *to whom* you are sent and keep them your priority, at the top of your list. It is a big job. It will require all you have got, but, in the end, it will be worth it all. The rewards are eternal.

I have Matthew 15:22-24 highlighted in my Bible, and next to the verses I written *to whom I have been sent*. It is a constant reminder to me. Why not do the same?

All keepers at home are not good helpmeets, but all helpmeets are good keepers at home.

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His Plan for Me

*When I stand at the judgement seat of Christ,
And He shows me His plan for me,
The plan of my life as it might have been
Had He had His way, and I see*

*How I blocked Him here,
And I checked Him there,
And I would not yield my will—
Will there be grief in my Saviour's eyes,
Grief, though He loves me still?*

*He would have me rich,
And I stand there poor,
Stripped of all but His grace,
While memory runs like a hunted thing
Down the paths I cannot retrace.*

*Then my desolate heart
Will well nigh break
With the tears that I cannot shed;
I shall cover my face
With my empty hands,
I shall bow my uncrowned head . . .*

*Lord, of the years that are left to me,
I give them to Thy hand;
Take me and break me, mold me to
The pattern Thou has planned!*

Martha S. Nicholson



A Wise Woman's Testimony

Part I

“But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.” —James 3:3-18

May I personalize this for women and focus on the following portion of the selected scriptures?

Who is a wise woman and endued with knowledge among you? let her shew out of a good conversation her works with meekness of wisdom. . . . But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

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When I read these verses, I am humbled. I have read these verses hundreds of times over the last thirty-five years, and pondered them, and used them as a measuring stick, yet I know that these words do not fully describe me. Will you not spend some time with me reflecting on these words? Perhaps you are like me and still need a little more help in these areas of a woman's life.

I know that we do want to be wise women. Who would not? The opposite of wise is foolish. None of us want to be foolish women, and, yet, can these adjectives describe us most of the time? Can we be described as pure, peaceable, gentle, meek, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, full of good fruits, never partial, and so true-hearted in motive and deed that we are never hypocritical? Are we truly peacemakers? If these adjectives can describe us, we are probably wise women endowed with knowledge and wisdom from above. If they cannot describe us, well, then . . . perhaps we are foolish women after all. Maybe, just maybe, some of the words describe us, and we have a ways to go yet to have this wonderful Christian testimony.

A while ago, I decided to do a more detailed study on these words of Light. I wanted to know what I was missing, how I was failing. What were my stumbling blocks to achieving this testimony, not for my sake, but for the sake of Jesus, Who deserves so much more from me? These words did shine light on some dark spots in my heart. Is that not the purpose of coming to the Light, so we can see our hidden sins, forsake them, and walk in the Light because He, Jesus, is Light? I hope you will be blessed as we reflect on these verses.

What Is Meekness of Wisdom?

What *is* meekness of wisdom? How can we possess what we are unable to define? Well, in order to help us, let us break it down even further, and study the two words which make up the phrase "meekness of wisdom."

Oftentimes, it is of great benefit to go to a dictionary and look up the

definition for a word. The definition for meekness really opened my eyes to a great deal of things. The definition reads: 1) Humbly patient or submissive, as under provocation from others. 2) Gentle, kind, meek, soft, mild, modest, long-suffering, enduring, tolerant, persevering, understanding, unhurried.

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So, what do you think? Does the word “meek” describe you? Regretfully, I must admit that several of the adjectives would not apply to me. And this, after thirty-five years of being a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ!

To further enlighten us, the dictionary gives us a list of synonyms for meekness. They are as follows: humility, resignation, surrender, forbearance, yielding, docility, unassuming, pacific [meaning at peace, calm, irenic, nonbeligerent, pacifist, peace-loving, serene, tranquil, at peace], calmness, softness, gentleness, long-suffering, modesty, kindness, tolerance, perseverance, understanding.

So this is what meekness means. Our dear Saviour, Jesus, was meek and lowly of heart. He is our pattern. We are admonished in Scripture to follow in His steps. What a challenge!

Let's Take a Look at Ourselves

Before we ponder these words, I wonder if we could take a few moments to look at ourselves. Sometimes—and it is easy to do so—we can become comfortable or proud of who we are, of how we keep our

homes, the skills we possess, and how our families are turning out.

We might even think we are quite spiritual because we read our Bibles and attend church and do a sufficient amount for others. However, on taking a closer look at ourselves, we might see that we are not serene and calm. We might also notice that we may be impatient, strong-willed, harsh, intolerant, judgmental, and possibly we may even be known to argue and not surrender our will very easily.

I wonder if God looks more at what we do or how we behave? Are we really Christlike? Do we really have His Spirit? Let us keep these questions in our thoughts as we continue.

Meekness

In order to possess meekness, as we ponder the definitions, we must realize that it is in knowing Christ, Who is Meekness, that we will gain some measure of it for ourselves. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* —Matthew 11:29.

Knowing Christ, Who is meek and

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lowly in heart, will bring rest unto our souls. What a lovely truth. We, who are so full of unrest, will find rest in Christ.

Have you ever pondered why and how Jesus, the Son of God, the King of the Universe, could also be lowly in heart? Do you not think He should be proud of His position? Instead, He is the essence of humility, and beckons us poor sinners to come to Him for rest.

Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end. He is the Creator, and He cares for His creation. He knew mankind would sin, and that there would be no way for mankind to get out of their sin. We, mankind, were doomed to everlasting hell, but Jesus loved us so much that He paid the price for our sin. He took our place and became sin for us. He redeemed us to Himself that we might live eternally with Him in Heaven.

It is incomprehensible for us to understand the Creator choosing to become flesh and dwelling among us, such a sinful human race, and to become a vessel of clay for a period of time to show us the way to live, and then to die for us that we might live eternally. It is simply too much

for us to fully appreciate.

However, because Jesus was at the beginning and in the middle and through it all, and will be at the end, He sees the outcome, which is marvelous, awesome, incredible. Because of this, He had and still has all those excellent synonyms of meekness. He could be humble because He knew He was God. He could surrender His life for a time because He knew the resurrection was coming. He had peacefulness and calmness because He knew He would prevail. He had understanding because He knew God's plan for redemption. He was gentle and long-suffering with His followers because He knew they were just specks of mortality. He was a pacifist because He knew He had the final victory. He could allow others to criticize and judge Him, to betray and condemn Him, and finally to put Him to death because He knew their end and His end. And, my friends, *do not we know the same if we are His?*

Do not we know that if we are washed in His blood, our sins are forgiven, and we have a home waiting with Him in Heaven? Should not that thought alone help us to become

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more meek and lowly in heart?

What does it matter if we are falsely criticized? What does it matter if our families do not understand us? What does it matter if our husbands were skipped over for a job promotion? What does it matter if we do not have all the material goods we would like to have? What does it matter if our health is failing? What does it *all* matter?

I love these words from the old hymn “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”—“The things of earth will go strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.” Yes, all our earthly struggles will seem as nothing and will fade away when we see Him.

Keeping Jesus in mind as our expected end should help us from getting upset over trivial, carnal things. And rest assured, most of the doings of our lives are trivial and carnal and have to do with this temporal life.

Let us study these adjectives, these qualities which combine to make themselves into meekness.

Humility

It is interesting to know that humility is derived from the word

humus, meaning earth, ground, dirt. Jesus humbled Himself and came down to earth, becoming clay (dirt?) for us.

Humility is not being proud or haughty. Hmmm.

A proud woman may be proud of her home, her possessions, her figure, her hair, her children, her dress, her achievements, and her position. She gives off an aura of “superiority,” and the words uppity or haughty could be used to describe her. She likes the more expensive, costlier things in life and speaks freely about them. She often demands her own way of doing things and seldom has a spirit of deference or submission to others. She loves to take the pre-eminence in a group setting.

A humble woman would be grateful she had a home in which to live, and thankful for comfortable surroundings; she would probably have few possessions, maintaining a neat, modest appearance but not standing out, seeking no attention, and never talking about self. She gives an aura of “God is so good,” and is a quiet, helpful woman.

A humble woman would not be assertive, demanding things to be

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done her way. She is quick to agree and submit to the desires of others. You will find her to be a hard worker who often takes the least wanted jobs.

She is not what you would call a center-stage person. She chooses to be a person of no reputation, as her Saviour was. It is not necessary for her to have costly things when less expensive items would do as well. She knows her value is not in the things of this world.

If you recognize in yourself any of the traits in the description of a proud woman, or are lacking in the description of an humble woman, how can you change? Why, you begin. If you like to buy expensive dresses, deliberately choose not to buy them, but select less expensive ones. If you like to have things your way, begin giving in and doing things other people's way. If you like the pre-eminence, sit in the back row and say little if not asked. Take the dirtiest job instead of the cleanest job.

My husband has said over and over to me and our children, "Actions determine emotions." This means we should do the right thing, and our feelings will follow. Humility is an attitude. If we choose to do

humble things because this is what our Saviour has asked us to do by following in His steps, sooner or later, we will lose some of the pride of our hearts, and humbler thoughts will take the place of sinful ones. The following poem illustrates this well.

For Them, or For Me?

*"Where shall I work today, dear Lord?"
And my love flowed warm and free.
So the Lord, He pointed to a tiny place
And said, "You tend that for Me."
I answered, "Oh, no, dear Lord,
Why, no one could ever see,
No matter how well my work was done;
Not that little place for me."
And the Lord answered me—He was not
harsh—
He answered tenderly,
"Tell me, precious child of Mine,
Are you working for them, or for Me?
Nazareth was a little place,
And so was Galilee."
Selected*

If we choose the tiny place to serve that no one sees and for which we receive no praise, we will have fewer opportunities for pride. If the Lord wants to use us in a more prominent place, He will move us. It will be His doing and not our own. When He requires it of us, we will not have

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pride in it, for it will be service for our King—just our duty, nothing more.

Resignation

Resignation: it sounds kind of dreary, doesn't it? What does it actually mean to us? You will find the definition interesting. It means a submissive attitude or the presentation of a formal statement that one is giving up a position, and it also means unresisting acquiescence. Acquiescence is a lovely word. It means to submit or comply quietly, to agree or consent. So we see that resignation is really not a negative, dreary word, but can be rather positive. It is taking action in a quiet, agreeable way.

Jesus resigned Himself from Heaven for a time in order that He could come to earth and pay the penalty for our sins. He resigned His position as King for a time to be a servant. He knew that one day He would be King forever, and that at His Name, every knee should bow. Jesus submitted to His Father's will. He consented and was agreeable to it. What a powerful example He has left.

We, on the other hand, were never kings, but are only humans made of the dust of the earth. We are not the great Creator, but we are His creation. Our heavenly Father has a perfect will for us too. He gave us Jesus, that we should follow in His footsteps.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. —Philippians 2:5-8.

So, ladies, can “unresisting acquiescence” describe us? Or do we put up a pretty good fight for our rights? Do we comply quietly with God's promptings and leadings in our lives or do we resist Him? Are we in compliance with God's Word? Perhaps we should make a formal statement that we have resigned ourselves from the world and are living for the next. Our rewards will come later. Just as Jesus knew His future, we, who are believers in Him,

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have a glimpse of the future God has prepared for us. At least, we know it will be wonderful.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. —1 Corinthians 2:9. Knowing this promise can truly help us to have the wonderful spirit of resignation, a form of meekness.

How about our husbands? Do we submit quietly? Do we live our lives in compliance with how our husbands would like things to run in their home and marriage? Do we quickly agree, or do we want things our way? Do we comply quietly or do we stomp around, slam doors, and manage to have the last word? Maybe we submit quietly with our lips, but our heart is far from submitted, so we pout and give the silent treatment.

What about our relations with others? Are we agreeable or disagreeable? Do we happily and quietly assent whenever possible to do things the other person's way? Can we ever say, "That's sound great!" or must we say, "I know a better idea"? Can we cheerfully comply with speed limits and parking guidelines? When

we are asked to do the dirty job, can we quickly and quietly say, "I will be glad to do that for you"?

Have you considered the opposite of unresisting? It is resisting. Are we resistant women? Do we have the mindset which says, "I'll think for myself. I don't think this music is bad. I like my television programs. I will dress how I want to dress. I'll keep house like I want to keep it. I will cook what I want. I, I, I . . ."?

With all my heart, I believe the mark of a real believer in Christ is an unresisting heart. We may all be at different places on the path of our Christian growth, but the believer, when presented with a new—to her—truth or conviction over any sort of sin, whether it be an activity or attitude, will not resist the Holy Spirit.

A true believer will always be growing and conforming herself to the image of Christ. A true believer's life will become holier as her life progresses. A resistant person will say, "I'm not going that far. I'm not changing my life anymore. This is where I stay." A non-resisting, true believer will have the heart attitude, "What else, Lord? What else can I

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lay down for you?”

Humility and resignation—two wonderful aspects of meekness, don’t you think? I pray you will begin to weave these aspects into your life. Do not hesitate. Begin today.

Surrender

Probably we are all familiar with the hymn “I Surrender All.” The first two stanzas say it all.

*All to Jesus I surrender,
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.
All to Jesus I surrender,
Humbly at His feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken,
Take me, Jesus, take me now.*

A concise definition of surrender is to yield (something) to the possession or power of another; to give up, abandon or relinquish something. Have we really surrendered all to our blessed Saviour? He surrendered His all for us. He gave up His life for us. We are called to give up our life for Him.

*Then said Jesus unto his disciples,
If any man will come after me, let
him deny himself, and take up his
cross, and follow me. For whosoever*

*will save his life shall lose it: and
whosoever will lose his life for my
sake shall find it. For what is a man
profited, if he shall gain the whole
world, and lose his own soul? or what
shall a man give in exchange for his
soul? —Matthew 16:24-26.*

Surrender—It is a giving up, a complete yielding, an abandoning of ourselves, a relinquishing of our lives. Why? Because He asked us to do this. He told us to do this.

You know, I think a woman struggles with surrender in her daily life because she often puts the cart before the horse. She takes each issue of the day and has a battle over it instead of surrendering herself and the day to God. If a woman was surrendered to her God, her daily life would not be such a problem for her. The heart attitude, “All to Jesus I surrender,” will permit her to surrender the many troublesome things which happen to her throughout the day.

When her husband asks her to do something for him, instead of thinking, “But I have other plans,” she surrenders her other plans to take care of his. When a woman at church criticizes her, she surrenders her right

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to defend herself, for she knows Jesus was criticized too. When her friend's family goes on an expensive vacation, and her family finances do not permit such, she does not make her husband feel badly about it because she has surrendered her right to vacations. When she feels like lashing out at her children or husband for some reason, she does not, for she has surrendered her tongue to the Lord. When she is tempted to complain about her lot in life, she does not, for she has surrendered her right to have any particular lot in life.

We can see how a surrendered person would be a person with a meek heart. Hmm . . . How is your heart? Have you peacefully surrendered on any issues lately?

To be Continued

We've covered three definitions thus far in our search for "meekness of wisdom." We will continue in the next little volume of *A Little of This and a Little of That*. We certainly have enough to work on—meekness, resignation, and surrender!

Whom Do You Please?

Are you a God pleaser or a people pleaser? Jesus was a God pleaser. John 8:29 tells us ". . . *for I do always those things that please him.*"

We are to walk in the steps of Jesus, and we do this by:

- * Doing the works of the Father.
- * Speaking the words of the Father.
- * Obeying the Father.
- * Serving the Father.
- * Doing only those things that please the Father.
- * Being one with the Father

A Little of This

A Little of This

I have had this little gem written down since my children were in grade school. In fact, if I remember right, it was my son's Sunday school teacher who passed it out to his students. And that is how it came to me—through my son. And, you know, the truths in this poem apply today as much as it did then . . . and I still need to remember them!

Opportunity

Why complain about the problem?

Rejoice in the opportunity.

You have a chance to grow in grace . . .

Take hold of responsibility.

The reward is worth the suffering;

There's glory some sweet day.

Praise God for the problems along your way.

Little Thoughts

- * I have only the moments God has given me.
- * I cannot live another's life.
- * Whatever God's will is—that is my will.
- * This is where I find peace—in His will.

The Heart of a Servant

For the past few years I have been studying the topic of servanthood, and it has been the most interesting and productive study of my life! It has changed my life more than any other study, for the issues of servanthood challenge our innermost beings, the very essence of who we are. I have pages and pages of notes, and though I do not know at present what I will do with them permanently, I thought I would share some things here with you.

In the *Joy of Womanhood* Bible study, we learned about the role of being a woman according to God's design and plan for her. Joy comes from living our lives as God created us to live them. In the *Joy of Obedience* Bible study, we learned the importance of obedience to God and that joy comes from obedience. We can learn to live within our God-ordained roles, and obey God in all things, and, yet, still not be a servant. Why? Because the first two do not require us to lay our lives down in the service of another. The first two allow us to plan our lives to some extent, and basically live out our roles within the confines of the law, without ever touching our inner self. Servanthood requires death to "self." It requires the giving up of our desires to those of another. Servanthood touches every aspect of our daily lives. Servanthood is a many-sided thing. How many sides are there? Probably dozens.

Why do we struggle with being servants? Because serving is more than doing. We may try to have some of the outward actions of serving, but if we do not have the hearts of true servants, we will struggle, complain, and fail.

It goes without saying that Jesus is the central example of true servanthood, for the Scripture saith, "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

*Shall not we, who are NOT equal with God, but mere flesh, shall not we willingly take on servanthood in order to follow in the steps of our Lord and Saviour, our God, Jesus, Who was equal with God?
I hope so!*

A Little of This

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:” —Philippians 2:5-7. Hence, this is our challenge. Shall not we, who are NOT equal with God, but mere flesh, shall not we willingly take on servanthood in order to follow in the steps of our Lord and Saviour, our God, Jesus, Who was equal with God?

I hope so!

Is He Lord or Not?

“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

—Luke 6:46

What if Jesus asked us the above question? Is He really our Lord, or are we like the Jewish people of whom He said, *“For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them,”* —Matthew 13:15.

How easily we say, “Jesus is our Lord and Saviour.” How readily it falls from our lips. We do mean He is our Saviour, for we surely do not want to go to hell, but do we really want Him to be the Lord of our lives? the Lord of our hearts? the Lord of our minds? the Lord of our wills? the Lord of our wishes? Do we do the things HE says or do we do the things WE say? These are questions we must answer honestly; we may lie to ourselves and to others, but He knows the truth. We cannot lie to Him, for He knows ALL.

What does our Lord ask us to do? We read His Word to find out and we listen to His still small voice. He tells us that *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me,”* —John 10:27. His sheep, His servants, hear—really hear—and follow (obey) their Shepherd, their Lord. Are we stubborn and rebellious servants, only half-heartedly, sluggishly following our Lord, or are we good servants? What would Jesus say about you?

A Little of That

Following are just a few areas to examine. Is Jesus Lord of these areas in our lives?

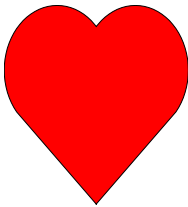
- ♥ Our thought life
- ♥ Our personal appearance
- ♥ Matters of the tongue
- ♥ Our job as helpmeets
- ♥ The job we are doing as mothers
- ♥ How well or how poorly we do the things given to us to do
- ♥ Our eating habits
- ♥ How we spend our time
- ♥ How we spend our money
- ♥ Our attitudes
- ♥ Our sins: selfishness, pride, gossip, laziness, jealousy, criticalness, resentfulness
- ♥ Our mannerisms: bossiness, unkindness, loudness, impatience, etc.
- ♥ Our emotions: moodiness, depression, irritability, etc.

The great question is not “Do you know the Lord?” but “Does the Lord know *You*?”

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity,” —Matthew 7:22-23

And there is probably more to add, but the great question is: “Is Jesus Lord of our lives in these areas?” or do we reserve the right to control these areas ourselves? If we are the controlling ones, then what kind of servants does that make us? Are we even servants at all? or are we just fooling ourselves like the Jewish people did? Will the Great Lord Jesus, our Master, say of us, “*Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me,*” —Matthew 15:7-8? It is not what we call ourselves, but what He calls us that will matter. It is not that we say we are Christians, but what He says. It is not what we say about being good servants, but how He will judge us. We have much to think about. (To be Continued)

The Hearts of Our Children



People think child rearing is something parents do, and that if the parents do a good job, the job will be over when the child is eighteen, and the parents will have turned out a “good product.” Children are not products, and the job is not over when they reach eighteen. Is it not a little presumptuous on our part to believe that it is even in the realm of possibility for us to rear a soul which ends up mature in God’s eyes, one who has conquered all his sins and is truly a saint? My dear friends, is not God continuing to work in our lives? Are we not in need of constant pruning so that we can bear more fruit for Him? Is God not continually stripping us of layers of sin and bringing us through trials that we may come forth being conformed to the image of His dear Son?

Our time with our children is now, and when they reach adulthood, if they belong to Him, God will continue the job of rearing them for His glory. He will send rain and sun, valleys and mountains, wind and fire. He will purify them. As their earthly parents, we certainly want to do the best job possible, but the reality is that our best job falls far short of God’s best for them. Even if we are able to teach them self-control and prevent a great deal of outward sin, their hidden attitudes of the heart will still need a lifetime of work.

I recently spoke with a woman in her early forties who was and is disappointed in how her children have “turned out.” She had high expectations—what with homeschooling, attending church, and rearing them according to the child-rearing manual, she felt that they should have turned out better than they did. She is a little angry with them and with God. Her life is very “trying” because of these trials for which she had not planned. Her expectations were false. God has never said that if we do thus and so, our children will “turn out.” Children have their own sinful natures, which must be conquered by God. Adam and Eve were the parents of a murderer. The father of the prodigal son most likely

A Little of That

reared both sons alike, and Samuel's sons did not follow in his footsteps.

God commands parents to teach and train their children morning, noon, and night. Why? Because it is a serious job and a tough job to rear children. It must and should take up most of one's life to do this job properly. It requires a tremendous amount of thought and effort and self-sacrifice to rear the next generation for God. There are no simple answers to rearing children. Surely, we must realize that homeschooling is wonderful, but it is not a cure-all or a panacea for child-rearing problems. Attending church is not a guarantee for anything. The Jewish people attended church, yet they did not know the Saviour when He came. They had head knowledge, tradition, and rules, but that did not save them.

Although the latest child-rearing manual is usually a best-seller, as parents rush to buy it thinking that it will have all the answers, it, too, will soon sit on a shelf collecting dust while the expectations of the parents are awash in tears. Why did not God write a manual on how to rear children? Surely, He could have done it and done it right. Why didn't He? Because He is God.

Why did God not write a manual on how to rear children? Surely, He could have done it and done it right.

God was and is wiser than the current list of best-selling teachers and authors on child rearing. He knew that a one-size-fits-all set of methods would not work. God does not want you to depend on a set of methods or follow some mortal man's guide to great kids. God wants you to look to Him for His leadership, direction, and knowledge. *God does have the answers to your child-rearing questions.*

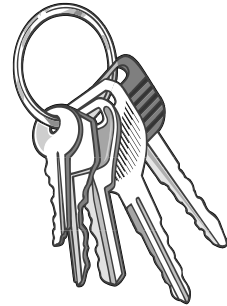
He not only has the wisdom, which we so badly need, He also promises us that "*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,*" —Philippians 1:6. God will perform this work in the hearts of our children if they truly belong to Him. With these thoughts in mind, let us take a look at some thoughts on child rearing.

A Little of This

Children Are Different!

It never ceases to amaze me how varied and different my children and grandchildren are. From birth it is quite apparent that their personalities are as different as their bodies. Deeply embedded in their genetic DNA, the tiniest details are mapped out. God has given us the greatest responsibility to rear these precious souls to adulthood.

There are many basic child-rearing skills that will work quite well for all children, but there are just as many that will vary with each child. There are different keys to the heart of each child, and it is our job to use the right key. Why couldn't God have made it simpler—one method for all? I do not know except that when we look at the rest of His kingdom, we see that there are dozens of different trees, hundreds of flowers, scores of animals . . . a pattern of variety that He continued with humans as well.



The variety of plants thrive in different soils, but they all need water and light to grow. Animals thrive in different environments, but they all need food to grow. Children, too, can thrive in different environments, but they need more than either plants or animals. They need water, food, light, love, training, and attention. They also need redemption from sin. This job of child rearing is not easy. It is difficult, and yet God would not have given us the job if He thought we could not do it. We surely cannot do it on our own. We simply do not have the wisdom, but God does. He knows the keys. He promises us that if we will ask, seek, and knock, He will give us the answers for which we seek.

Each child is different, and each child will have his or her own key to unlock the child's soul both to you and to God. Each child is an individual, and that requires us to treat each child individually. Because each child is different, we must be thoughtful. We cannot just rush through child rearing and hope to get any kind of decent results. We cannot keep ourselves so busy that we have little time to think about our children and what their needs are, nor can we be so busy that we spend only a few minutes in prayer for them.

Next to being wives, the most important job God has given us is the rearing

A Little of That

of our children. Their futures, both in this life and the next, may well be determined by our efforts. This thought ought to make us tremble with fear. There is no time to waste in this great effort. Make much use of prayer with God and ask Him to give you an older woman to help guide you in some of the more practical areas of child rearing. *Ask* for advice. Do not be shy about it. If you are struggling, get help. There is no time to lose!

Become Organized in Your Child Rearing

If you have a notebook, binder, or daily planner, put a section in it for your children. Give each child his own section or, at least, his own page. Write down this child's strengths and weaknesses, and, in particular, this child's sins. Pray over these things daily, asking the Lord to show you what you need to do to train and discipline this child. A particular child may be insecure. How can you make him more secure? A child may feel that he is in competition with an older sibling. What can you do about it? A child may feel unloved. How can you show more love? A child may need more attention. How will you give it?

All great works are planned. Child rearing is a great work and needs a great plan. When we have our plan, we need to do any preparation necessary to carry out that plan, and, lastly, we need to carry out the plan. It profits little to say that Johnny has a bad temper, and then do nothing about it. Plans require action. Child rearing requires action on our part.

There are no deadlines in your notebook. It may take a year to cure Johnny's temper or Mary's laziness. You are working for the long term, not short. These sins may not be conquered during the time your children live with you. If not, God will finish the job as only He knows how to do. That great truth is not an excuse for us to be lazy in our own efforts. Our children could be spared much grief in later life if they learn to conquer their sins early in life.

First Priority

We must point our children to God, their hope for redemption. Of course, we want our children to be moral and have a good character. That makes life easier for us, but good character is not enough. There are countless millions

A Little of This

Good character can send a soul as quickly to hell as bad character, but a character centered on God is the heaven-bound character.

with good character. Good character can send a soul to hell as quickly as bad character, but a character centered on God is the heaven-bound character. Our children must know that they are wicked sinners, and the penalty for sin is death, hell, and an eternity separated from God. They must know of God's great holiness and absolute hatred for sin. They must know that sin grieves the heart of God. They must know that sin begins in the heart; that to be angry is murder; that to look upon a woman with lust is the same as adultery. Those are sins of commission, but God also expects us not to commit sins of omission (leaving things undone) such as loving those who have wounded us, and forgiving those who have betrayed us.

God expects us to do good to those who have done us evil. In fact, God expects us to love Him with our whole heart, mind, and soul, and, furthermore, He expects us to love our brother as ourselves.

God's expectations for us far exceed good character. We must be very careful not to just teach character but to focus our children on Jesus, Who had and has the most perfect character of all. Do not hold up character, but hold up Jesus to your children. He is their example to follow.

Find the Keys to Your Child's Heart

Study your child to find the key to each of your children's hearts. You do this by observing him or her. Does he respond to praise? Does she respond to rewards? Does he respond to physical punishment? Does she respond to your love and approval? What is his motivator?

Praise and Good Words

Some people think that to praise a child is to make the child proud, but God's Word teaches that mankind is made in the image and likeness of God, and God certainly tells us in His Word to praise Him . . . and God is not proud! It also says in Proverbs 12:25, "*Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a*

A Little of That

good word maketh it glad.” Sometimes children have heavy hearts. Perhaps they are struggling with schoolwork, or not getting along with a sibling, or are sad about something, and they need an encouraging word. Good words make the heart glad. We should have an abundant supply of good words for our children.

We all have that same need in us. Just as flowers wither without water, a child will wither without words of approval and assurance. We should never flatter a child, never praise beauty or talent, but when a child has obeyed, done a good job, been helpful, been kind to a sibling, and more, tell the child that you noticed. You appreciate what he did. It brought joy into your heart to see his actions, and God must be pleased too.

Critical words cause deep wounds in the heart, and are seldom forgotten, but good words bring much healing to wounded spirits. Let’s be encouragers of our children and give true praise, approval, and acceptance, which, of course, are just different words for love.

You have read the words in Luke 6:31: *“And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.”* I have heard someone rephrase them, and I have never forgotten it. The rephrasing was *“And as ye would that men should speak to you, do ye also to them likewise.”* Ladies, this includes our children also!

Speak kindly, lovingly, patiently, meekly, and softly. Just because our children are young is not a reason to be disrespectful, rude, or unkind. They are little people made in the image and likeness of God, and we should speak to them accordingly.

Rewards

Very often we are asked the question: “What is the difference between bribes and rewards?” In fact, Jeff recently answered this question on the Keeper’s forum, and his answer follows:

Hi,

Thank you for your question concerning the difference between rewards and

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bribes. The very first difference is the definitions for these words. The word bribe (according to Webster's) usually has a negative connotation such as a price, reward, gift, or favor bestowed or promised with a view to pervert the judgment or corrupt the conduct especially of a person in a position of trust. And, yes, sometimes parents, out of desperation, have been known to bribe their children to get them to do something specific, like go to bed. However, if some people use bribes, this in no way casts any aspersions upon the use of rewards, which are something completely different.

The word reward (according to Webster's) usually has a positive connotation, such as to give a reward for a service or an accomplishment. The very same things used for bribes can be used to accomplish every bit as much good, and thus, they then receive a different name—rewards.

The purpose of a bribe is to accomplish a short-term, selfish goal, which is not even usually a moral goal. To reward is to promote the other person's best interest. Children need to be trained, and not bribed. However, there are negative training methods and positive training methods. I am not referring to discipline for disobedience here, but training—the day in and day out method.

You say that "Quite often children are bribed to do something and desire the physical, material object instead of performing a task or achieving a goal with the right heart attitude." Well, the truth is that children should never be bribed to do anything. If a child is well trained to obey the first time, there will never be any occasion for bribery. If a child is taught to be diligent and to do a job right, the first time, there would never be any need for a child to be bribed in that regard. If a parent feels the need to bribe his child into anything, he has not trained his child properly.

Regarding incentives—back to the dictionary we go: something that incites or has a tendency to incite to determination or action; something (as fear or hope of reward) that constitutes a motive or spur. Ah! What a great definition. As parents we want to spur our children to higher learning, more proficiency, better behavior, a greater love of the Bible, a closer walk with the Saviour. Do you see the difference?

It is so pleasant to reach little goals, such as "Let's work hard this morning,

A Little of That

and we will take a walk together this afternoon.” That is an incentive to work hard in the morning with the reward of a walk in the afternoon. Oh, those multiplication tables . . . Well, the child is going to learn them, but why not have some fun along the way? “You memorize those ‘twelves,’ and we will celebrate with an ice cream cone.” “Work hard and pass five more pages, and choose a candy bar from the incentive basket.” “Don’t miss one day of Bible reading, and you can choose a bookmark for your Bible.” All the time the children are doing good things, learning to work hard, reaching small goals, building great habits, and being thrilled with little rewards for reaching the goals.

When our children were little, we passed an ice cream shop several times a week on the way home from church. Occasionally, and generally when I knew that the children had been especially well behaved, I would remark, “You children have been so good lately that I do believe we just have to get some ice cream to reward all that effort.” The truth is that they may not have even thought about their behavior in that vein, but it always gave them pause for thought that further good behavior would certainly not prevent the possibility of future stops at the ice cream shop. And even more important than the reward itself was the fact that Dad actually noticed good behavior, and that it meant enough to him to spend money to reward. Money was a very tight commodity for us in those days.

As I said, rewards can be misused or abused. However, in our efforts to rear children with righteousness and good character, we adults should avoid the trap of expecting our children to be more righteous than ourselves. For example, I would expect that every Christian dad carries on a vocation in which he knows that he is performing good, righteous, and necessary labors. But would he do so without the incentive of a paycheck? Would the work not still be as righteous and necessary? How many people take a job, even the best job, for which they will receive no pay? Do any of us desire the work more than the pay? Or how many take a position and say, “I will do my best on this job because it is right; I never will expect a raise for my efforts”? Who would deny that it was incentive, the promise of good rewards rather than bad, that

A Little of This

first influenced one's choice to follow the Lord Jesus?

There is nothing wrong with lofty goals, but we cannot leave all the work up to our children. How many of us are living our lives solely to fulfill someone else's goals or expectations, especially if that person seems not to care? Incentives can be used to show that we care. Can we show that we care without them? Maybe. However, I do not think that we can do so as well. Incentives are closely interlinked with initiative in young people. Children miss out on many opportunities, skills, character traits, and other blessings because there is no incentive to induce them to take any initiative in those directions.

Children are children. As adults, we err in expecting them to think, feel, and behave as we feel that they should. We tend to feel that they should have enough character and be good enough Christians that they should always do right and perform their best with no incentive because it is right. However, that kind of character comes from habit. Habits—good or bad—start small and grow strong. The reason we need to train children is exactly because they are not fully and perfectly developed adults. I guess that is why God offers and gives rewards to His grown children.

There is a wide difference between bribes and rewards. The book of Proverbs speaks profusely about rewards reaped for good behavior, and the opposite reaped for foolishness. Positive parenting uses rewards, just as God uses rewards. He blesses us each day as we follow and obey Him.

Jeff

Punishment

Punishing children is a hotly contested question. How do I punish? Everyone seems to have his or her own way of punishing, but let's discuss the reason a parent punishes his child. Obviously, the child has done something wrong, but what is wrong? Did he misbehave? Did he not clean his room? Or did he disobey?

In the Bible we learn that God punishes disobedience. Adam and Eve were punished for disobedience. Men go to hell for disobedience. Obedience is important, the most important thing that will ever be required from us—

A Little of That

obedience to God.

God has in place the law of sowing and reaping—for everyone and everything. Smokers reap lung cancer; overeaters reap weight gain; spending more than you earn reaps debt; not reading the Word reaps ignorance of God’s ways; not cleaning the house reaps a dirty house; not homeschooling properly reaps ignorant children, and so forth.

We adults have plenty of disobedience with which to deal; God is not punishing us, but we are reaping what we have sown. Thus, it is important when rearing children not to punish with a spanking. (Although there is a place for that, the need for it should be rare.) We are in the process of teaching and training our children, developing character in them, and just as God’s law of sowing and reaping deals with cause and effect, so should the training of our children. Punishment is for a crime, while sowing and reaping is for all other aspects of child rearing.

Examples:

- ✘ John does a poor job of cutting the grass. He sows a sloppy job and reaps another cut job, and as many more as it takes to get the job done right. He will soon learn to cut it right the first time.
- ✘ Susie has done a poor job of getting the dishes clean. In fact, there is food stuck on the silverware. She sows a sloppy job and reaps another dish wash job. And since we don’t know which dishes and silverware are dirty, she must empty out the cupboards and silverware drawer and wash and dry everything.
- ✘ Peter misspelled six of ten words when copying them out of his speller. Now these mistakes show pure lack of attention to detail. This sloppiness reaps writing the entire list over ten times. Oh, and he is not told which ones he has misspelled; rather, he must find his mistakes, and still write the entire list. This will train him to pay attention to details.
- ✘ Cindy is doing her copywork and copying several Bible verses. You notice that there are misspelled words and missing punctuation. Again, she is sowing sloppiness and reaps having to redo her copywork—all

A Little of This

of it. She does not need to be told what she missed, but must pay more attention until she does it right.

If redoing a task causes the child to miss an activity, oh, well. That is too bad, but the lesson needs to be learned and learned right now. If we can put off reaping until a later time, until it fits in with our schedule, we are not really teaching sowing and reaping, just sowing, reaping, and delaying at our convenience. Children can understand reaping the consequences for what they have sown, and seldom become bitter or upset with it. They cannot understand indiscriminate physical spankings (in which they are spanked for some offences and not for others).

As an aside, parents and teachers often make a mistake in pointing out what is not right or where the mistakes are. The child will become dependent on his mom or dad or future employer to point out mistakes. A competent child or adult will find his own mistakes and fix them without having them pointed out to him. The person who knows how to do things right is always a person who will be in demand.

In conclusion, we can see that 95% of rearing children is in the realm of sowing and reaping, and 5% is in punishing disobedience. Save the punishment for disobedience to God's laws, such as not telling the truth.

Love

The human heart craves love and approval. It is how we are created. We are made in the image of God, and His first and great commandment is, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.*" God wants our love; He commands our love. He wants us to love Him with every fiber of our being. We were created to love Him, but mankind is stubborn and rebellious and selfish. We seek after others when only He can fill this incredible need in our own heart.

There also is within our own heart a need for the love of another human; hence, we have the marriage union between woman and man. From this union

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comes our children, and our children have this need for love within them. They have a special need that only parental love can fill. A childhood without love produces a wounded adult. It is our job to love our children.

How do we go about loving our children? In one sentence, it is the second great commandment: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. Yes, it is that simple. When we ponder this commandment, we only have to look inward. Some of us may not like ourselves, but we all love ourselves. Whether we are depressed, angry, sad—it is about us. It is about what we are feeling about the circumstances of our lives and how we are affected by them.

As parents, what do we wish we had learned? We may all wish that we were self-disciplined, temperate, competent, loving; that, yes, we could actually read and write well, do math, handle our finances, knew how to cook well, keep our homes clean and organized, or make beautiful things. We might wish that we could play an instrument or sing well, or at least stay on key! We wish we knew how to live enjoyable lives, make good choices, and more. Even more importantly, we wish that we could have known the Saviour sooner, and how to live lives more pleasing to Him. If our parents had taught us all these things, or most of these things, they would have taught us well, or shall we say, *loved us well*. That is love for our children—teaching and training them to obey God first in all things, and then lovingly preparing them for life, this life and the next.

Very briefly, on top of that, we should accept them while training them, be kind to them, speak softly and courteously, and treat them with respect, for they, too, are made in the image of God, and He loved them enough to die for them. Shouldn't we love them enough to do the best for them while we have the opportunity? The opportunity is the time that God has given us to parent them for Him.

Books are written on this subject, but the second commandment covers everything that is in them if only we will take the time to think about what we are doing, pray over it, and truly seek to love our children as we love ourselves. May God bless you in this endeavor. It is the most important endeavor you will ever undertake.

Have you heard these sayings?

YOUR BUTTON

What Pushes Your Button?

That is a common phrase that we hear often. It means: What ticks you off? What sets your temper off? Most people can immediately rattle off a few things. My question to you is: Should you have a button? Should a Christian have such a thing? Is the grace of our God not sufficient for us? What do you think?



IF MOMMA AIN'T HAPPY, AIN'T NOBODY HAPPY!

Have you heard this one too? It is a true statement, but why should Momma not be happy? Is not God's grace sufficient? What is Momma teaching her children? What pattern is she setting for future generations?

A Little of That



Happy Little Wife

Wife

Now, Gudhand, have you sold the cow
You took this morning to town?
And did you get the silver cash
In your hand, paid safely down?

And yet I hardly need to ask;
You hardly need to tell;
For I see by the cheerful face you bring,
That you have done right well.

Husband

Well, I did not exactly sell her,
Nor give her away, of course;
But I'll tell you what I did, good wife—
I swapped her for a horse.

Wife

A horse! Oh, Gudhand, you have done
Just what will please me best;
For now we can have a carriage,
And ride as well as the rest.

A Little of This



Husband

Nay, not so fast, my good dame;
We shall not want a gig:
I had not ridden half a mile,
Till I swapped my horse for a pig.

Wife

That's just the thing, dear Gudhand,
I would have done myself:
We can have a fitch of bacon now,
To put upon the shelf.

And when the neighbors come to dine
With us, they'll have a treat:
There is no need that we should ride,
But there is that we should eat.

Husband

Alas, alas, my darling,
I fear you'll change your note,
When I tell you I haven't got the pig—
I swapped him for a goat.

Wife

Now bless us, dear, kind Gudhand,
You manage things so well;
What I should ever do with a pig,
I'm sure I cannot tell.

A Little of That

If I put my bacon on the shelf,
Or put it in the pot,
The folks would point at us and say,
“They eat up all they’ve got.”

But a good milch goat, that’s just the thing
I’ve wanted all my life;
And now there’ll be both milk and cheese
For Gudhand and his wife.

Husband

Nay, not so fast, my darling;
You make too long a leap:
When I found I couldn’t drive my goat,
I swapped him for a sheep.

Wife

A sheep, my dear! You must have tried
To suit me all the time:
It would plague me so to have a goat,
Because the thing would climb.

But a sheep! the wool will make us clothes,
To keep us from the cold:
Run out, my dear, this very night,
and build for him a fold.



A Little of This



Husband

Nay, wife, it isn't I that care
If he be penned or loose:
I do not own the sheep at all;
I swapped him for a goose.

Wife

There, Gudhand, I am so relieved;
It almost made me sick
To think that I should have the wool
To clip and wash and pick!

It is cheaper, too, to buy our clothes,
Than make them up at home;
And I haven't got a spinning-wheel,
Nor yet a carding-comb.

But a goose! I love the taste of goose,
When roasted nice and brown;
And then we want a feather bed,
And pillows stuffed with down.

Husband

Now stop a bit: I could not go
All day with naught to eat;
So I took a shilling for the goose,
And bought myself some meat.

A Little of That

Wife

That was wisest thing of all,
My husband, fond and true;
You do just after my own heart,
Whatever thing you do.

So here's a kiss, dear Gudhand;
I'm sure that while you're mine,
I'll not want no goat, nor horse,
Nor sheep, nor goose, nor swine

Phoebe Cary



Oh, my! What a challenge this poem is to all of us!

More Wifely Thoughts—

Being a good wife is not what a woman thinks a good wife is, but what her husband thinks a good wife is—and these can be very different thoughts!

Her list of what she thinks should satisfy her husband is easy for her to accomplish. However, she can only be a good wife when she is willing to do the hard or difficult things her husband asks of her.

Also, she can only be a good wife when she is willing to stand before God and accept His will for her as a wife. And we know that God's will is for her to meet her husband's needs.

The Matter of the Tongue

“The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.” —Proverbs 18:8

“The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.” —Proverbs 26:22

Pretty interesting, is it not? The exact verse is repeated twice in the Bible! It is repeated word perfect! There is no way we can misunderstand this, for God allowed it to be said twice. Wounds—ouch! Wounds hurt! Wounds fester. Wounds make us cry. Wounds may make us lose sleep. Wounds drain our body’s energy. Wounds must be healed. Wounds take time to heal. Wounds may leave permanent scars. Wounds go down into the innermost parts of the belly—our souls, our hearts, our spirits.

Few things go as deeply into us as words. Who says these awful words that wound so deeply? The Scripture tells us that they are the words of a talebearer. Why do the words of a talebearer wound so greatly? Well, for one thing, they are words always said behind one’s back. One cannot defend them. They are quite possibly of the nature of “secrets.” *“A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter,”* —Proverbs 11:13. The words hurt because a person might have shared something personal, thinking she was with a friend and never intending that anyone else would know. When one reveals what another has shared, it is a betrayal of friendship. The talebearer did not have permission to share. No one likes to be betrayed.

And then, remember: it is not always a verbal secret that a talebearer carries to another. It could be some personal knowledge that she observed or found out about accidentally. Repeating it can hurt just as deeply as revealing a secret.

What motivates talebearers? Attention? Greed? Pride? These are not

A Little of That

very nice motives. We might ask ourselves if a talebearer ever tells tales out of love? If the motive is not love, then what would we call it?

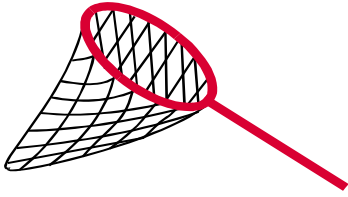
The two great commandments have love for their motivation. The first is to love God. The second is to love our brothers. In fact, the exact words of the second are, “*And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,*” —Matthew 22:39. “As thyself.” We probably love ourselves enough not to carry negative tales about ourselves to others. We may confide in a friend, but we usually do not confide in mere acquaintances, and never in strangers. So this commandment admonishes us to treat others in the same way we would treat ourselves. That would mean, of course, that we would not carry tales nor be talebearers. We hate it when we are wounded in that way, so we would never want to be the cause of such pain in others.

Have you ever thought of it exactly in this way before—that what you consider to be harmless tales or a necessary repeating of things actually may cause deep wounds in the hearts of others? And rest assured, your talebearing words will find their way back to the one who was talked about. How do we know? The words would never cause such wounds if the person did not find out about them. And do you know whose words cause the deepest wounds? Not a stranger’s—no, a stranger does not have that power over us. The wounds of a friend hurt deeply, and the wounds of a family member hurt more deeply yet. Wounds hurt. Things are seldom ever the same after words of talebearing are discovered. How can one ever confide again in a friend who has betrayed confidences or carried tales that may or may not have been true?

These are all thoughts to consider. Certainly, a good and faithful woman will keep her tongue and not be a talebearer.



Will You Catch Your Family for Christ?



Do you sometimes wonder and/or worry whether your children will follow Christ? Do you wonder what more you could be doing to help and encourage them to do so?

“Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.” —Luke 5:4-11

This passage of Scripture has so many things to say to us. The men were busy trying to make their living. They had worked hard all night with nothing to show for it. Jesus came along and told them to “launch out into the deep.” Jesus knew where the fishes were waiting. The men caught so many that their nets broke, and they called for more workers to come and help. This illustrates that Jesus knows men need to earn a living, and that He is able to provide for them. Jesus will take care of our physical needs. He knows where the fishes are!

A Little of That

Second, He tells them to “*Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.*” And the men forsook all, and followed Him. In the margin of my Bible I have written, “Jesus wants us to catch men. Catching men is the business of our lives. Forsake all—everyone and everything—to do this. For a mother, this means to catch her children! How am I going to catch my family for Christ?”

These are certainly some words to ponder. The business of my life is not to keep a perfect house, not to do pleasurable things, not to take vacations, not to give the best Bible devotions at the ladies’ Bible study, not to be the best homeschooling mom, not to find a way to earn more money—the business of my life is to “catch my family for Christ.” “How am I going to do this?” I asked myself. I came up with a list of questions to help me sort this matter out.

Do My Actions Match My Goal?

How do I spend my days? What activities keep me busy? Do any of these activities help me to win my family to Christ? If so, which ones? If not, why not? Should they be eliminated? Can they be eliminated?

Evaluate activities and eliminate everything which does not contribute to this goal. For some, this may mean giving up time spent in fellowship with other women. For others, this may mean setting aside personal reading or crafts and hobbies. For a few, it may mean giving up a part-time job or no longer teaching a class. We have to remember which activities are eternal and which are temporal. We have our children for only a little while. Perhaps later in life we will have time for other things. If the time never comes, our time would still have been well spent.

What Can I Do to Catch My Children?

How much time am I spending teaching my children God’s Word on a daily basis? How much time am I spending with them to build better and closer relationships? Am I setting the right example of a godly woman, wife, and mother for them? What might I need to change in my own life for the sake of my children?

A Little of This

What are my children watching? Is it contributing to “catching them for Christ”? What are my children reading? What are my children hearing in the form of radio or cassette tapes?

I am responsible for what my children watch, read, and hear. I need to make sure that all of it contributes to godliness, and is not a stumbling block in any way to them. I can read good books to them. We can discuss these books. We can listen to only the most godly music. We can learn and memorize new hymns together. We can have daily devotions together and prayer time together. These seem to be small ways, but together they mean a great deal, and do add up over the course of a lifetime.

Look Out for Dangerous Relationships!

I daresay that one of the things that you will hear the most often from brokenhearted parents whose children have left the paths of God is that they were not careful enough of the friendships their children formed. It only takes one friend to lead your child astray! Never be afraid to limit friendships with others who seem not to follow the Lord as closely as you do. Fear not what others might say. We teach our children not to be affected by peer pressure. We need to set the example.

We need to look out for these relationships in our own lives as well. We, parents, *do* set the example. If we maintain friendships with unbelievers, our children will one day follow in our footsteps and have friendships with unbelievers as well. We may have been able not to let these relationships have an effect on our spiritual lives, but our children may not be so fortunate.

It is one thing to help those in need and show Christian compassion to unbelievers; it is another thing to get together with them for fun. This would also apply to extended family members who are not believers. Non-believing cousins will have an effect on our children. Our non-believing families are as dedicated to their way and their truth as we are to our Way and our Truth.

A Little of That

This “Catching” Never Stops!

Yes, that is true. There is not a time when you can say, “They are reared. My responsibility is over.” No, no, no. You will want to continue to “Catch your family for Christ.”

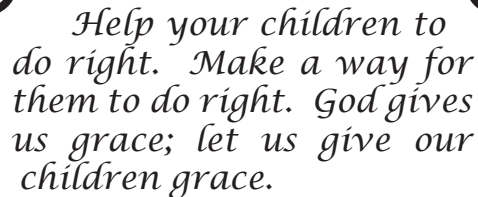
Temptations are as rampant for young marrieds as for those in their teen years. You will want to continue to be a godly example. It is still possible to pray together, to share what you are learning in your Christian walk, and to be helpful to them in as many ways as possible. And those grandchildren . . . where will they be in eternity?

Grandparents can hold a very special place in the hearts of their grandchildren. We will want to take the same care and responsibility that we took with our children with our grandchildren. We still will want to set a good example; we will want them to know that Grandpa and Grandma love the Lord, live for Him, and are ruled by Him, because we are His.

I have been a grandparent for twenty years. My grandchildren range in age from four to twenty. I have played countless games with them, read stories, crafted, told Bible stories, sung songs, and more. My home has a library just for them, and a toy closet too. And we have built some grandparent traditions that they look forward to each year. We pray together and share concerns, and my grandchildren are some of my dearest friends. I love them, and they know it. I pray for them daily.

Will you endeavor to catch your family for Christ? I hope so!

Susan



Help your children to do right. Make a way for them to do right. God gives us grace; let us give our children grace.

**I will hate the work of them that
turn aside!**

Do you???

“I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.” — Psalm 101:3

People often quote the first part of this verse as a standard for the videos or television they watch. Only G or PG movies, family programming, sports, or the news are viewed. While this may sound good, there is the last half of the verse, which is equally as important.

Perhaps 1% of the movies Hollywood and Disney produce may be found to be truly acceptable, while the other 99% of movies are unacceptable. Hollywood is the producer of evil. They are the ones that have turned aside from the Lord God and are trying to motivate you to turn aside also. They want your children to turn aside. The 1% good which they offer is the bait, the lure to hook you into enjoying their entertainments. Once they have you hooked, the movies degenerate quickly into sex, violence, and pornography. Watching videos becomes a horrible addiction for many that leads into the paths of unrighteousness and a godless eternity. Why, oh, why are you still watching it?

Wifely Thoughts

Many of you have read *Are You Serious About Marriage?* That is a collection of marriage articles taken from our former magazine, *In Keeping With the Faith*. *Wifely Thoughts* will be a continuation of that series. If you have not read it, I urge you to purchase a copy, for my intention is not to repeat to any extent what was in previous articles, but rather continue on, just as if I had not stopped. There has been laid a tremendous foundation, and we will continue to build on that foundation.

I continue to receive many letters, e-mails, and phone calls concerning marriage and problems within them. One very common problem and one that seems to recur often in the same marriage is that of allowing someone outside the family (husband and wife unit) to determine what is happening inside the family unit. Most often (or at least that is how it appears to me), the woman is reading and listening to others, picking up that information and bringing it home, encouraging (pushing) her husband to consider this information, and insisting that their family make changes to match the newly heard-about way. When a woman does this, she is in essence *leading* her husband.

Now please, ladies, do not get your backs up when I say this. Women do seem to be more gullible than men. The Bible affirms this by relating, “*For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression,*” —1 Timothy 2:13-14. Adam knew the lie. Eve was deceived. You see, God made woman to follow man. He gave her a gentler spirit, a more emotional spirit, because she did not have to be the leader in the family unit, but was to be the follower. This is good. However, when she attempts to be the leader, she is walking on dangerous ground. It has often been said that “A man leads with his head, and a woman leads with her heart.” A man can often see a lie much more quickly than can a woman. God made him to be so, for it is man’s responsibility to lead his family.

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Women are impatient and complain about how slow their husbands are to come to spiritual truths (as the women see it). Meanwhile, the man is thinking, “That can’t be right. I can’t explain it, but I know it does not ring true.” But the woman begs, pleads, and cries, and finally the poor man gives in to his wife, and the next thing you know, they are in a new church, have a new doctrine, moving to the country, or . . .

If you could hear the tales I hear, and told by the women themselves, you would be amazed. Men have quit good jobs that they loved to move to the country and farm, which they didn’t have a clue about! Others have moved to locations to join up with churches that have required husbands to surrender their rights as leaders of their homes to the church leadership. Others have sold their acres to live in the city so they could do more for the church because they were made to feel guilty for having a garden and a few animals. Most recently, I heard of a mother giving birth at home to a dead baby because the woman had come to believe that it was a sin to have a hospital birth. Her midwife told her to go to the hospital, but the woman refused because of this errant philosophy. Another woman’s husband left her because she wanted to be at church praying and singing nearly seven days a week. She told me she loved God and loved to get together and sing with the other folks, and her husband wanted her to be home and cook meals, of all things!

As I listen to these stories, the women readily confess that their husbands had misgivings, didn’t feel it was right, etc., but they forged ahead . . . until what? Until the wife saw the damage done to her family in some shape, way, or form. Then she still continued to lead, because at that point, she acknowledged that her husband was right, and they left the church, or moved again, or dropped the doctrine. But rest assured, the woman’s search continues, and the man follows on, and hence, the situation recurs again and again.

Now, what is the problem? These women will tell me that their husbands are not interested in spiritual things, but upon closer questioning, that simply does not ring true. Their husbands were not interested in following the new ways that their wives were finding out about. Does that mean that the men are less spiritual? Not at all. It just means that they are not ready to jump on every

A Little of That

passing freight train.

Men have a better grasp about what life is than women do. Men spend their lives working hard to provide a living for their families. Some men are fortunate enough to have enjoyable jobs; others must spend their lives in toil to bring home a paycheck so food and shelter can be provided. Men live and grow old and die. They do not expect too much more in life. They innately understand that this is how God set up the human system. If they have read their Bibles at all, they know mankind is sinful. God punishes sin. God sent His Son to be a Redeemer to redeem mankind from the consequences of sin. A man understands that God expects certain things of him: obedience, for one. It is basic. It is simple. A steward should be diligent and faithful. Men live quietly.

Women, on the other hand—at least in our day and country—have quite a bit of free time on their hands, which does not have to be devoted to work. This is a blessing or a curse of a prosperous society, whichever way you want to look at it, and the old serpent is at work with us, just as he was with Eve. He beguiled Eve into wanting something more than what God had given her—more knowledge, more spiritual understanding, more power. Many women today are seeking and searching for more spiritual knowledge than what God has given.

God created woman to be a helpmeet to her husband. Jesus taught us the way of servanthood, and Peter admonishes us to follow in His steps. Women are trying to find new and better ways to find fulfillment or better ways to please God. God gave us the perfect pattern, but woman thinks if she follows a certain group's pattern, that is better yet. Some groups lay down, just as the Pharisees did, extra-biblical rules for living. That is dangerous ground. It proved to be so for the Pharisees as well.

Woman is tempted by the desire to be spiritually wise and is impatient with her husband's "Can't we just obey God?" attitude. She also has an incredible desire to belong to a group. I do not know if it is their strong nesting instinct or what, but most women cannot stand not to be part of something. They *must* belong. The group says, "Come and join us. We are the best." And off a

A Little of This

woman goes, dragging her family behind her. She hears of another church or group, which is better yet, and off she goes again.

Where am I going with all this? Well, sometimes I just want to say, “Stop! Stop! Stop where you are! Do not go any further following people and groups. Get in your Bible and read, read, and read. Pray, pray, and pray. Start serving your husband and family. Work on your attitudes. Ask Jesus to show you your sins and to help you work on them. Rid yourself of them. Ask Jesus what you should do next. Ask Him how to win your family to Christ. Ask Him for help in learning how to follow and serve your husband. Do not read another book on another doctrine.”

“But, Susan, do we not have to know what the truth is?” My friend, if you read all the books stacked up on each side of every issue, you would never have time to read God’s Word, Who and Which has all the answers on any topic given. His Holy Spirit is able to teach you. *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you,”* —John 14:16-17. *“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error,”* —1 John 4:6. *“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him,”* —1 John 2:27.

Do you believe these verses? If so, simply pray and ask God to teach you the truth. Wait on God! You can rely on Him. This same all-wise God can teach your husband too! Women spend countless hours, which add up to weeks and months and years, searching for knowledge, when all the while, the things they know they must do—serve their husbands, be kind, rear their children, and help their neighbors—are barely done. God asks you to obey Him! The rest will come. God would probably lead your husband if you stopped leading him. But, hey, if you want to be god in his life, God will let you, and you will suffer the consequences.

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I cannot emphasize prayer enough. *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus,”* —Philippians 4:6-7. Many women have no peace because they are leading instead of praying to God and waiting on Him. Let God be the Great Director of your life. Let Him handle the problems and cares. He has all the answers to your questions, and He knows when you need to know them. He knows in what grade level you are in your spiritual school. He knows when to promote you to the next level of learning. Relax! Do what you know to do. Obey what you know to obey. Trust God and let Him lead and direct. You and your family will be better off.

We are helpmeets—not leaders. Let us learn the gentle art of following, supporting, helping, loving, and encouraging the men in our lives. Let us learn to be women of prayer. How much time do you actually spend in prayer for your husband—one minute? Five minutes? Have you ever spent thirty minutes praying only for him, your husband and leader? My, my. Ouch! The finger is now pointed at us. We are out of line, out of place, not praying, not supporting, leading instead of following. Oh, Lord! Forgive us! Help us to be what you want us to be: gentle helpmeets.

.....

• God purges us so that we can bear more fruit. The only way we
• can glorify the Father is through bearing more fruit. John 15:8 says,
• *“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be*
• *my disciples.”*

• Our prayer should be, “Purge me, Father, so I can bear more fruit for
• You.” Bearing fruit is having the fruit of the Spirit. The fruits of the
• Spirit are by Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:11).

• When we bear the fruits of the Spirit, we glorify God because we are
• then like Jesus, His Son. We are the Father’s children, and we act like it
• because we act and live like Jesus. He is our pattern. This is what God
• expects from us. This sets us apart from the world and shows the world
• that we belong to God the Father.

.....

A Little of That

What is it that you remember about people? Do you remember pleasant things or only the negative? Make a list of people you know, and what it is that you remember about them.

If we have some negative thinking, some little criticism or even a big criticism, let us try to remember some good things. When we think about people and remember the good things, our attitudes toward them will change. Our behavior toward them will change also.

“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he,” —Proverbs 23:7. How we treat people depends on our thinking. *“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,”* —Matthew 7:12.

What is it that we would like men to do to us?

- * Treat us kindly.
- * Forgive us our offences.
- * Forget our offences.
- * Remember the good things about us.
- * Like us despite our failings.
- * Treat us each day as if it is a brand new day, and we are new creatures—not old sinful ones from the day before.



| |
|---|
| <p>Satan doesn't say, "Follow me." Satan says, "Do what you think is best."</p> |
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Are You More Spiritual Than God?

The idea of being more spiritual than God is such an interesting one to pursue. Have you ever met people or talked with people who seem to be more spiritual than God? I have. These are the folks who have more rules than God does. They have a rule or opinion about nearly everything in life. The more rules they have, the more spiritual they think they are. They also believe that if you do not follow their rules, you are not on the path of everlasting life. You are not on the straight and narrow path according to them. They believe this to be true because they equate their rules with true biblical commands. They have, in essence, added to the Word of God.

What a relief to read in God's Word, the Bible, "*For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.*" —Acts 15:28-29. This is told not once, not twice, but three times!

Dear friends, those who are teaching that you must wear a certain type of clothing, have certain occupations, live in certain types of places, have certain styles of life, and live your lives according to them, are not led of the Holy Ghost. They are quite similar to the Pharisees of Old Testament times, who laid great burdens upon the people. They added to God's Word with a rule for everything.

You know, if we just read the Word faithfully, we will find all the answers to our questions and find the directions for living our lives and bringing honor and glory to our Lord and Saviour and our heavenly Father. We certainly are to grow in grace and in our knowledge of Him. Through reading His Word, all of His Word, we will learn truth; we will learn what pleases Him; we will be admonished to "*Be ye holy; for I am holy,*" and to "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" There is no end to growing in the Lord, but let us grow in Him, and not in the rules of men.

A Little of This

Questions and Answers

Dearest Susan,

First, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you and Jeff for all you've done for us through the Keepers organization. Two of my daughters and I have been members of a local "club" for a little over three years, and the time has just flown by. We have had fun learning everything from tatting to how to play "official rules croquet," and everything in between! But more than that, you have given us the tools to help our girls be prepared and equipped for (and excited about!) being future keepers of their homes. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

And from a personal standpoint, I would also like to thank you for your thought-provoking articles in the sadly missed "In Keeping With the Faith" magazine. Wishing I had more time to go into the details, I will just let you know that Jeff's article on headcoverings, the marriage series, and your book reviews have reshaped more than a little of my thinking! (Hallelujah!)

But the main purpose of my writing today is to get your opinion on a topic you touched upon in the marriage series, but didn't get into in detail. If answering me personally is not convenient (which I certainly would understand!), would you perhaps consider addressing this topic in some other way for the general public? I think it would be very helpful to more women than just me!

Here's what I'm writing about: What's a woman to do WHEN, and HOW? Specifically, WHEN does a woman become a Titus 2 "older woman," and HOW is she to teach all those "good things"? Let me tell you why I ask. My family and I joined a very small church (about fifteen families) about a year ago, where we are very happy. Believe it or not, though, at 45 years old, I am the oldest woman in the church by a good ten to fifteen years. Now I have always, since joining this church, considered myself to be an "older sister" of these women, and have taken my responsibilities as such very seriously. However, I have not seen myself as being in a position to take on the "surrogate mothering" I think is implied in the duties of the Titus 2 older woman. (Homeschooling and raising six young children of my own, the youngest of which is two, I really am

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still a very busy mother here in my own home!) But as a “big sister,” I have always thought of my role in the church as that of BEING AN EXAMPLE of holy living—always ENCOURAGING through words and deeds, as much as possible, and ADVISING, when appropriate. I just don’t teach any formal classes, nor do I do anything that would require my being out of the home on a regular basis.

Well, I’ve been merrily doing what I thought was my duty (and loving it!) this past year, as I’ve been getting to know these young ladies. I hate to sound like I’m boasting of my good deeds, but to give you an idea of what I mean, I’ll say that although I live thirty to forty-five minutes from all these ladies (we don’t live in the same county as our church) and am therefore not in a position to just drop by and chat, and although my homeschooling and household duties mean I am not in a position to have other ladies just drop by here and chat either, I do take time every single week to write a note to someone; I call every single lady on her birthday; I have advised several ladies one-on-one on homeschooling throughout the year; I have phone counseled another lady extensively on repairing her marriage; I have taken numerous meals to these ladies (yes, taking all six kids with me for the 1½ hour round-trip car ride), often for no other reason than I thought they sounded tired on Sunday; I have taken a young lady under my wing who is having trouble conceiving, and I try to encourage her in various ways as each month she suffers another disappointment; I encourage two ladies who suffer from depression, calling them during the week or sending them fancy tea bags I buy specially for them along with Scripture notes or pieces of beautiful poetry each week, etc. In addition, I am temporarily meeting once a week with a dear young friend of mine from our old church, to counsel her (with both our husbands’ blessing) regarding training (re-training) her children, who are out of control. She begged me to help her, as she says she wants her children to be as cheerful and kind and obedient as she says she sees mine being. I also co-lead a once a month Keepers at Home group at our old church. (I offered to start a Keepers club at our new church when we joined, but the ladies weren’t interested.)

Last week, however, at home fellowship (we meet in small groups once a week

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in homes for fellowship, study, etc.), a respected brother lovingly challenged me to consider whether I've been letting the ladies of our church down in my failure to be involved in "discipling," as even the younger women are, when obviously my obligations in that area are so much greater, by being the only Titus 2 "older woman" in the church. Susan, I was crushed.

When I asked what he meant, he said that all the ladies of the church meet one-on-one once a week to "disciple" each other and/or do a Bible study—except me. When I asked, "When would I do this?" he said the other ladies get together during the day and just let the kids play outside. I said I just couldn't do that, as the trip was long, and I homeschool from 9 to 3:30 (at which time I simply MUST go about some housekeeping duties and start thinking of supper). I don't have time to do the homework (oh, and then I found out he didn't want me to just DO a Bible study, he wanted me to TEACH it), and finally, I just wasn't comfortable having my six kids run around unsupervised for that amount of time. "Well," he said, "then what about week nights or Saturdays?" This was getting more and more ridiculous! I answered that those times were sacred to me (you know what I mean) in that my husband was home!

He then asked, "Well, then, Kathy, how DO you plan on fulfilling your Titus 2 role to TEACH the younger women?" I was dumbfounded! Thankfully, my husband jumped in and said that I WASN'T a Titus 2 "older woman," and that the request that was being made of me was unreasonable. He asked if it didn't seem odd that I was being asked to leave my family to fend for themselves for one evening a week, while I went out and taught others how to care for theirs!

The brother countered that my husband should be willing to make the sacrifice necessary to help me fulfill not only my Titus 2 obligations, but my calling as a follower of Jesus Christ to fulfill the "discipleship" part of the Great Commission.

Here's the ironic part of all this, Susan. Three of the ladies of the church have this week "given up" on homeschooling, saying that they just can't do it all. They seem at peace about their decision, so I'm not going to interfere. But a fourth lady took me aside last Sunday, and with tears in her eyes said she was

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thinking of joining the other three, even though she really, really didn't want to; but her life was just such a mess, she didn't think she had any alternative. She couldn't balance all the demands on her time, and she's now an emotional wreck.

Susan, these burned out ladies are the same ones who have time for one-on-one "discipleship" with each other during the week, who have time for weekly homeschool co-op, who have time for weekly ladies' prayer, and who see nothing wrong with (and think they need and deserve) going off for a twice-yearly 3-day weekend retreat, or taking a girls' night out every other month or so to "unwind"! And here I am, on the one hand being accused of not keeping up with these better organized sisters in my discipleship duties or fellowship obligations, due to some supposed "lack of time," yet on the other hand one of the few women still on an emotional even keel, with a wonderful, happy, well-balanced marriage, and looking forward to our twelfth year of homeschooling! Could there be some CONNECTION!?! :)

So, Susan, my question to you is this: Am I indeed a Titus 2 older woman, as this influential brother insists? And if so, is teaching a once a week Bible study on "The Excellent Wife" (or whatever) the only, or the best, way to fulfill my obligation to teach the younger women? If you answer yes to either question, please let me know why, and I will seriously consider your opinion. If not, could you please advise how to handle this matter? Would you suggest just leaving it alone unless it's brought up again? Or perhaps bringing it before the elders of the church for clarification? If so, how should we present our case? (It really would be my husband's case, as he has already stated he will not permit me to spend my evenings out and about discipling and teaching, so "I'm" off the hook, but he'd better have a good reason for HIS unwillingness! Any suggestions?)

Whew! I am so sorry for how long this turned out to be. It started out in my mind as just a simple question! I hope you will find time to perhaps address the topic privately or publicly (you may of course quote my letter in whole or in part if that seems best) whenever you get a chance. I'll bet there are a lot of us women out here who are confused about how to be Titus 2 women in season!

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*Thanks for everything and blessings to your family,
Kathy*

I printed Kathy's (name changed) letter in its entirety so that you, the reader, will get a truer picture of Kathy's heart and of what was taking place in her fellowship. We easily can see that Kathy has a heart to help her sisters in Christ, whether younger or older. She is doing much for them on a regular basis. However, now she is in a quandary. Is she failing to be a Titus 2 woman? Should she be doing more? What is her place? Is this elder brother right?

First, let us remember the two great commandments. "*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,*" —Matthew 22:37-39.

It is simple. God is first; neighbor is second. Duties never conflict. Now, let's next consider why God created a woman. We all know the answer to that question: God created her to be a helpmeet to *her* husband. This is foremost in a woman's life. As long as a woman has a husband, she is to be a help to him. Maintaining a household, rearing and teaching their children, cooking for the family, and caring for all the needs of the family is a huge job. Duties never conflict. She loves God. She loves her closest neighbor—her husband. She does the job God has given her to the best of her ability, giving it all diligence so that nothing is left undone. Then a woman, seeing that her family and house are in order, may reach out to others who are hurting or in need. Kathy has done this through counseling, sending cards, taking meals, teaching a Keepers' club, etc. If her home duties begin to suffer at any point, she should cut back on outside activities to give her first attention to her family. This is what God has called her to do. *If she does not take care of her family, who will?*

This Christian brother is inserting himself between Kathy and her husband. He is trying to expand her to-do list, and putting pressure on her, which he has no right to do. Thankfully, her husband is the leader and protector of his family, and has drawn his lines for his family. The other brother should have spoken with him first and discussed these issues with him, not his wife.

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So, is Kathy a Titus 2 woman? No, she is not “aged.” Recently, I have even heard of some young ladies in their twenties claiming to be Titus 2 women. That is ridiculous. The reason Paul expressly said “aged” is that “aged” women are finished with their child rearing; they have lived their lives, they have made their mistakes, they hopefully have learned to live for the Lord, and are looking forward to going home to Heaven. They know where the perils and dangers in life are for younger women. They have walked the path and are experienced.

Kathy is a beautiful older sister, able to show what works for her, and how she is living her life, rearing her children, and being a blessing to others. She is teaching by example; her walk talks, and her life reflects her love for her Lord, her husband, and her children.

Now, the real truth is that the majority of the other ladies and this elder brother probably *would not like* Kathy’s teaching. While these others are seeking to pull the women out of the home for seemingly religious reasons, a Titus 2 woman would be telling them to stay *at* home! Honestly, can you even imagine Abraham’s wife Sarah having a girls’ night out or a weekend trip just for the women, while the patriarchs stayed home to babysit???

I wonder if a quiet hour in our prayer closet would not be more effective than a women’s prayer meeting? Jesus went alone to pray to His Father in secluded desert places. You know, the Titus 2 woman was teaching one on one. She was not holding classes or speaking publicly. She was an older woman helping one young mother at a time. She was encouraging women to be keepers *at* home, not be out running around.

And then I am quite sure that most husbands, if not all, would like peaceful wives, peaceful children, and peaceful homes, and this can come about only as women put their time and energies into the people and place where God has placed them. And God knows where these peaceful Christians are, and His Holy Spirit will bring others to them so they can “mentor” or “disciple” along the way. And yes, God has a Great Commission, and He has given woman a great commission to be a helpmeet to her husband. Together they will be one in fulfilling all that God desires for them to be and do in this life.

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A Look at Another Lady's Schedule (as a follow-up to the previous letter)

About nine years ago, my daughters and I invited the author of the following letter to join us for an evening of sewing once a month, because she wanted to learn to sew. The following was her response. She homeschools her son John and sends her daughter Sally to preschool. Names have been changed.

Tomorrow starts the craziness all over again though. I have to go with Sally to school again tomorrow and bring the snack, then clean the house and do some school with John. Tuesday we go on the field trip with Sally's class to the grocery store at 8:30, and hopefully it will be done by 9:30 for John's violin lessons (in a town 35 miles away); then I pick Sally up, try to do some school with John, and cook for Bible study. If there is time, I wanted to bring the kids to the storytime at the library from 3:45-5:00 p.m., and then come home for study. Wednesday is wreath making at the church with the homeschoolers, then try to do some school with John, before taking Sally to ballet, and John to AWANA. That night I will try to paint Sally's room. Then Thursday I take Sally to school, head over to John's swim classes, then back home to do some school; I'll go back to pick up Sally, and head home to finish up school with John. I thought about trying to come to sewing, but I am thinking of just putting that off till January if it is still going on and I am still welcome. The last thing I need right now is to try to fit in another activity. Friday night Tom and I are going to try to go on a date, and Saturday morning I would like to make it to Women's Bible study. Then we hope to clean out the basement on Saturday so it is usable for the Christmas party. My friend Katrina and her family are coming up for Thanksgiving and that weekend.

Sadly, her life continues the same.

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Another Example . . .
(names changed)

Dear Susan,

I am drowning again and thought if I gave you some details you could see the forest for the trees. I cannot! I am going to limit myself to writing for twenty minutes, but I could go on forever!!

Typical Wednesday—yesterday—get up at 7 and help my husband out the door—he needs his clothes matched, lunch packed, the mail ready, wants me to talk to him while he shaves; 8-8:30 breakfast; kitchen a disaster area, but no time to clean it. 8:30-9:30 make phone calls—invite Grandma to Christmas dinner, invite Cousin Kathy, make appt with doctor for annual, make appt with orthodontist, call my mom’s cardiologist to find results of blood test (mom doesn’t know). Call Mrs. M to tell her we don’t have enough plates for church social Sunday. Start school at 9:30 still in my nightgown—teach until 3, call cardiologist back to get new dosages, throw chops in crock pot, hunt for due library books, leave at 3:30 for daughter’s violin lesson—while she is there, my other daughter and I go to the library and drop my mom off at the drugstore. Then we go to the grocery store; home at 6:30. Groceries put away—microwave potatoes, make salad, garlic bread, husband home at 7:45—eat dinner, clean kitchen until 9:00, and then burst into tears! Husband finishes kitchen while I pay bills that have to go out today. I promised daughter a private talk, so husband does that too while I help other daughter with a theory paper for piano lesson. They get to bed at 10:30, one hour late. I keep doing laundry/paperwork until midnight. My husband needs me, but I am exhausted. I fall asleep before he comes to bed.

Today—my list reads—(I don’t teach Tues and Thurs)—Step Aerobics, shower, do tape ministry for church (this will take at least 2 hours). Work on small home business (this will take at least 2 hours)—bank rec, negative acct rec, cancellations, birthday card to Grace, sympathy card to John, make chili, finish decorating tree (decorations have been out two weeks). Help daughter crochet at least 6 rows for crochet badge, have prayer and Bible readings, read

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literature assignment for Friday (five stories), read Earth Science assignment (chapter on rockets), address ten Christmas cards, call people who might know a better violin teacher, sew buttons on daughter's winter coat, do personal bank rec, wrap presents for 11 people, sew a button on my top, write AACC for annual meeting report, order stickers from Dover Press.

There is no way I can do all this today. Tomorrow will be another teaching day from 9:30 to 3:00 and then I have a dentist appt at 3:30 and prayer meeting in the evening.

I am having Christmas dinner at my house (20 people), so need to be thinking about that.

I feel as though I would love to read my Bible and pray and really study it as suggested in your Philippians Challenge, but there is no time. Also, need to find some new recipes—have two cookbooks checked out and six “Taste of Home” magazines that I haven't looked at yet. I would like to organize my wardrobe so I don't buy more than I need—no time. Is there an answer for me? My husband doesn't see the problems. He says just do what I can and don't worry about it. But my toilets are filthy and I haven't dusted in months. My house has yet to get clean for Christmas. I have had material for a year with no time to sew.

Well, sorry this letter is so disjointed—I can really write better than this—just trying to give you the feeling of my life in a short time. I cut everything I could: no church activities except tape ministry, no children's choir, no homeschool support group, and husband has agreed to quit our home business, so that is winding down. The girls' piano lessons are right next door, so my only outside thing is Keepers at Home, which now meets only four times a year, and violin for daughter.

ANY IDEAS?? ANY SUGGESTIONS??

*Love,
Sandy*

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And I have received many more such letters, e-mails, and phone calls with ladies in similar dilemmas. Let's take a look at how to set things right in these women's lives. The author of the first letter, Kathy (the elder sister), had a busy but focused life. She was fairly calm, not stressed, enjoying her marriage relationship and her children, and trying to be a blessing to others. She knew who she was and what she should be doing, and was focused. She had peace until someone came and upset the applecart! She and her husband did work out this situation with the church fellowship, and as I recall she remained an elder sister.

Life has never changed for the author of the second letter. She has never reached a peaceful place in her life; she is still running. Her children are growing up quickly, and . . . things are not turning out as she thought they would.

I do not really know the end of Sandy's situation, described in the third letter, because we lost communication more than several years ago. I hope things improved for her.

What can be done for these ladies and so many more just like them? Let's ask ourselves a few questions.

Too Busy?

Is it possible for a woman to be too busy? Of course it is. A woman can be too busy doing good things. The evil one doesn't care how busy a woman is as long as she is too busy. If she is busy, she will not have time to spend with the Lord God in prayer and devotion. She will not have time to spend with her husband, leaving him lonely and frustrated. She will not have time to spend with her children, leaving them to other influences.

A woman that is too busy is stressed, frustrated, irritable, not peaceful, not content, not gentle, and more.

Get Unbusy!

How does one become less busy? Get back to the basics. God made you a woman; He made you for a purpose. He made you to be a helpmeet to the man to whom you are married. A man's needs are simple. He needs love, physical and emotional; he needs to eat; he needs someone to make a

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home for him, and someone to nurture the children while he is working. He looks forward to coming home to his helpmeet.

Now, do you think your husband cares about all the other things in your life? Your activities? Your ministries? Your Bible studies? Your lady friends? No, he really doesn't. He loves you and he wants you, period. When you are too busy or too tired, he will try to fill up his time with other things, and then most likely you will gripe that he isn't helping you enough; he probably isn't, but then *why can't you get it all done so that you don't need him to help you?*

Let's keep eternity in view. When we have been there 10,000 years, what of what we did here will matter? The only thing that will matter is that we did what God created us to do, and that we lived for God; and we live for God by fulfilling our job assignments: wife, mother, neighbor, friend.

So, keep it simple:

- 1) God—time with Him, lots of it!
- 2) Husband—meet his needs.
- 3) Children—rear them.
- 4) Neighbor—be a good one.

So, how do these areas get so

complicated, over busy, and cluttered that we are overstressed?

Let's Expound

1) God

Our first priority is God—not church attendance, not service, not Bible studies, but God, your living personal relationship with Him. He is your King, your Lord, your best Friend, and your Saviour. You are to learn to walk with Him, to hear His Voice, to know His Word. You are His disciple. Your allegiance is to Him.

Get up early: early for you likely means 5:00 or 6:00, not 7:00 or 8:00. Spend at least an hour with Him before your day begins. Pray throughout your day. Pray about everything and pray to see your life through His eyes.

2) Husband

In our society, it is so easy to miss the importance of being there for our husbands. Think back to the garden of Eden. Adam looked around at all the animals—each animal had a mate, and he had none. God then created woman for him. Adam now had his mate. He had someone made just for him. He had someone with whom he could talk, laugh, dream, and have

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fun. He had someone to love in more ways than one. It was just him and his little Eve. He did not have to share her with anyone or anything; there were no pulls on her time to draw her away from him.

Ladies, this is what every man wants: his Eve, made just for him. He wants all of her; he doesn't want to share her. She is for him. He is willing to go to work and work hard, just to provide for her and take care of her. All he desires is her.

We need to wake up to our calling, and whatever interferes with it must go. We are created for one and only one purpose, and that is to be a helpmeet to our husbands. If something needs to be cut, if more time needs to be carved out, it should never, never be cut from the husband.

3) Children

Children are very important—they are eternal and they are the result of our union—but they do not come before God or our husbands. Many women make the mistake of putting their children first, before their husband, but that is clearly wrong. Everyone will suffer if the children become the center of the adults' lives,

including the children!

Simplify! For six thousand years, children did not occupy center stage. The lives of parents were not revolving around the schedules of their children. There were not sport teams for children, educational co-ops for children, music lessons for children, choirs for children, Christmas programs for children, dramas for children, and you can probably think of many more.

Will your children be scarred for life if they don't have violin lessons or play soccer? I don't think so. When all these extra-curricular activities are put on the schedule, where is the time found for being a servant, or helping a neighbor? What is eternal here? What is the financial cost? What is the time cost? What are the costs in terms of stress levels to your marriage, and yes, even your parenting?

There is nothing wrong with these things, but they have to work for *your* family. If they don't work, don't do them. Perhaps they will work in another year or two, but if not, your children will not be damaged. They will be more blessed by a spiritual, peaceful mom who has time for them, good meals, and a peaceful

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environment that is not run, run, run.

Simplify the homeschooling. Homeschooling is excellent, but it is not the end all. It is only one part of a child's life and one part of home life. You have nothing to prove to anyone. Your children do not need to be the best, smartest, most socialized, and most competent. You do need to make sure they can read well and spell well, that they are competent in math, and have a solid, general knowledge of history, geography, and science. Of course, it goes without saying that a thorough knowledge of the Bible is essential to godly living.

However, if you read all the homeschooling magazines, visit all the homeschooling sites, and try to do it all, you will end up doing none of it well, and be exhausted with the trying. So, keep to the basics. You are a wife and mother before you are a teacher. You are the only mother your children will have.

4) A Good Neighbor

Be a good Samaritan. Love your neighbor as yourself. *"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well,"* —James 2:8.

Help your neighbors when they need help, do good to them, be kind and friendly. You do not need to let them consume your time, party with them, or be best friends with them. The good Samaritan was helpful in a time of need, and then he moved on with his life.

And so . . .

The first lady, Kathy, had her priorities in order. She was a loving wife, tending to her family, homeschooling her children, and being a good neighbor. Her life was about others. The second lady, Sally's mother, was just busy; she was on a treadmill, and she didn't want to get off. The third lady, Sandy, was earnestly trying to make her life come together to please her husband, and her children, and the Lord. She just didn't know how to do it, but she could see it.

We each have different lives to live, and we are in different stages of life, but, trust me, we all face these same challenges again and again and again.

There is always the temptation to take on more, to do more, to be too busy, to get on the treadmill of life, but where will we end up if we do?

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Not in a good place.

If you desire a quiet life, a happy and contented husband who loves you, and children who are happy, you must *give up your life*. What? Yes, even though there are loads of things you must do and should do, you and I both know there are things that we love to do! We may love to read, scrapbook, quilt, spend time on facebook, or attend those fellowship meetings or girls' night out because we like to socialize, but we are making choices when we choose to spend our time on those activities or with others. We are all selfish and want to do what we want to do instead of doing what we should do or laying down our life for others.

There is nothing wrong with reading a book or doing a craft, or spending fifteen minutes or so on the internet, but we do know that when the kitchen is buried, the laundry needs to be done, the children need attention, and we are not there or are busy, something is very wrong.

And think about it for a moment. When you tell hubby, "See ya, John; Donna and I are going out for pie and coffee tonight. We won't be too late," do you think he is happy? Wouldn't

he be happier if you said, "John, let's go for pie and coffee for a bit. Dana will watch the kids"? I think his face would light right up with pleasure. He came home to be with you and there you go leaving him alone with the kids and work to do. Or you sit curled up with your book, or sit in front of the computer browsing your facebook account, and he sits on the couch doing—what? A little time spent here, a little time spent there doing your own things, not paying too much attention to your husband, and you will wonder what happened to your marriage relationship.

So Much More . . .

There is so much more I could write, but the picture is painted. Again, we all face these temptations, and we must constantly bring our lives to Christ for direction. We must lay down our lives for others, for in doing this, we are laying down our lives for Christ, and after all, did not He lay down His life for us? He has given us the opportunity to live for Him by living for others, and when we do this, we will have His blessing on our lives. I hope you will give it some thought and prayer. *Susan*

Have you ever thought

that we who have received redemption and eternal life; we who have received forgiveness for our sins; we who expect God to answer our prayers because we ask—to bless us because we are His; to heal our sicknesses because we want to be well; to keep us in financial prosperity because we do not want to be poor—that we who expect all of this from Him, and are not even willing to spend an hour a day in Bible reading, prayer, and communion with Him, are presumptuous at best, and utterly selfish, self-centered, and ungrateful creatures at worst? We expect Him to be readily available while we are too busy for Him! How sad! How despicable! How unfortunate for us!

Do you really want

to grow closer to the Lord Jesus? Do you really want to abide in Him? Then prove it by your actions!

What if

for a year, you canceled all your outside activities, gave up all unnecessary things, and spent the time gained with the Lord God? How many hours would that add up to? Five hours a week? Ten hours a week?

What if

you watched one less hour of television, or spent one less hour on the internet a day? That would be seven hours of time freed up which you could spend with the Lord. If you do not watch television or use the internet but spend your evenings reading instead, could you spend less time reading other materials and read His Word instead?

What would the results be?

Powerful! Life-changing!

And then, why not

tackle this as a family? Enlist everyone to be involved in drawing nearer to God for a year. Keep a journal or family diary of this special year.

And, pray over everything

individually and together. Read together. Talk about what you are reading and discuss and share with each other. What are you learning? What are you being convicted about? How is the Word changing you?

And, then next year . . .

Press on the upward way! Keep going!

*What if this is the year
that Jesus will come? What
little time we have left!*

A Little of This

I've Had an Affair

*Yes, I'm a Christian . . . but I've had an affair.
I thought it couldn't happen to me,
But I surrendered to another lover.
Willfully I chose to jeopardize my marriage . . . my family . . .
How did it happen?
I meant no harm and yet . . .
I've hurt my family, myself, and my Lord.
I thought I was following You, Lord;
I enjoyed this ministry so much . . . I thought I was serving . . .
Sacrificing for You! I thought I deserved this joy.*

*My lover was not a person . . . not another man . . . but a ministry in my church.
It seemed good and harmless, but somehow my priorities turned upside down.
Slowly . . . slyly . . . this love for a "ministry" began to steal a love that should
have gone to my family.
Is it too late to ask forgiveness?
Too late to start anew?
I've stolen so much time . . . so much emotion.
Lord, I've broken promises and let another lover
put a wedge between my husband and me.*

*I've learned a painful lesson, Lord—
Help me never to forget it.
Keep my priorities in order . . . and if I should ever again begin
to love a "ministry" more than my husband . . . my children . . . or You—
Nudge my heart . . . speak to me . . . I promise I'll listen and obey.
I'm sorry, Lord!
Thank You for Your forgiveness and healing.*

Author Unknown

Substitute "friends, e-mail, phone conversations, quilting, scrapbooking, crafts" for the word "ministry," and/or put the word in its place that keeps you from loving your husband as God would wish you to love him.

Why Women Believe Lies

Most of us would like to believe that we are not the ones the Bible warns us about. You know, the verses that make us sort of cringe on the inside, verses like, *“For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth,”* —2 Timothy 3:6-7. That’s not us, right? We are more spiritual than those women. We are more discerning, more wise, right? I wonder . . . Will you be open-minded and willing to *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves,”* —2 Corinthians 13:5, or can you honestly pray to God and ask Him to *“Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart,”* —Psalm 26:2?

First, let us take a closer look at these verses: *“For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* Hmm. *Laden with sins.* That is not us. We are Christian women. We are upright. We have standards. We do not commit crimes. Sins. No, no, these verses are not speaking about us.

What about the sins of self-will, self-pity, a critical spirit, lack of contentment, or pride? Let us be honest. We are guilty of being sinners—dirty, wicked sinners. “Okay, but I’m not led away by diverse lusts.” Really? What about the lust for new things? What things are on your credit card bills? How about the lust for food? What does your weight scale read? What about the lust for attention? Is that why you may long to be somebody special? Or perhaps it is the lust to be accepted which entraps you, and that is why you are a people pleaser.

Now we are beginning to see ourselves more clearly. We are wicked sinners with diverse lusts, and these lusts cause us to sin by overeating, spending too much, buying too much, seeking to be the center of attention, etc. This verse is speaking about us. What is that you are saying? You are knowledgeable? Ouch! This is where we really get zapped. Eve prided herself on being knowledgeable. After all, she knew God. He visited her each evening in the

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garden. She knew her husband and listened to his instructions on how they should live their lives. She also knew the friendly, beautiful serpent who visited her in her garden. She listened to him also. She was full of knowledge, but she lacked wisdom to use her knowledge correctly. She believed Satan was telling her the truth; she believed Satan had correct knowledge; she trusted Satan over her God and over her husband. She was ever-learning, but not able to come to the knowledge of truth. She could have asked God. He would have told her what the lie was. She could have asked Adam. He would have told her what to do in the situation, but she was deceived. She believed the lie. She didn't need to ask God or her husband. She could decide these things for herself. She knew more than they did. She made her own decision on the matter. Dear friends, if we are honest, most of us will confess to having believed the lies of Satan many times, and we have acted no differently than Eve did.

So, as much as these verses humiliate us, and we want to deny that these verses are not speaking about us, they are. Humble yourself and admit it. God knows it. *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,"* —1 John 1:8. Praise God. After the humiliating confession of sin, our God says that *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,"* —1 John 1:9.

A woman's nature is more trusting than a man's nature. God made women this way. Thus, women are more gullible than men. They are more easily led astray into error. They are more easily manipulated than men. Eve was deceived. *"And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression,"* —1 Timothy 2:14. Further, *"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ,"* —2 Corinthians 11:3.

Due to my public education and worldly life before coming to Christ, it took me years before I could admit the truth of these verses to myself, let alone to my husband or to anyone else. I surely believed I was as discerning as my husband, but God's Word said I was not. I guess I did not believe God's Word, but as I began to make this a matter of prayer, God showed me that my husband was more discerning. God made him that way. Do you know what I have

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discovered? There is no shame in admitting that I am gullible, and that I might not see through the deceitfulness of others as easily or quickly as my husband. God created women to be helpmeets with a nature to be followers. He created us to be trusting, caring women. Men can nearly always see the lie. Adam did. He chose to sin, but he still was not deceived. God did not need women to be as discerning as men. That was man's job. Ours was to be helpmeets.

So we caring, loving women like to believe the best about people, hope for the best, trust nearly everyone, and take things at face value. We are believers! If it sounds good, it must be good. If so and so said it, it must be true. Once we understand our own natures, and realize and accept the fact that we are more gullible and more trusting than our husbands, we can be more aware of our need to take everything to our husbands and to God and to His Word.

We can sharpen our own skill of discernment by “trying the spirits” and by comparing what we see, hear, and read with God's Word. It is essential that we study God's Word—all of it, Old and New Testament alike—to gain this discernment. *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,”* —2 Timothy 2:15. Paul was referring to the Old Testament Scriptures. The Old Testament is not irrelevant, for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Lastly, no matter how much you are growing and learning, and may think you know, take everything to your husband and to your God. If you earnestly seek the truth, true light, God will make sure that you have it. We must first lay down all we think, all we supposedly know, at His feet, before we can find His Truth. Let's do it, shall we?



A Little More of This

Joy in My Journey

- ✿ God always prepares me for the next thing in my life.
- ✿ Don't worry about the future; God already knows it. In fact, He is in it! He is able to carry me through it. He will provide all the strength I need.
- ✿ Take the first step—don't worry about the miles.
- ✿ Don't leave Jesus behind. Take Him with you!
- ✿ My tasks come directly from the throne of God.
- ✿ I need not look at all I have to do, but look to the Lord.
- ✿ Live in the “now.”
- ✿ Love in the “now.”
- ✿ Let your day flow like a river—perfectly, softly, gently, peacefully . . .
- ✿ Why worry about what needs to be done later—or why worry about it at all? Just do it later, but enjoy the “now.”
- ✿ Find the silver lining in every cloud. See the Father's love in everything. See all the good in everything.
- ✿ Rest in the Father. Trust Him. My job is to follow. His is to lead, protect, and provide.
- ✿ Bask in the love of God.
- ✿ Do not argue with the Bible.
- ✿ Remember that in the big picture of life, your to-do list is not nearly as important as your to-be list.
- ✿ Schedule time to be with people you love, in the places you love, doing the things you love.
- ✿ Don't say, “I'm losing my life to this or that.” Instead say, “I'm living my life.” Don't say, “I'm losing my time.” Instead say, “I'm spending my time.”

Are You Opinionated?

Opinions—whether good or bad—should we have them? What is an opinion? According to *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary*, there are several definitions. The first is “a belief or judgment that rests on grounds insufficient to produce certainty.” Hmm. Opinions are not facts, just beliefs about what we think is so. Very interesting. The next definition is, “a personal view, attitude or appraisal: public opinion.” We all know how reliable public opinion is! The third definition is, “the expression of a personal view, attitude; appraisal, or judgment.” The expression of opinions could be verbal or written. Some people even pay for the opinions of others.

Opinionated, according to the same dictionary, means, “obstinate or conceited with regard to one's opinions; conceitedly dogmatic.” Now obstinate means “firmly or perversely adhering to one's purpose, opinion, etc.” Dogmatic means “asserting opinions in a doctrinaire or arrogant manner; opinionated.”

Opinions, therefore, are just a person's beliefs. They are not fact. They are not truth. They are not the Word of God. Why do so many people feel compelled to share their opinions with everyone they meet, and on almost every subject they encounter? I would venture to guess (and that's just my opinion ☺) that folks who are always expressing their opinions have a need to appear knowledgeable to others. It is a way of building themselves in the minds (opinions) of others. It is a form of being proud, although they would most often disguise it in the form of “helping others.” These folks just know that their beliefs are the right ones, and that everyone else's opinion is wrong.

Does being opinionated cause problems in the body of Christ? Does it divide? Does it cause needless pain for others? Is it biblical to be continually espousing one's opinions? Yes, it causes problems, it needlessly hurts others, and it does cause unnecessary division; and, no, it is not biblical.

“Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldst thou destroy thyself?” —Ecclesiastes 7:16. “Only by pride cometh contention; but with the well advised is wisdom,” —Proverbs 13:10. “The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness,”

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—Proverbs 15:2. *“He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit,”* —Proverbs 17:27. *“Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?”* —Proverbs 20:6. There are plenty more Scriptures to be found on this subject of “speaking our beliefs,” but these are a start.

Usually folks who are always expressing their beliefs are trying to convert people to their way of thinking. Many times other folks do not want to change just because someone shares his or her opinions with them. When one refuses to convert or change, division often results. According to an opinionated person, if his way of thinking is right, the other person’s way must be wrong. Let me stop to clarify that we are not speaking of facts or doctrinal issues. We are not speaking of truths in the Word of God, though many opinions about doctrinal matters are not really in agreement with Scripture. We are speaking of a hundred other issues in our daily lives. My own heart is grieved for the many dear ladies who are being confused and hurt by the outspoken opinions of other Christian women. In the following paragraphs, we will talk about some of these womanly topics. *The intent is not to hurt, but to show how we do hurt.* Our goal should be to *“Be not righteous over much,”* and to be able to say as Paul did, *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,”* —I Corinthians 2:2.

Children—Children are a blessing and heritage of the Lord. However, the number of children one has should not be a source of criticism, nor a factor for comparative competition. Those with large families often feel scorned by those with smaller families. They are often the brunt of jokes and unkind remarks by people who have planned the perfect family. Conversely, those with fewer children can also feel inferior to those with more. However, each woman who allows God to plan her family has the exact number of children God has given her, whether it be none, two, or twelve. God is the author of life.

So often these days, women greet someone new with, “Hi! I’m Mary, and I have eight children. How many do you have?” Why do they never say, “Hi! I’m Mary, and I have a husband,” or “Hi! I’m Mary, and Jesus Christ is my Saviour”? We should be careful here. No one has asked us for our resume. In

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fact, we should not even be asking such a personal question of others. A godly woman is cloaked in humility. We should be careful not to exercise pride in the number of children we have, since pride is sin. When one woman boasts, “God has blessed me with nine children,” the woman with two children could feel slightly cheated, and wonder why God has not blessed her. The number of children we have should not make us feel superior or inferior to others, nor make us question God’s planning in our lives. Sarah was chosen by God to have one child, and that one child was sufficient to make her a mother of nations. When someone does ask us the number of children we have, we can then say how many, but we should first wait to be asked. *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,”* —I Corinthians 2:2.

The Birth Process—People used to rejoice in the blessing of a new baby. Now it seems that it is necessary to state whether the baby was born at home or in the hospital. Many women are becoming divided over where a baby should be born. God is the author of life! A new creation, a new baby, comes into the world, and we, instead of praising God for His gift to us, use the occasion to promote the place of birth. *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,”* —I Corinthians 2:2.

Education—Parents who have their children in Christian school and parents who homeschool equally love their children, and both are making sacrifices of time and money. Yet the assertion of dogmatic opinions spew forth, and the self-righteous are on both sides of the battle line. The poor folks with their children in public school aren’t even considered worthy of the battle. The Bible truth is that God did give the mandate to fathers to teach and train their children. Throughout the centuries, both Jewish and Christian fathers have trained their children in all manner of ways, including in the home, out of the home, through apprenticeships and/or higher education, etc. The father is responsible. He is to see that his children are prepared for this life and for eternity. The Word of God does not spell out the details. The Pharisees spelled out details, and we know how wrong they were. We could keep our opinions to ourselves, *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus*

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Christ, and him crucified,” —I Corinthians 2:2.

Standards—Everyone should have standards, but most people’s standards are opinions. Most folks have a line that they draw. A few actually use God’s Word as their standard. None of us live up to the high set of standards lived by the Pharisees and their families. Why is it that most people know more of our standards and less of our Saviour? *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,”* —I Corinthians 2:2.

Child-rearing—“My child was potty-trained at ten months!” “My child was potty-trained at two.” “I don’t allow my children to play with Barbie dolls.” “I don’t permit my son to play with guns.” “We only allow our children to watch G videos.” “We don’t watch any videos.” “I don’t give my child a pacifier.” “I would never use a playpen. It’s too confining.” “I let my child cry to sleep.” “I would never let my sweet baby cry to sleep.” “My children go to bed at a set time in their own rooms.” “My children sleep with us.” The list goes on and on. Whose opinions are these? The Lord’s? Have you noticed all the instances of “I,” “my,” and “we”? Who is getting puffed up here? *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,”* —I Corinthians 2:2.

Homemaking—“My house is messy because I put my family first before a clean house.” “My house is clean because cleanliness is next to godliness, and I want my children to live in a clean house.” “We love our families because we garden, can, and preserve our food.” “We love the Lord because, although we don’t can and preserve, we serve the Lord by the work we do for Him.” “I bake my bread.” “I buy my bread.” Again, is all this putting forth of how and why we do things necessary? Is it anybody else’s business if a woman bakes bread or doesn’t? This is all self-justification, and we are trying to be better than our sisters when we boast about how we do things. *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,”* —I Corinthians 2:2.

Residency—“I live in the country. God wants everyone to live in the country. Yes, you make less money, but the quality of living is so nice.” “I love the Lord, and His fields are white unto harvest in the city. There are

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more opportunities to witness for the Lord in the city.” Here, we are passing judgment on the will of God for others. *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified, —I Corinthians 2:2.*

I think we get the picture. ☺ We spend far too much time talking about our opinions and far too little time talking about Jesus. Our opinions and methods are nothing. Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, is everything. Our opinions do not save anyone. Jesus Christ is the Saviour.

These days folks talk about the biblical life. I suppose they mean moving out to the country, working for yourself, having a plot of land to garden . . . you know, simple living. It is just that, simple living. We must remember that the Jewish people lived simply. They lived in small houses, dressed very modestly, ground their grain without electricity, baked bread in earthen ovens, home-educated their children, had home births with midwives, did not practice birth control, and did not have televisions, visit Disneyland, swim in bathing suits, or even listen to a radio. MOST OF THEM DIED AND WENT TO HELL! Simple living is not biblical living. It is only simple living.

Biblical living is as Paul states in Galatians 2:20, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”* Biblical living is not a set of methods. It is being crucified with Christ. *“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it,” —Matthew 16:24-25.*

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men,” —Philippians 2:5-7. Servants do not have opinions.

What then? Shall we never give our opinions? *“Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth*

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not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace,” —James 3:13-18. God’s Word says that our lives, not our verbal opinions, will reflect His works in us. If our verbal conversations cause others to envy us or feel inferior to us, or cause strife and confusion, our verbal expressions are earthly, sensual, and selfish. God’s wisdom is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy (not proud or self-righteousness), full of good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. If we will sow, we must sow in peace, God’s peace.

If someone asks why we bake bread instead of buying bread, we can gently share why, remembering that baking bread makes us no better or more spiritual than anyone. We need not be on a crusade to convert folks to bread baking. If someone asks why we wear dresses, we can meekly share why. That is all. My friends, we are here to share the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We are not here to make a reputation for ourselves. We are here to make *His* reputation. May only the truths of His Word be found in our mouths.

Susan

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A Little of That

Today Is Your Future

Nearly every Sunday after church, the twenty-four members of our family—Jeff and I, our children and grandchildren—share a family meal in our home. This past Sunday was no different, and as I sat in my favorite rocking chair, I quietly watched and listened to what was going on around me. Two of my granddaughters (cousins to one another), Melody, age 15 and Julie, age 13, were quietly talking together. Because their faces were often lit up with such bright and sweet smiles, my curiosity overcame me, and I asked what they were talking about. The answer was “school.” We all laughed at that, including them. They were talking about history.

To my right on the love seat sat two more granddaughters (also cousins), Jenny, age 12, and Miranda, age 13. They were discussing their current quilting projects. Miranda was nearly finished with a log cabin twin size quilt. Jenny was sharing that she did not think she was ready for something quite that large, but was working on a smaller quilt that included embroidery on it. Then their topic switched to pie making. Miranda is a tremendous pie maker, but to earn her award for pie making, she still needed to make a savory pie and a lattice top pie. She wondered what a savory pie was. I joined the conversation to explain what a savory pie was, and it turned out that both girls already had made them without knowing it. The lattice pie still troubled Miranda. Jenny told her how easy it was and demonstrated with her hands how to slice the dough. Miranda still had questions about the weaving, and Jenny again demonstrated how easy it was. Miranda breathed a sigh of relief and said she was sure she could do that.

To my left, Ben, age 17, was amusing our youngest grandchild, Jody (4). He was genuinely enjoying making conversation that was of interest and joy to a four-year-old. And she at age 4 was telling him a story about when she was a little girl: too funny! Katie, age 12, was playing a game with a group of younger children at the dining room table, keeping them busy and happy. Earlier, several of the girls were practicing playing hymns together on their violins and flute. Oh, and yes, all the adults were quietly visiting with each

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other, and catching up on the news of the week.

Back to the title of this little story, “Today Is Your Future.” Well, your children are becoming what they will be. What you do today will have an impact on their future. The quilting girls began with an embroidery kit, learned to stitch, and then quilted a pillow; now they are going on to their own projects and enjoying every minute of it. The “history” girls were expressing a love of learning interesting things, and enjoying discussing what they had been learning. The bakers were building their baking experiences one pie at a time. Katie can easily take over a group of children and amuse them. Ben can work hard, and he participates in the adult conversations, but this day he had chosen to be a servant and amuse a little one so the parents could relax and enjoy one another.

Shall I go on? After Sunday dinners, Rose, Melody, Miranda, and Julie head up the kitchen cleanup crew, with Katie, Jenny, and Lauren pitching in. The older guys take care of the trash and general pickup. It is a blessed day! How did it get this way? One step at a time, and no step is unimportant.

But back to the title, “Today Is Your Future.” What especially blessed me is that the girls were not discussing boys, makeup, movies, etc. They were not gossiping. They were talking about quilting and baking and history. Their minds were filled with good things. And so where am I going with this? Keepers and Contenders’ handbooks are filled with wholesome things to interest your children. They are life builders and family builders. One small skill leads to another. These skills help to make young people competent, and help them prepare for their future. And yes, I am still incredibly blessed that my own grandchildren are learning these skills too, and am equally blessed to see my grandchildren develop into beautiful and godly young people. I won’t be here to see the ends of their lives, but I have a glimpse of their futures, and I am grateful.

You, too, can bless your children by helping them become the kind of adult that you and God would like them to be. The teaching and training is each day, for their future depends on this day. Make the days count, and when the future comes, you will be blessed!

Susan

A Little of That

IS IT YOU, LORD?

*Thank you, Lord, for when I didn't succeed.
Thank you because You send what I need.
Thank you for all the trials You've sent.
Thank you for the way I've been bent.*

*I see now that I've passed my peak,
And I'm slowly becoming old and weak.
When, before, there was much I could do,
Now, finally, Lord, I look more to You.*

*When I try in my strength to serve You,
I often receive the glory for what I do.
But what really brings glory to You, Lord,
Are my feeble attempts to conform to Your Word.*

*Oh, please show me when I would think to brag
That I am nothing but a filthy rag.
For only then can I possibly know
How nothing but Your light can make me glow.*

*Truly, how often I would decide.
And, yet, it is my job to only abide.
For years I have wished to DO things Your way
Rather than to be a lump of clay.*

*Lord, I cannot know how patient You've been,
Waiting until the light I've seen.
Show me that I can only follow You far
If I can truly realize Who You are.*



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*The only thing I can do for Thee
Is what I am willing to let You do in me.
My deeds for You can bring only shame
As long as they continue to bear my name.*

*How will I ever send others to You
As long as my presence blocks their view?
Seeing You, they will yearn to obey.
Seeing me, they will just go astray.*

*I don't know how to be strong when I'm weak.
Somehow, it's not a lesson I seek.
I never will find it all on my own.
My flesh won't desire the things to be known.*

*Failure and weakness and sorrow at least—
And wants, successes, and goals released—
Are required steps on the path to that gate.
The one we know as the gate called straight.*

*So, send me trials in line with Thy will
Even when I think I've had my fill,
That when I falter to my knee,
I can gratefully know that **it is Thee.***

J. Zakula



A Little More of That

Identification

With whom are you identified? An unsaved person must see Christ in us. Our children must see Christ in us.

Do we identify with our unbelieving neighbors by laughing at their jokes, agreeing with their life choices by assent, or remaining silent and nodding our heads?

We must live our lives as Christ would. Our children must not see any compromising behavior or even impropriety in us. If they do, this shows them that we are not whole-hearted followers of Christ, and therefore, we must not *really believe* who Jesus Christ is, because if we really believed, we would be wholly identified with Him, and not seek to identify with our neighbors.



What Is Your Focus?

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” —2 Corinthians 3:18

- * What we focus on is what we become.
- * We are changed by what we focus on.
- * Jesus is the only role model.

Believers are unstable because they do not stay focused on God.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.” —Isaiah 26:3-4



Our Bear Hunt

Remember the childhood story “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt”? The lesson to be learned from this little story is that we must go through it, whatever “it” is. Each person must go through his/her journey. Can’t go over it, can’t go under it—must go through it. Jesus will go through it with us. He is the only One who will and can.

- * The widow must go through life alone.
- * The woman in a troubled marriage must go through it.
- * The invalid must go through life.
- * Whatever the trial—illness, a handicapped child, accidents, job reversals, pain . . .

We must go through it—*not escape it, but embrace it!* This is our journey! How do we want to live it—sad, depressed, and complaining, or cheerful and victorious? The choice is ours! At the end of my journey, I want to have lived it well. Don’t you?



A Little of That

He Maketh No Mistake

*My Father's way may twist and turn,
My heart may throb and ache,
But in my mind and soul I'm glad to know,
He maketh no mistake.*

*My cherished plans may go astray,
My hopes may fade away,
But still I'll trust my Lord to lead,
For He doth know the way.*

*Tho' night be dark and it may seem
That day will never break;
I'll pin my faith, my all, in Him;
He maketh no mistake.*

*There's so much now I cannot see,
My eyesight's far too dim;
But come what may, I'll simply trust
And leave it all to Him.*

*For by and by the mist will lift,
And plain it all He'll make.
Through all the way, tho' dark to me,
He made not one mistake.*

A. M. Overton

My Mailbag—

Dear Susan,

First of all, a heartfelt thank you for all the articles you wrote in “In Keeping With the Faith.” I have many back issues and still go back to reread them. More often than not, the Lord has used an article to bring to light something in my life which is out of line with His Word. Though it is usually painful, I am thankful for this.

Second, I very much need some input and advice regarding our eldest daughter. To give you some background, we are a military family with a doctor daddy who is currently commanding a squadron of 200+ people. We have six children: G13, G10, G7, B6, B4, G3 months. We live on base where everything down to the people with whom one may freely associate for friendship is regulated, and where it is extremely difficult to shelter children. We have always homeschooled, and currently drive 70 miles one way each Sunday for church in an effort to have somewhat likeminded fellowship. We move about every two years, with our next move scheduled in about eight months. Because my husband usually works six 10-14 hour days per week, the training of the children is mostly on my shoulders. Though my convictions and my husband’s differ on such things as reading materials and music (I am far stricter), I have made his standards the family standard, even when it cost me much inner pain and many, many prayers.

Our eldest child has always been very independent. She is unusually gifted in composing music and literature, often in genres of which I cannot approve. She has read voraciously since learning to read at age four. Though we have been very strict with her behavior, she is becoming ever more a rebel. She is very firm that she does not want to marry or have children, as she sees my life as a stay-at-home mother as “boring” and akin to “slavery.” This past week we learned from her younger sister that our eldest and a homeschooled neighbor girl had devised a fortune-telling system using a set of cards. Our daughter was basically unrepentant and went so far as to say that she doesn’t

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wish to serve either God or Satan, rather only to serve herself. I was horrified. Her father was not pleased, but did not take the situation as seriously as I did. We also learned that she has been regularly listening to popular music at the other family's home, for which she was likewise unrepentant. My husband did agree to let me restrict the time that our children spend with those from the other family in their home, though not to eliminate it altogether. (The other children are our children's only friends besides the children at church, whom they see only on Sunday.) I fear that the battle for this child's soul is being lost, and I fear it will affect the younger children also.

Would you have any advice for me in this situation? I would very much like to totally revamp our homeschool program, clean out the burgeoning family library, get rid of videos, etc.—in short, clean up our home so that any element which would encourage my daughter to further rebellion or would lead any of us into sin would be rooted out. However, I feel that I cannot do this without my husband's complete support and agreement. I do not know quite how to appeal to him, or if such an appeal would even bring more than a cursory hearing. He is very often so laden with the concerns of the people he shepherds at work that the concerns of our family are easily neglected and soon forgotten in the assumption that I will somehow "handle it." My prayers right now seem to be jumbled and confused. I do not feel that seeking help from the other families at church would avail much due to definitely differing convictions about reading materials, etc. In short, I am at a loss as to how to proceed—or even if I should proceed. I would appreciate any godly advice and counsel you could give me.

Thanks,

Dear _____,

Your letter has been prayerfully read and reread and prayed over, all as I have been asking the Lord to help give the answer. It is a difficult, complex

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situation, and I can certainly sense your deep feelings and struggle with it. What can you do?

There are things I am sure you wish you could do but cannot. You must live within the constraints of the military system. There are simply things which cannot be changed, such as your frequency of moving and your husband's very long hours. So, we must ask what can be changed to help the situation.

I guess my first thought is that you should try to convince your husband of the great need for his leadership in his children's lives. All the many people he ministers to at work are just people who come in and out of his life every two years, but his children are forever his, and they have eternal souls. He brought them into this world, and he owes them his time and much guidance, and he will be accountable to God for them. It is not a responsibility he can delegate. It is his. Perhaps there is a way for him to shorten his workday. If not, the hours after returning home must be given to love and train his children. Time for other things must come after that.

Is it ever possible to live off base?

You say, "I have made his standards (regarding music and books) the family standard even when it cost me much inner pain and many prayers." Surely, your husband can understand what a little germ or small virus can do—it wreaks havoc and disease. Perhaps you can share again the effect these types of materials are having on your eldest daughter. You are seeing the very real results of wrong reading, friends, etc. in her life. In the case of a physical disease, antibiotics are given to combat the invading organisms. This is what your daughter needs: a strong dose of parental antibiotics. Otherwise, left untreated, your daughter will be lost to a way of life down a path which leads to destruction. Your husband must SEE the danger your daughter is in.

If your husband does not see it, or does not want to see it, what can you do? I would fill all the hours of the day when you are alone with the children with beautiful music and hymns. I would sing with them. Vocalize how much you love this song or that song, and tell them the reasons why. Sing or hum all the day long. Encourage your children to memorize hymns. If they do, reward them with a shopping trip or some reward of value to them. Sing, sing, sing.

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Don't let the battle be over standards, but let your loved ones know that Mom loves to sing and make a joyful noise unto the Lord all the day long. You are the adult in the home while your husband is gone. Surely, he will not mind if you play the music which blesses and encourages you, and as it does that, the blessing will fall down upon your children. He needs to see that if he wants you to "handle it," he needs to be willing to allow you to use methods geared toward providing the right results.

On the matter of books, keep your eldest daughter very busy with school and other work so that she will have as little time as possible for reading. Teach her to sew, and have her help with or take over completely the sewing of her own clothes and clothes for her younger sisters. Do crafts with her. Teach her to bake and cook. While you are working with her, talk and share about how you LOVE to stay at home. Women who work have little personal freedom. They must work all day for a BOSS. They can never just decide to go to the park on a nice day, or take a nap if they are tired, or spend the day doing something fun. They get only two weeks a year of vacation. They still have to clean their house on their days off, and the only time to cook really good things is on a Saturday or Sunday. Just as your husband is controlled by his bosses, who control nearly every waking minute of his life, so is a woman who works; her life is dictated by others. Constantly talk of how blessed you are with your life. It is a joy to stay home and be with those you love.

Wean away the friendship between your daughter and the worldly girl as quickly as possible. Friendship with an enemy of God is no friendship. Of course, I am sure you told your daughter that to serve her "self" is the same as serving Satan. There are only two paths—one toward God and one away from God. She is walking on one or the other. She obviously has no "fear of God," Who has the power to cast into hell. During Bible devotions or school Bible time, teach about the "fear of God." She needs to know that she is playing with fire, and she needs to be afraid of it.

If your husband has placed the responsibility on you to rear these children and/or has passed on the authority to you by delegation, I would by all means begin a little housecleaning and purging. After seeing the effects on your oldest,

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why allow the same problems to occur right down the line? Get busy, clean, and purge whatever things are yours and the children's (not your husband's).

You did not mention television. If you have one, limit its use or do not watch it while you are home alone with your children. Ask your husband how serious he is about not losing his children to the devil. The effect of removing bad reading will be marginal in the wake of what pours out of the television. Keep your children too busy doing other things to have time to watch television. Read good books to them twice a day. Have an afternoon reading time and a night time reading time. This at least will instill some good ideas into your eldest daughter's mind. If your eldest daughter is a good reader, as you say she is, select books for her to read. We used to assign a number of books each month that we wanted our children to read, and knew they would probably not read on their own. We continued this practice through high school. Choose some good books and have her read them out loud to the younger children. This is also another way of getting some good things into her mind.

I know this is quite a job assignment for you, but, as you said, you are in a battle for your child's soul. Pray, pray, pray. This battle can be won only with the assistance gained through prayer. Bombard God's throne with this petition long and often. Ask God to give you special opportunities to talk with your daughter. Ask Him for His Holy Spirit to work in your daughter's soul, convicting her of sin, and giving her discernment. Ask Him to show you each day what you can do that day for her. Pray for God to work in your husband's life, to open his eyes to the dangers in his own home, or, at least, to give you reign in the matter of books, music, friendships, etc. After all, you are in the trenches while the captain is away. You see the day-to-day battle. We do have book reviews on the web now. Ask him to read one or two so he can know that the very ideas in your daughter's head are coming from the books she is reading. Satan can enter her mind easily, so, although you are controlling behavior, it is a losing battle because the mind is being lost.

Thus, in answer to your last question, I would encourage you to do all you can to reclaim your daughter. I am sure your husband is a caring father, and as you said, he helps people all day every day. He is a good man, and please

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do not think I have implied differently; he is, as you say, overburdened with other cares and responsibilities. Love him and be the best helpmeet you can be to him by doing all you can to rear his children to love God and live lives pleasing to God. Good children are a blessing. Troublesome children are a huge burden. You are trying to avoid future burdens by using all the weaponry in your home arsenal you can to keep the minds and hearts of your children.

I certainly hope these thoughts help. I will pray for you. I hope the next place you move will be a nicer place. Again, remember that the battle is not over soon, and do not ever give up hope. People talk about “turning out children,” but the truth is, “turning out” is a lifelong process of learning to live for God. Many young people may go through a troubling time where they learn how sinful they are before they decide to come fully to the Lord. So, never give up. Never stop praying, and never give in to your children. *Never condone the idea that wayward behavior can belong to one who belongs to Christ.*

Please keep in touch, and I will be praying for you to handle it!

Susan

He Giveth More Grace

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;
To added affliction He addeth His Mercy;
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

His love has no limit; His grace has no measure;
His power no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth and giveth and giveth again.

Annie Johnson Flint

Dreams

Nearly everyone says you need to have a dream. The world says it. Christians say it. I can't find where God says it. Where does Jesus say it? I think we are swallowing another lie. Satan is so slick.

We are told to dream big. Dream little. It does not matter as long as you have a dream. Maybe your dream is to live in the country; maybe it is to have a large family; maybe it is to have a home business; maybe it is to own a nicer house; maybe it is to have children who are nearly perfect—well-educated, polite, and “perfectly turned out.” There are so many good dreams to have, but your real life has not turned out to be a dream, and you are somewhat discontented about it.

This is what is wrong with dreams. Dreams frustrate people because they cannot make their dreams come true. They cannot control the circumstances of life or control the outcomes of employment, child rearing, sickness, and in general—life.

Dreams have to use and depend upon others for their fulfillment. That means that those with dreams are often frustrated with the “others” in their lives. Folks are just not cooperating with making another's dream come true because they are too busy working on their own dreams. Resentment, bitterness, and anger can occur with those who are not helping the one accomplish his dreams.

Dreams are of this world. They will die with the dreamer or shortly thereafter. But, you say, the Bible says in Proverbs 29:18, “*Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*” This verse has given many a person seeming authority to give others a vision, a dream, and encourage/manipulate them so that they will work toward fulfilling the vision or dream; but read this verse again. The vision is the “law.” Yes, happy people keep God's law; they do not work on visions.

God's Word in Colossians 3:2 urges us to “*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*” Our affections, our desires, should be on

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things above. Dreams are earthy, carnal—here today, gone tomorrow—but things above are eternal.

Psalms 62:5 says, “*My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.*” My expectation is my hope, the thing for which I long. My dreams come from my God. He gives us heavenly dreams of a celestial city where you and I will see Him in all His glory. What a hope!

We need no one else except the Lord Jesus Christ for this dream to come true. If we are looking for our expectation, our hope, to come from and through Him, we will not be dependent on others to make it happen. We will not be bitter or frustrated, nor will we attempt to use others or control others.

God says for us to obey today. Work today. Serve today. Do your job today. He never says to have a dream and work toward it. Unfulfilled dreams lead to disappointment, hopelessness, and depression.

Dreams might cause you to make wrong decisions because you are focused on your dream instead of on the Lord. Your dream may not be God’s dream for you. A dream could be a slippery slope.

Do you know what my dream is, my hope? To hear Him, my King, say “Well done.” The past is gone, the present is all we have, and we don’t know what the future will bring. Why don’t we relinquish our dreams of this life and set our attention and affection on our King, His Kingdom, and spending eternal life with Him?

Be Filled With What?

I want to be filled with You, Lord, and not myself. Myself is full of negative thoughts and emotions and sin, but You, Lord, are full of peace and love and good thoughts and good emotions! You are full of Truth and Light.

Oh, Lord, please fill me with You!

Are You Spread Too Thin?

Dear Ladies,

You know, soup that is very thin does not taste quite as good as a thick, hearty soup. Peanut butter spread so thin that you barely know it's there does not taste quite as delicious as a thickly spread peanut butter with jelly on top. Paint that barely covers a wall does not hide the blemishes as a thick coat of paint would, and, therefore, does not look as good as it could. A woman who spreads herself too thin amongst her duties of life can often have the same problem.

"I have too much to do! I can't get it all done! I'm under pressure all the time!" are complaints, or shall I say "cries," that we often hear or feel ourselves. The truth is that when we are overscheduled, have too much on our plates, and can't keep up with it all, we are spread too thin; and we don't look so good, our homes don't look so good, our families don't look so good, and there is nothing tasty or delicious about it all.

Well, what can we do about it? If you are feeling spread so thin that there is simply not enough of you to go around, take a good hard look at yourself, your home, your marriage, your activities, your homeschool, and whatever else you have going on in your life. Ask yourself some questions such as:

- What can I do differently?
- What can I eliminate?
- What can I streamline?
- What are the really important things?
- What are the eternal things?

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I have always loved the little poem—

*Only one life to live,
'Twill soon be past;
Only what is done for Christ
Will last.*

Wives, you have only one life to live as a wife. Don't you want to be a wonderful, delightful wife? A wife that your husband can't wait to come home to? To spend time with? To love?

Mothers, you have only one life to be a mother. Don't you want to be a loving and encouraging mother? A mother that your children will always be thankful for?

Women, you have only one life to live for Christ, to serve Him now. Don't you want to live for Him instead of for self?

Life is short; it is fleeting. The past is over, the future is uncertain, but we have today to live and love and serve. Why not clear out the clutter from your home, your schedule, and your life? Don't spread yourself too thin; instead, make your life like a delicious sandwich or a hearty soup, something that nourishes and tastes good and satisfies. Give it some thought, will you?

Susan

Reprinted from Susan's Corner
www.kofcompany.com/susanblog

**Content with this, I ask no more,
But to Thy care the rest resign;
Sick or in health, or rich or poor,
All shall be well if Thou art mine.**

Selected

The Burden of Romance

The Bible really never speaks about romance, but we women seem to think it is a very necessary part of life, and that it is a vital part of a successful relationship. Most of us grew up with some type of literature that makes us aware of something called romance. Whether it was classic English literature such as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, or something more contemporary such as a Grace Livingston Hill novel, we became acquainted with the idea of Mr. Right striding into our lives and sweeping us off our feet like Cinderella's prince, carrying us off to Camelot to live "happily ever after." Even today, everywhere we look, we see books advertised telling us how to put "romance back into our marriages." Marriage seminars are being promoted as "getaway weekends" to help married couples get back "in touch" with each other. Women are told to prepare candlelight dinners or have a regular date night. Men are reminded to "remember" Valentine's Day, Sweetest Day, Mother's Day, and so many more. "Say it with flowers," or "Say it with candy," are the slogans of the day reminding the men in our lives to get with the thoughtful, romantic stuff!

This romance philosophy is so prevalent that if your marriage does not measure up to society's romantic standards, you might even think that there is something wrong with you, and certainly that there must be something wrong with your husband. Before long you can find yourself believing that you are really missing out in life, and how easy it can then become to harbor bitter, and even angry, thoughts about the man to whom you are married. You can begin to believe that you are being robbed of the delight and happiness which should come from that elusive romantic relationship that everyone should have.

How Do I Know This?

How do I know this? Because many years ago I was foolish enough to fall into this trap. And why not? Didn't I read "Christian" books that said God

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wanted me to have my fill of romance?

May I share a personal story with you? I am married to a very good man. However, he is a very practical man, and practicality and romance often mix (or don't) like oil and water. Of course, I had all the "necessary" starry-eyed dreams of my future life when I married him. However, life happens after the marriage ceremony. The babies, housework, and routine of wifedom and motherhood set in very shortly. Occasionally, I would still find time to read a fanciful book, or an article by some "prominent" Christian stressing the importance of romance. I might even hear an occasional sermon on keeping the romance in a marriage. Romance surely seemed to be the key to a happy marriage according to the experts. So . . . I began to feel a little shortchanged by my husband. One day, about fifteen years into our marriage, we were riding in the car and he looked over at me and smiled and said, "I love you." Well, the words just weren't quite enough for me, so I went on a fishing expedition and asked him to expound on them. "Why do you love me?" Of course, I was hoping for a few really nice compliments, something to make me feel special. Big mistake! He thought for a minute or two while I awaited in eager expectation. He finally gave me what he considered to be his highest compliment. With a big smile he said, "Because, honey, you are just like an old shoe."

"What?" I sputtered. "An old shoe! What kind of compliment is that?" I was fuming! I was upset! I was so hurt! How could he say such a thing? The poor guy meant it sincerely. He tried to explain why it was a compliment, but I was not in a mood to hear it. When I calmed down a little, enough to try to listen, he explained that being "an old shoe" was a very high compliment indeed. He went on to explain that old shoes are comfortable, they don't pinch or cause blisters, they don't rub you in the wrong way. They are an absolutely perfect fit. That was what I was like to him. Well, okay, I guess that was a compliment. The truth is, it does take a huge effort to ever get him to give up the remnants of what used to be a pair of shoes. I can laugh about it now. I am probably the only woman in the world to be called an "old shoe."

As time went on, I just sadly became resigned to the lack of romance in my

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life, until one day my husband told me that all this romance nonsense was just that, nonsense. It wasn't biblical. Men were being forced to live up to some elusive image that fictional writers imagined and silly women believed. This nonsense was further compounded when leaders gave credence to it, preachers gave it their stamp of approval, and the Christian publishing houses spread it in order to get rich. Well, I've always believed my husband to be a little radical about practicality, but investigation usually proves him right in the end. He encouraged me to pray about it. I did. He was right! Let me share a few thoughts that the Lord has given me concerning romance in marriage.

What Is Romance?

What is romance? According to Noah Webster's Dictionary, a romance story is a narrative depicting heroic or marvelous achievements, colorful events or scenes, chivalrous devotion, unusual or even supernatural experiences, or other matters of a kind to appeal to the imagination. Being "romantic" is described as being fanciful, unpractical, unrealistic, imbued with or dominated by idealism, a desire for adventure, chivalry, etc. It is characterized by a preoccupation with love, or by the idealizing of love, or one's beloved. Actually, the list can continue, and could be quite lengthy.

We can see at a glance that this list certainly does not include any scriptural concepts. The Bible exhorts us to be sober, sincere, practical, realistic, moral, and obedient. The Bible commands men to love their wives, lead them, provide for them, and protect them. Nowhere in His Word does God instruct men to create romantic situations or cater to the fanciful illusions of their wives. If God does not think it necessary for men to be romantic, why do we? Do you think it is quite possible that Satan has deceived us once again? Isn't the truth really that those who teach us to seek romance in our marriages are actually, in the light of spiritual things, telling us to forsake the pursuit of biblical love in favor of more selfish gratification?

When we are searching for romance, we are looking for something more than God has planned for us. In searching for this elusive "something" called romance, we become discontent. Discontentment breeds a restlessness which

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causes us to look at our husbands with dissatisfaction. As said before, we may become bitter over what we perceive we are missing. Some may even go astray searching for forbidden relationships which might fill the imaginary gap in their lives.

Gimmicks

Have we ever stopped to think that Valentine's Day and Sweetheart Day are only gimmicks to encourage consumers to spend more unnecessary money? It's hard to imagine the patriarchs going to such lengths to romance their wives. Even romantic dinners at a quiet restaurant are something peculiar to our day and age. I confess to even being disgruntled with my husband for not remembering to purchase me a corsage to wear on Mother's Day or Easter Sunday like all (okay, a great many) of the rest of the women in my church. For a few years, I bought my own. Then I just gave up on it.

Setting My Husband Free

Well, I'm wandering here, but I want to say that when I finally realized that all this was a ploy of the devil to deceive me into finding fault with a perfectly good, honest, God-fearing, loving husband, I decided to trash the romance thing. I decided to free my husband of the burden of being romantic! I told him he was off the hook. He did not need to remember any more of these special feast days to romance me. He didn't even need to remember my birthday or anniversary. (After all, he never remembers his own.) He no longer needed to try and remember to do these things. I was happy and well pleased with him. He was a kind and loving husband, just a practical and no-nonsense type of man. He fulfilled all of God's requirements for a husband, so why should I desire more than God? I asked him to forgive me for being such a foolish wife. He did. So I am content to be his "old shoe" and he is content with his "old shoe."

I can only ask you dear ladies whether you, too, may have been deceived by the evil one. Do you sometimes wish for a more romantic relationship with your husband? Why not give it up and set him free from trying to live up to

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some fictional romantic hero? The next time you hear some radio preacher telling you how keep the romance in your marriage, turn him off. Burn your books on how to keep the romance burning in your marriage. Don't read another article on it. Instead, turn to your husband and thank God for him. He may be a plumber, an electrician, or computer programmer, a teacher, or a pastor. He may work sixty hours a week to provide a living. He may not have a romantic bone in his body. He probably doesn't, but he is a good man who, we hope, loves the Lord and loves you.

Romance has nothing to do with real, biblical love. Love is a commitment to obey God by keeping His first and second commandments. Our husbands love us by going to work every day, by caring for us when we are sick, by bringing home their paychecks, by seeing that our physical needs are met. They are there day in and day out. There is nothing romantic about that, but there *is* something that our God prizes very highly—faithfulness. Why not be a blessing to your husband and set him free from the burden of romance? Perhaps he just might like an “old shoe” for his wife too.

Susan

Reprinted from *In Keeping With the Faith* ©1996

A Poem About Murmuring

Some murmur when their sky is clear
And wholly bright to view.
If but one speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue;
And some with thankful love are filled,
If but one streak of light,
One ray of God's good mercy, gild
The darkness of their night.

Selected

Difficult People

When we have difficult people in our lives we must realize that:

- ✿ It is not our job to change them.
- ✿ It is not our job to criticize them.
- ✿ It is not our job to be frustrated, bitter, or angry.
- ✿ It is not our job to complain about them.
- ✿ It is not our job to gossip about them.

It is only our job to serve our Lord. We must do our job, which means:

- ✿ Keep our hearts right.
- ✿ Love others better than ourselves.
- ✿ Return kindness for unkindness.
- ✿ Return good for evil.
- ✿ Not carry hurt feelings or grudges, only forgiveness.
- ✿ Pray for those who hurt us.

As the Lord leads we should *actively* seek to win these people. Do not stay away or be passive, but be warm and friendly and show them Christ's love.

“Robert, we have before seen that those we expect most from often repay our kindness with ingratitude. It is enough to break the heart to help the saints. Did not the Jews, who were benefitted by Christ, cry ‘Crucify Him’? Shall we have better treatment than He had?”

Mary Moffat

“I wish them to see the contrast in everything where love rules.”

Pandita Ramabai



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More on Difficult People

After having some really troublesome times with difficult people, I earnestly prayed for God to show me how to be more of a help to them, since it seemed I so often failed them. This is what He showed me.

1. Give cups of cold water, one cup at a time. Only give water when the person is thirsty.
2. Difficult people are very selfish in the sense of being focused on themselves—their problems, needs, thoughts, questions. So it is important to make contact only when they want to make contact; otherwise, they resent it, and don't like the intrusion.
3. They may say that they want to be friends with you, but they are too selfish to be friends; however, we can still be a friend to them. We simply must have no expectation of anything from them.

Thus, I can best help them by keeping my distance, being there when they need me, and then retreating into the background. Difficult people need lots of space, and they need to feel in control. They also need to stay in the power position. This is how they feel safe.

Conflict

Whenever there is conflict, pause and pray and evaluate. What is happening? Why is it happening? What are the motives behind each person's actions?

When we have conflict, something is out of line with God.

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It Matters Not

It matters not if I've been hurt,
It matters not at all
That sometimes from my weary eyes
The scalding teardrops fall.

What matters most is if I've erred
And not confessed the sin,
And through my lack some needy soul
Has failed to follow Him.

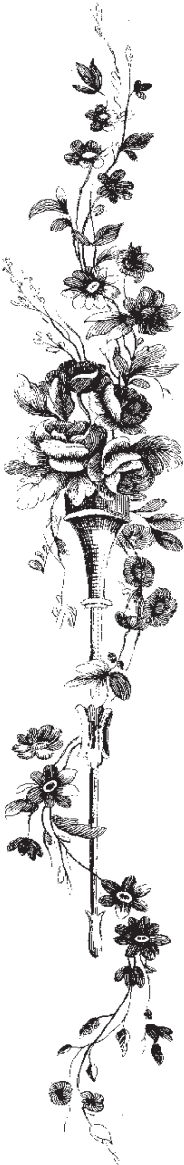
It matters not if cherished friends,
On whom I leaned in vain,
Have wounded me by word and deed,
And left me with my pain.

What matters is—Can I forgive
Again, and yet again?
It's not, "Have they been true?" but "Lord,
Have I been true to them?"

'Twill matter not when evening comes,
How rough the road I've trod;
If only I have walked with Him
And led some soul to God!

For when I wake to be like Him,
Who saved me by His grace,
Earth's pain will vanish when I see
One glimpse of His dear face!

Selected



What Worked and What Didn't, Part 1

A Forum Subscriber wrote:

I recently reread "A Way in the Wilderness" [a good book Keepers sells], and I love when the grandmother, reflecting on her parenting, shares a mistake she made and says, "Mothering has such far reaching effects." As you look back on your parenting, what advice would you give young mothers? What are you glad you did and what do you wish you had done differently? What's important and what's not? I know this is a big question, so I don't expect a response right away. Thanks for sharing from your wisdom and experience.

I have pondered these types of questions through the years. Nearly every parent does. Parents do often ask themselves in later years: What did we do wrong? What did we do right? What would we have done differently? An important factor in looking back is to ask ourselves where we began our journey. So, I would like to take a few moments to share where we, Jeff and Susan, began our journey.

My husband and I came from a non-Christian background. We had some religious knowledge, but that was it. It is interesting to note that when my husband was a young boy, he called out to God to ask Him if there was any way he could go to Heaven because he was a naughty boy. I (because of a, shall we say, dysfunctional family) searched long and hard for God because I didn't want to go to hell, and because deep down, I was hoping God would love me, as I had not known a mother's love. God, in His wonderful wisdom, put the two of us together. We married, had three children, and then found our blessed Lord, our Redeemer.

Well, we were babes in Christ; we had a lot of unlearning and learning to do fast, as we were already parents. We did the best we could with what knowledge we had. Every parent needs to come to terms with that. Some folks are blessed to have been reared in Christian homes, and they have a wonderful heritage to help them, but for those who don't, God is able to lead, guide, and keep on working in the lives of parents and children. With that said, I will begin with the first thing that both my husband and I wish we would have

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known. It is foundational for a number of other things.

We began to learn a philosophy that seemed to be good at the time, but really was not so good, and did not produce good fruit in the long run. The idea was that a major key to keeping children in the faith was to provide them with everything the world has, but paste the word “Christian” on it. This provided a wide range of enjoyments, but some were not good. Others were needless and brought considerable contact with the world and its activities at an early age. The hope was twofold: that children would not ever feel deprived, and that amusements engaged in with similarly minded folk became totally safe and even spiritually enhancing. Their “Christian world” would be so good that young people would never desire to go out into the real world.

Upon reflection, we learned that you will not find this philosophy anywhere in the Bible. Jesus never taught it. Paul never taught it. It simply is not a biblical philosophy. All of us must come to the Lord to receive His salvation, and learn to live for Him, and walk in His steps. Jesus never did the things of the world, and in His time there were plenty of worldly things to do. *“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”* If Christians pattern themselves after the world, they will reap the same results as the world, for they are creating appetites for worldly things.

But the question begs to be answered. Can you put a “Christian” label on secular or even pagan things? Will that make worldly activities godly? Will it make frivolous activities godly? Will it make any activities godly? Is this what God tells us to do? Or does He want a peculiar people following Him? You will find plenty of arguments for having a “Christian” version of everything, but what does it accomplish? Many people support these ideas, but what spiritual good is done? Good clean recreation is sometimes useful, but can we really label games and amusements—especially those with a worldly flavor—as “Christian” activities, and assume that they are creating spiritual fruit?

In our family, we found that this philosophy was not really helpful to us or our children. We found that it was really important to spend time discussing

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how to make decisions about all types of activities in terms of what course Jesus would most want us to take. We also learned from our children when they grew up and spoke of those days that parental example did more than discussion.

This errant philosophy on activities, though, led us on one path that both my husband and I wish we had not taken. It involves competition, but that will require another post . . . coming soon!

Susan



What Worked and What Didn't, Part 2

Here is the promised second segment of “What Worked and What Didn’t.” I will basically be picking up where Susan left off in Part 1. When we came to the Lord Jesus thirty-five years ago, we joined a church, put our children in a Christian school, and began to change our lives as much and as quickly as we could learn how. At that time homeschooling was an infant movement of which we, as yet, knew nothing. We were beginning to grow in Christ, but as young Christians and young parents, we had not thought everything through for ourselves, nor had we learned to test all things for ourselves against the Word of God. We were really trying to read and study the Word enough that we might be able to skillfully use it as the lamp that God intended to light our way. Thus, “competition” sort of blindsided us. We grew up with competition, so it was a completely normal facet of our lives and environment, and that did not appreciably change when we became Christians. We believe that we, like many others, were wrong.

At school competition abounded. There was a sport for every season, and our boys participated each season. I dutifully taught them to be achievers, and how to play skillfully and successfully. There were also academic meets, spelling bees, Bible contests, and more. Our children also learned to do quite well in

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these activities. But were they really doing well—I mean, according to God? You see, our children had learned to work, achieve, and endure, but they had become proud; they were really learning more to have the hearts of achievers and winners instead of learning to have the hearts of redeemed sinners who are becoming devoted servants of their Saviour. They were not the only ones. Being competitive was nearly a matter of survival in an environment that was teaching many wrong attitudes right along with—or in spite of—all the good things expected from the methods being used. As the children grew older, we looked more closely at young people, including our own, and the dawn began to break that something was amiss.

What was it? Weren't we doing everything that we should? What were we missing? As the children grew even older, nearing adulthood, some of these wrong attitudes became more ingrained. It seemed the children could not see these attitudes at all. I began to realize why. I began to see that I had many of these traits, and did not see them either! I had grown up in an environment that demanded not only competition, but victory. I considered the ability to compete in whatever environment one encounters a necessary means of survival, and had learned to master it. I had considered it my duty to teach this “necessity” to my children. Don't get me wrong. The idea was not to just go out and “beat” people, or to always excel. I applauded a grade of “C” as well as an “A” as long as it represented honest effort. The idea (the survival mechanism) was just to be able, when challenged, to stand the test, whatever it might be, and very often carry off the victory. I had made it my business to learn how, and to teach it. Sadly, though I wanted to be a pleasing servant to my Saviour, I was missing the mark, and even more sadly, I could see that I was rather proud of it. And in an environment that provided continual opportunity, I realized that I was often falling into my established patterns—patterns that do not become a servant.

Unfortunately, we cannot undo what wrongs we have done. However, we can repent and make what amends God outlines in His Word, and we can pray to Him Who can give grace to overcome the effects of our errors in our own lives and the lives of others. This we did. We went to each of our children and

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confessed our errors in judgment and example. We shared with them what the Lord had been teaching us. We asked their forgiveness for teaching them bad habits and attitudes. We knew that we could not undo the damage. Only they could do so with God's help. We told them exactly that. We told them that we hoped and prayed they would be able to learn different attitudes and patterns of actions. We knew that now it could only be between them and the Lord.

They listened; they understood. It takes time to change the nature one has developed; it is a lot of work. It certainly was for me. Over the years, we have talked about the subject a few times, and we know that with prayer and effort, God has worked in all of our lives. Praise God for His unceasing love and His great ability to undo the blemishes in our characters, and our parenting mistakes.

So, why did we feel competition was such a big contributor to the problems in a Christian's spirit? I have made a few updates to, and included, an old article that I wrote about some of the discoveries that surprised and changed me. Others may not all feel the same about these ideas, especially if the ideas are new to them, but I think it is a good place to start thinking and praying about competition's place in God's family. As I said, they did begin to stir me. That is what these thoughts are intended to be—merely a place to start. As each of us shines God's lamp on our environment, He will supply the rest. I hope you will give it some thought and prayer. It may become a journey for you also.

Competition — Is It Biblical?

Competition, according to *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary*, is—the act of competing; struggle or rivalry for supremacy. By this definition there must be winners and losers. Winners and losers are comparative terms. Someone must be beaten for one to be the winner. How does this relate to “*Comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise,*” — II Corinthians 10:12 or “*In honour preferring one another,*” —Romans 12:10?

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If we are to be Keepers of the Faith, and if we belong to Jesus Christ we are, and if we truly desire to follow biblical principles, we must examine competition, as every other issue in life, in the light of God's Word. We must throw out what other people do, what they think, their thoughts about what God might or might not like, and anything else, no matter how prevalent, that is not fully supported in the Word that God has given us. Some say competition is as American as apple pie; that we must all learn to be competitive since we live in a competitive society; that we need to teach our children to be winners. Competition may well be as American as apple pie, but where does America lie on our Saviour's scale of godliness? And where does this particular issue lie on that scale? When we stand before Him, God will not ask if we followed America; He will not ask us if it was a great country; He will ask us if we walked in His will and lived in His Word.

In the struggle for supremacy, winners go to the top; losers sink to the bottom. "Losers" is a concept that we do not find in Jesus' teachings. Actually, neither is the concept of "winners." Only two passages in the New Testament mention winning. They both use the term to describe the same thing. The first is 1 Peter 3:1. However, the second actually makes direct reference to the essence of competition as the antithesis of what God's winning is all about. Philippians 3:8 says, "*Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ . . .*" Paul says that he has gladly suffered the loss of all those things which might be won in this world through means such as competition, and counts them as excrement. How close is our thinking to God's thinking?

Is competition just not God's best, or is it downright harmful? When all is said and done, what is a loser? It is not a good thing—not in a godly sense, nor even in a worldly sense. To this concept, the first *au contraire* we hear (it may even come from our own lips) is likely to be the example of sports. In sports we excuse this with the explanation that the competitors are just training, and that losers should learn to be good losers. If competition is a struggle for supremacy (and that has been established for us), then why should we be happy

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to fail in the struggle—the goal—the assignment that we accepted or were given?

Without even thinking, we can bombard our children with competition beginning at a time when they are quite small with peewee sports, group games, Bible memory competitions, and spelling bees. The cream rises to the top; the rest are expected to be amiable “losers.” Amiable or not, who is glad for the losers?—or even cares about them? There is some level of degradation attached in everyone’s eyes. And the winners—are they not proud? Is piety born of victory in struggling for the mastery? The vanquished struggle with the temptation of emotions that they know are wrong (anger, shame, etc.), and they also struggle with knowing that they are failing in that emotional struggle. Is it necessary to place them thus in the way of temptation? *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,”* —Ephesians 6:4.

The victors face different temptations; they are proud of their successes. The problem is that Jesus counts it all loss and sin (shall we say, as Paul does, excrement?), and they do not even realize it. And do we steer them clear of these distractions? Who warns them of the spiritual dangers? Where is God glorified in the things of dung? Do winners feel better about themselves than losers? Some might—but there is plenty of evidence to the contrary. You see, losing may be only as far away as the next competition. Such a position is seldom a comforting experience. Does competition really seem to be the way to rear children in “the nurture and admonition of the Lord”? A child’s self-worth should be dependent upon whom he is in Christ, not his competitive status. The only true “feeling good” comes as we “. . . *press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,*” —Philippians 3:14. We cannot get that from competition, and we cannot learn it from competition.

Is it not interesting that in recent years we have witnessed the adoption of the term “loser” as yet another negative stereotype with which the proud label others in our society? Isn’t this because we have become so “American” that we somehow feel some sort of residual competition? It seems people must find what they are good at, and find someone less fortunate with whom to compare

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themselves favorably. America is so swamped with this idea that most of us can barely have thoughts outside of it. Sports, grades, position, wealth, intelligence, physical ability, speaking ability, owning the biggest, having the nicest, being the prettiest—even professional sports, which have no relation to real life—are they not at their very best simply a distraction from real things? Yet the country is absorbed in rooting for one team over another. Shall we teach our children that God is pleased to have sports receive a special place in our lives?

Have you also noticed what a popular pastime criticisms or “cut-downs” have become among youngsters nowadays? They all feel the need to be at the top or to gain approval. They are often so desperate that they think that “cutting down” another increases their own stature. Are they not simply coping with the competitive culture in which they live? We want winners, right?—but is God interested in winners? We may think that teaching our children not to participate in such activities will at least be a solution to this particular problem, but the problem is part of a larger issue—struggle for mastery cannot occur without permeating one’s being. God has answers, but we must apply them.

And are we, as parents, promoting this continual struggle for mastery? That is a question each of us must decide alone before God. If we are, why are we doing so? Is it because we have not thought about it?—or because this is the way society is?—or both? Are these things that God expects His own to think about and discern? When we think about it, why would society be otherwise? Whose kingdom does the Bible say the earth is? Do we forget, and sometimes think that kingdom only extends to other countries?—or to countries that do not have as many churches? Or is this world a foreign land to every true pilgrim traveling to the celestial city? Should we want to be so much like the world? Should we as Christians encourage our youngsters into all manner of combative (even if not physically combative) contests?

The very nature of competition necessitates comparison to determine who is better, or who wins. Mastery cannot exist until peaceful balance and equilibrium has been upset. Did God create His people to strive to see which

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one is better than his brother at anything? When a person is a victor in a competition, who is receiving the glory—God or the victor? Who is receiving the praise and adulation of the fans? Does being number one contribute to humility? Ultimately, does competing tend to make us more or less like Jesus? And just to put things in proper perspective, does praying beforehand for mastery change the answer to any of these four questions?

And what does the Bible say? II Corinthians 10:12—*“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”*

It goes on to say that we are to emulate Him Who gave His life to redeem us. Philippians 2:5-7—*“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”*

If Jesus is to be our example, it seems that we are to make ourselves of no reputation. How do we reconcile that with striving for the mastery over others? Jesus was not competitive. Instead of competing with others, Jesus washed their feet. Instead of beating others, He served them. He is not greatest who wins, but he who serves. That is what the Saviour taught us, and *“Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”* Can competition be stirred together with true servanthood?

Now, in any such discussion of competition, another immediate *au contraire* that comes up is the fact that our capitalistic society is based on competition. However, is this relevant to our relationship with our Redeemer? Capitalism is an economic system. Such systems are used to rule the kingdoms of earth. We are taught to obey our governors, but not to emulate them. Our walk is not affected by capitalism, communism, freedom, or totalitarianism. The apostle Paul says in, 1 Corinthians 7:20-22, *“Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free,*

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is Christ's servant." The Bible commands us in I Corinthians 10:31 ". . . or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

So what about little childhood competitions? What is the harm in them? Here are a few things to think about. Little things in little lives grow up to be big things in big lives. For every action there is a result, which generally, over time, often attains far greater magnitude than the original action. When that frail, semi-formed life is thrust into a struggle for mastery, we cannot expect that life to come through that struggle (that upset or that emotional turmoil) unchanged. Feelings and attitudes have been formed, and competition has been installed as a factor in the life. Has it been given its proper place? The Jesuit motto is, "Give me a child until he is seven and I will give you the man." If the Jesuits know the importance of early training, shouldn't we as God's people? As parents, are we not entrusted to train a seven-year-old to live as the Saviour said? We might look at these little competitions as adults and think, "Big deal!" But to miniature lives, miniature situations can be a very big deal.

Childhood is a time for training and preparation, not a time for competition. It is a time for building character. If we wish to help our children build real character, we are going to have to think about what builds true character, and what builds it without harmful side effects. Shall our children learn to achieve in order to fill needs, or in order to win? Shall they learn endurance to be strong in the day of temptation, or in order to gain mastery by outlasting another? Shall they learn diligence as a steward for the Saviour, or in order to be the best?

Centuries ago science was infatuated with alchemy. Many men were convinced that a way could be found to transform lead into gold. Obviously, none ever succeeded. The term alchemy has now found a modern day definition. One source defines it as: A process by which paradoxical results are achieved or incompatible elements combined with no obvious rational explanation. Will we be able to give an account of building godly brotherhood between those whom we teach to struggle against each other for mastery?

We want to always choose activities for our children in light of God's Word. The process is sometimes more difficult and involved than we may

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have expected. It is so easy to forget to test an activity or principle. If we are faithful, though, to ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in all things, He will be faithful to do so. We only need to accept light and search out truth when light comes, even if it startles us. The Bible has the answers, and the Holy Spirit knows exactly where they are!

Jeff

This series will be continued.



Bits and Pieces

- ☒ Change begins when we see life from God’s perspective.
- ☒ Real change starts on our knees.
- ☒ You become a stronger person by getting your strength from God.
- ☒ Whatever is taking you away from Jesus is hurting you eternally.
- ☒ God sees things in terms of black and white—no gray. Stick to the white in your life.
- ☒ God is not impressed with what impresses man.
- ☒ God never violates His holiness to be loving.
- ☒ God values a meek and quiet spirit. Does God value *your* spirit?
- ☒ Satan doesn’t say, “Follow me.”
Satan says, “Do what you think is best.”

What Is Your Purpose for Living?

*“Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live and keep thy word.” —
Psalm 119:17*

What is my purpose for living? Simple, isn't it? The psalmist is praying, asking God to deal with him bountifully, abundantly. Why? So that he may live. Why? To have more fame? To have a happy home? To have good children? No. He wants to live for one reason, one purpose, and that is to keep God's Word.

Simple, isn't it? My purpose for living is to keep God's Word. God will be pleased with that. God will be satisfied with that. My whole life is reduced to keeping God's Word. What could be more important than that? What could have a higher priority than that?

We may answer that nothing takes priority over God's Word, but we have only to look honestly at ourselves and at our lives to see things not in harmony, not in keeping, with God's Word. I'm not necessarily speaking about “things,” although they certainly apply here too, but rather I am speaking about discord, stress, attitudes, jealousies, fears, anxieties, and the like. All these, both physical and emotional, reveal that something is amiss. Perhaps we have other purposes for living than the keeping of God's Word, and our lives reflect it.

The question begs to be answered, “How can I keep God's Word? I am a Christian, and things aren't supposed to be like this. What can I do?”

The answer is simple—if keeping God's Word is the purpose for my life, then I must *know* God's Word in order to keep it. I must spend time, time, TIME, reading and meditating and praying and communing with God over it.

No time, you say? Are other things crowding out this time? Are other things overshadowing your purpose for living? Will you miss out on your purpose for living because *your* living leaves no time for God?

What can you do differently? Pray, ask God to help you to reorganize your life, simplify your life, so you can learn more about Him and His ways and His Word. Somehow, some way, carve out time for your God. Won't you try?

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No Time



I knelt to pray but not for long,
I had too much to do.
I had to hurry and get to work,
For bills would soon be due.
So I knelt and said a hurried prayer,
And jumped up off my knees.
My Christian duty was now done.
My soul could rest at ease.
All day long I had no time
To spread a word of cheer.
No time to speak of Christ to friends;
They'd laugh at me, I'd fear.
No time, no time, too much to do.
That was my constant cry.
No time to give to souls in need,
But at last the time to die.
I went before the Lord; I came.
I stood with downcast eyes.
For in His hands God held a book;
It was the book of life.
God looked into His book and said,
"Your name I cannot find.
I once was going to write it down . . .
But never found the time."

Author Unknown

A Little of That

Thy Word in My Heart

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” —
Psalm 119:11

Psalm 119:11 is a verse that is familiar to most of us. Many learned this verse as children. It is most often used as a verse to encourage the memorization of Scripture, which is an excellent thing to do.

Let’s really ponder this verse. “Thy word”—not anyone else’s word, but “Thy word” should be hidden, buried, tucked into my heart, my soul, my very being. Why? What is the purpose? So that I might not sin against Thee.

Here is my purpose for living. Remember Psalm 119:17? *“Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.”*

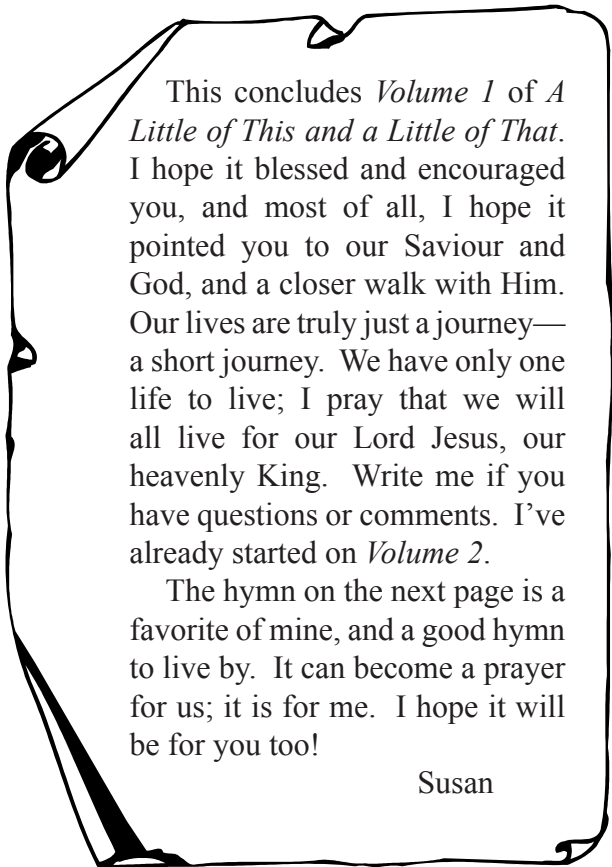
We must read, study, meditate, pray over, *and* hide God’s Word in our hearts so that we shall not sin against God. Memorization is good, but this verse is not telling us to memorize God’s Word; rather, we are to hide it in our hearts, down deep, to know God’s Word deeply so that we *know* Him and will not sin against Him.

People can memorize hundreds of verses—just ask the Jewish scholars—but still they do not know the God Who wrote the verses down for them. Memorizing is mind work, but this verse teaches *heart* work. Memorizing does not give understanding and does not bring forth obedience. However, studying, meditating, thinking on God’s Word, and praying for understanding will help to let His Word sink deeply into our hearts. And when His Word is deeply hidden in our hearts, we will most likely come to know our great God more intimately and seek to keep His Word more fully.

You see, God wants us to get knowledge of His Word first-hand, not to just receive it from teachers, authors, and preachers. They may have error, but God’s Word is Truth, all of it. Each one of us is commanded to hide it in our hearts so that we—I—might not sin against our God.

Will you do that each week? Take a few verses, hide them deeply in your heart, and pray earnestly to your Saviour?

A Little of This



This concludes *Volume 1* of *A Little of This and a Little of That*. I hope it blessed and encouraged you, and most of all, I hope it pointed you to our Saviour and God, and a closer walk with Him. Our lives are truly just a journey—a short journey. We have only one life to live; I pray that we will all live for our Lord Jesus, our heavenly King. Write me if you have questions or comments. I've already started on *Volume 2*.

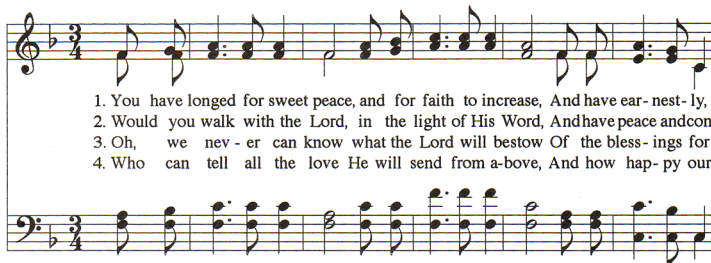
The hymn on the next page is a favorite of mine, and a good hymn to live by. It can become a prayer for us; it is for me. I hope it will be for you too!

Susan

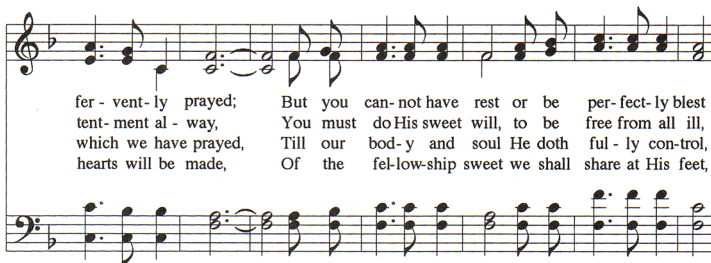
Is Your All on the Altar?

ELISHAA. HOFFMAN

ELISHAA. HOFFMAN



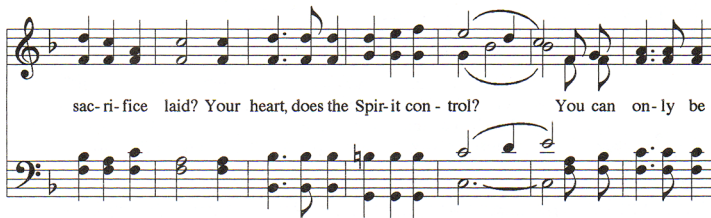
1. You have longed for sweet peace, and for faith to increase, And have ear-nest-ly,
2. Would you walk with the Lord, in the light of His Word, And have peace and con-
3. Oh, we nev-er can know what the Lord will bestow Of the bless-ings for
4. Who can tell all the love He will send from a-bove, And how hap-py our



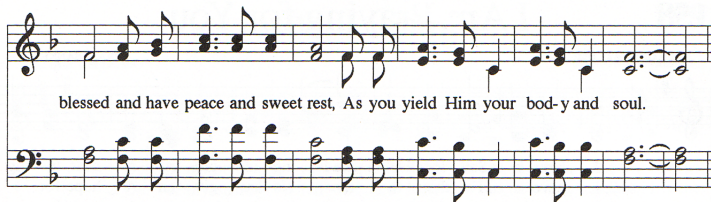
fer-vent-ly prayed; But you can-not have rest or be per-fect-ly best
tent-ment al-way, You must do His sweet will, to be free from all ill,
which we have prayed, Till our bod-y and soul He doth ful-ly con-trol,
hearts will be made, Of the fel-low-ship sweet we shall share at His feet,



Un-til all on the al-tar is laid.
On the al-tar your all you must lay. Is your all on the al-tar of
And our all on the al-tar is laid.
When our all on the al-tar is laid.



sac-ri-fice laid? Your heart, does the Spir-it con-trol? You can on-ly be



blessed and have peace and sweet rest, As you yield Him your bod-y and soul.

A Little of This

More Resources

Joy of Obedience, by Susan Zakula

Have you ever discovered the joy of obedience? Or are you stuck in the misery of self-will, having things your way? Do you go through your days with a song in your heart, radiating cheerfulness and joy, or do you stumble through, complaining and griping, and have a less than happy existence? If you are tired of the old ways and are ready for a change, a delightful change, which will bring joy to your heart and life, choose the *Joy of Obedience* your next Bible study! You will be a changed woman, I promise you! This Bible study is perfect for groups, mother-daughters, or a personal study. Begin yours soon.

Joy of Womanhood, by Susan Zakula

Have you ever wondered where your joy went? Or perhaps you have never felt joy, real joy in who you are and joy in your life. If so, this Bible study will help you discover joy that is lasting. It is a fifty-two week Bible study delving into the very core issues of womanhood and the essence of joy. It is in a workbook format, so take pen in hand and begin! Perfect for ladies! Bible Studies, lessons for teens, or a mother-daughter study.

Are You Serious About Marriage? by Susan Zakula

How is your marriage doing? Do you have a close, loving relationship with your husband? Do you feel that you are “one,” as you set out to be years ago? Or are things beginning to unravel as the stresses of life mount?

Are you disappointed in your husband? Are you disappointed in life? Are you disappointed in your marriage? Are you struggling? Perhaps this little book, *Are You Serious About Marriage?* will shed some light on the perplexing issues women face.

It is not written from a know-it-all attitude, but from the heart of a woman that knew nothing and had to learn along the way. It is not a “20 Steps to a Great Marriage,” but the sharing of a journey to become a wife as God has intended a woman to be.

We have had a tremendous number of requests from our former *In Keeping With the Faith* subscribers to put this series of marriage articles into a book. We have, and they now continue to bless and help wives to be godly, loving helpmeets to their husbands. People have requested them for future reference, for their children, for newly married women, for women who are struggling in their marriages, for Bible studies, and for

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those young women preparing for marriage. We have received countless testimonies of changed lives and changed marriages, as a result of these articles.

If you are ready for a change and want to really get serious about your marriage, give this a read.

Little Keepers at Home

Keepers at Home

If you have daughters or granddaughters, please encourage them to discover the joy of being a girl by learning to be keepers at home. The *Little Keepers* and *Keepers at Home* handbooks are filled with practical knowledge, encourage Christian character, and inspire godly habits. Start now to prepare your girls to be all God would have them to be!

All of the above are available from Keepers of the Faith.

Visit our website at keepersofthefaith.com

or

reach us at sales@keepersofthefaith.com.