

God Knew He Needed Her

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God Knew He Needed Her

By CLEON LYLES

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by

Cleon Lyles

Introduction

GOD KNEW HE NEEDED HER is a book that is the outgrowth of many years of prayer, thought, and labor. Several years ago, perhaps ten, I became aware of the fact that there was not a book available along the lines of this book for and about women. Recognizing God's woman as man's greatest blessing and her capability of filling a role in the kingdom of God with attributes given only to her, it became my fond desire that such a book could be written and that it would cover the face of the earth.

About the time I began to think on this need, the Lord blessed me with a close association with Cleon Lyles. I was impressed from the beginning of our association with his keen insight into the needs of man and man's ability, with proper direction, to fill those needs. I also was made aware of the fact that perhaps none among us has had more years of rich experience in the practical management of the things of God and a realization of our respective places in God's scheme of things. I readily recognized his ability to see the needs of God's woman and her role in life.

About four years ago I approached the author about writing the book you now hold in your hand. Together we have talked by the hour about the book's content, preparation, and publication. The manuscript has been written and rewritten, and is now ready for you to bask in its pages. No book of such quality can be written in a short time, nor can it be written by one who has not had the rich experiences of Cleon Lyles.

I count it a superb honor to be privileged to write the introduction to such a magnificently rich book as **GOD KNEW HE**

NEEDED HER, and also to have had a small part in its inspiration. May you thrill to the fact that you are a Christian woman as you read such chapters as: "Because He Needed Her," "She Called Him Lord," "I Have Nothing To Wear," "The Ideal Wife," and many more.

G. L. Peters
Glenwood, Arkansas

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CHAPTER ONE

God Knew He Needed Her

*Love comes because it cannot stay away and
stays because it cannot leave.*

God Knew He Needed Her

One of God's ancient prophets wrote that God formed the earth to be inhabited (Isa. 45:18). Thus in the process of creation God was fitting the earth as a place for man to live. David pictured God as always out in front, anticipating the needs of man long before he arrived, and seeing that his necessities were provided.

When God had finished the earth and all that it contains, He created man in His own image. He alone of all other creations of God bears the image of God. But when God had created man he was alone as far as other creations were concerned. "And the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18). God was still concerned about the needs of the man He created in His own image.

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:21-24). "For the man is not of the woman; but

the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (1 Cor. 11:8, 9).

Many are the needs of man, but above them all is his need for a companion. Although there is a companionship in the relationships sustained in the human race, the basic needs of companionship are never complete unless man has someone who becomes a part of himself. We can be very much alone in a crowd. Sometimes the loneliest place can be where there are many people. Most of us have had the experience of being a part of a multitude, jostled on every side by other human beings, but never feeling that we are a part of their lives. We have much in common with them, but really we have nothing in common. Although we may breathe the same air, eat the same kind of food, and hurry to and fro on similar missions, we are still as separate as though we lived in different parts of the world. Unless there is someone to become a real part of our lives we live alone regardless of how many people we may contact. And, although some strength and encouragement may be received from many people, no one can provide satisfying strength and necessary encouragement like the companion God made for man. If this companion is never found man experiences an emptiness that nothing else can satisfy. Though he may do good work and find some satisfaction in the work he does and the life he lives, life can never be complete without the love and respect of a woman made for him.

We use the word "companionship" in many ways. We often speak of it as two people being together regardless of their relationship. We speak of the companionship between a father and his son. We think of the companionship of two good friends whose lives have somewhat blended together. We refer to the companionship of those who work or play together. But we all recognize that God meant more than this when He made woman for man. The two become one. Although they are two distinct personalities, God has made it possible that the two can blend into one to the complete satisfying of the needs of both. But this can only be done God's way. Unless each recognizes the order of God such a companionship can never be enjoyed. If a woman tries to become less or more than God in-

tended for her to be she not only fails to fulfill the purpose of her creation, but she fails to find the real purpose of her life. She also fails to become to the man that for which she was created thus bringing pain rather than pleasure, sorrow rather than joy, and takes from man his greatest human need in serving either God or man.

Man needs a companion to love him. Most of us are loved by many people and in many ways. No word is given more meanings than the word "love." Because of the many definitions and the manifold ways in which the word is used it is often misunderstood. When the Bible speaks of the love a woman should have for her husband, we can very easily see that if she loves him as she was intended to love him she loves him above all others. Love for no other can take the place of the love she should have for her husband. No other can take his place in her heart and her life.

In loving her husband she does not cease to love others who are a part of her life. She loves her parents, her children, and others who mean much to her, but the love she has for him is a different love. It is a stronger love placing him before all others. Life is empty without love. If a child is not properly loved we know that he is cheated of the greatest need of his life. So we, in many ways, are forever pointing out the need of this love in the well-being of the child. But because one has ceased to be a child does not mean that his need to be loved has vanished. The need of love in the life of a child is no greater than the need of love in the heart of a man. When a woman who has vowed to love her husband fails to love him she takes from him his greatest human need and destroys the reason for her creation. Love is more than a sentence uttered by the lips. It is a life. When the actions of an individual are contrary to words that are spoken, the words become a lie and life becomes a sham.

A woman who loves a man loves him regardless of external circumstances. She does not love him because he has made a success in business. True love loves as much in the struggle upward as it does when success is assured. She does not love him because the position he holds lends some satisfaction to

her ego and places her in a position to be envied by her less fortunate friends. If she truly loves him she would love him as much if he had no position. She does not love him because he is like others, but because he is himself. She loves him for what she knows he is and no circumstances can change her love. And she is able to recognize what he is regardless of the position he holds in life. She does not love him because he is loved by others. She would love him if no other person in the world loved him. She does not love him merely when days are good, but through all the storms that may cross his path, through sorrow and joy, in waiting and wanting, in longing and yearning, through tears and smiles her love remains steadfast and becomes his strength for successful living. True love is never altered by circumstances. It comes because it cannot stay away and stays because it cannot leave.

A woman who loves a man as she should loves him above all others. Her love for him is greater than her love for father, mother, son, or daughter. He is first in her life. His needs and his wishes come before those of anyone. She will be found standing with her husband even if it becomes necessary to stand against everyone else. She will never be found standing with someone else against her husband. She had rather be with him than to be in the company of any other person on earth. She receives more joy from pleasing him than pleasing anyone else. She never turns away from him to anyone else. He is her life and the greatest purpose of her living.

A woman who loves a man does not envy him. "Love envieth not." If he accomplishes some good work for which he receives the applause of men she is willing to stand in the shadow. In fact she is proud to stand in the shadow. She makes no effort to turn the attention of others away from him to herself. She is not interested in trying to prove to him or others that she is better than he is, smarter than he is, and more deserving of the praise he receives. She receives more joy from hearing him praised than being praised and from watching him succeed than being a similar success. She is interested in succeeding only in becoming a good wife. When she fails in this her whole life is a failure if she has taken the responsibility of

being a wife. It is tragic when a woman so misunderstands what love is that she forgets to be a wife and tries to become a competitor against her husband. She lives an empty life in spite of everything accomplished.

A woman who loves a man does not seek to be his superior. This word is defined in many different ways depending on the manner in which it is used, but the Bible teaches that the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, and this order cannot be changed without unhappiness being the result. Regardless of the fact that she may be in some ways mentally superior, the husband is still the head of the wife. Though she may possess abilities that have never been his, the husband is still the head of the wife. When a woman truly loves a man she finds happiness in occupying the position for which she was created and being pleased with her husband being what God created him to be. God was making possible the happiness of both the man and the woman when He made this order, and since God knows what can bring happiness, any changing of His order will take away the happiness God planned for us.

Man needs a woman to share his life. The kind of sharing that can exist between a husband and wife cannot be replaced by any other kind of sharing. Unfortunately this sharing is often never known. A woman who loves a man will share his dreams without trying to destroy them. She will share his ambitions without looking for his failures. She will share his thoughts without trying to take possession of his mind.

One reason many wives are unable to fully share in the life of their husbands is they never understand nor appreciate the life that he lives. A wife like this is more interested in trying to make her husband into something he is not than sharing life with him as he is. She does not truly love him for what he is but for what she hopes he will become. When this is true she does not love him at all. She is more interested in people believing she made something out of her husband than sharing the life he is capable of making. A wife who loves her husband never considers how much she is contributing to his success or well being but what a joy it is to her to be a part of his life.

A man cannot share his thinking with a wife who is constantly contradicting him. It would seem that some people believe the only way to be helpful is to be argumentative, when in reality that is often the least way to help. Of course an argumentative wife says that in so doing she is only trying to strengthen the thoughts of her husband, but in reality she is only closing the door for any sharing of thoughts. This kind of reasoning is very unsound and very much out of place.

A man cannot share his feelings with a wife who is always belittling them or trying to call attention to her own feelings. Some husbands find when they try to share some problem with their wives that attention is quickly removed from what he wanted to share to some problem of her own. Such a wife demonstrates that she is not interested in how her husband feels, except how he feels about how she feels.

A man cannot share his thoughts and feelings with a wife who does not have time to listen. It is very easy in the multiplicity of duties and obligations of a wife and mother for her to forget what her first duty is. And it is easy for her to believe that she can put off sharing with her husband because of other demands. A woman like this never sees that she has contributed to losing him when he begins to share his feelings with someone who is willing to listen.

A man needs a wife to be his best friend. Some years ago while preaching in a meeting in a Texas city I met a young lady whose thinking about marriage was so wholesome it could never be forgotten. She said the man she married would have to be her best friend. A few years later she visited the city where I was living. She and her husband came to worship. After the services she brought him by and introduced him as her best friend. It was easy to see what she meant. She had found the man with whom she wanted to share everything in her life.

A man may have many friends. This word is used in such a way as to describe many people. Sometimes we use it in talking about people we hardly know. But a woman who is her husband's best friend is more to him than all these other friends could ever be.

True friendship is not changed by circumstances. We have people who call themselves our friends who can as easily become our enemies if circumstances change. Most of us have more "friendly enemies" than true friends. Some people are your friends as long as the friendship does not cause them any trouble. Others are friends unless they are called to stand with you when many stand against you. Then there are the friends who are friends until they find some little fault with you. Then they become enemies. But true friendship stands by regardless of what happens or the number of battles that must be fought. A man needs a wife to be that kind of friend.

A true friend never joins hands with your enemy regardless of the reason for so doing. A true friend cannot listen to others say harsh and critical things about you, to say nothing of being a part of such conduct. A woman who will join with others in trying to hurt her husband is not his friend. And she does not love him.

A man needs a home and woman was created to be a home builder. Man may have several places in life that he calls home as the years go by, but there can never be a home like the home that is made by the woman who loves him. A woman once said she never realized how much she meant to her husband until he came home one day and she was not in sight. Although there were children playing in the room he inquired, "Where is everybody?" To him she was everything and everybody. I am sure he did not feel this way because he felt an obligation to do so, but because of what she had made the home to be.

A young man worked through the summer months with another man hauling logs and bridge lumber. The man and his wife lived in what would be considered a cheap apartment. Their furniture was of very little value. But they loved each other and the lack of things did not matter. Late one evening the two men took a load of lumber many miles away from town and delivered it to the place where it was needed. The night was warm and the road dangerous. The young man insisted, since darkness had overtaken them, that instead of risking the danger of wrecking the truck and hurting themselves that they stop and sleep in the truck that night. The other man

said, "No, you do not understand, but I am going home." Home to him was the place where the woman he loved could be found. When a man is forced to go through life without ever knowing that kind of home he has missed one of the great blessings God planned for him.

A home is not a few acres of land or a pile of brick and lumber. Some women have wasted their lives and frustrated the lives of their households by persuading their husbands to build one house after another, replace furniture of which they had grown tired before it was hardly used, searching for the happiness that everyone expects to find in a home, without realizing that things do not make a home. Home is not the kind of house you live in but the kind of people who live in the house. Some of the happiest homes we have ever known were not expensive from the standpoint of things money can buy, but they had some things all the money in the world could never buy.

A man needs a home because of his need for a place where he can shut out the world. Many of us have sighed at times for someone to take the world off our shoulders. Home is the place where this is possible but it takes a good woman to make this kind of home.

A man needs a home because he needs the stabilizing power that he can receive in a good home. A woman who loves a man can provide that kind of home for him. In the stress and strain of living, beaten by the waves of many waters that seek to weaken and destroy, many a man has gone home to find the strength he needed to face up to life and become its master. It is a tragedy when a man does not have this kind of home to which he can turn at the end of a long hard day.

Man needs a woman to love him because he needs the other half of himself. She is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. She was taken out of man and that is why she is called "woman." His life cannot be complete without her. It is amazing how much two people become a part of each other's life when they truly love each other. They think about each other even when they are not thinking about each other. Whatever they do they do together even if it is only in their thoughts.

They are aware of the presence of each other often when they do not know they are near. And many times, though miles apart, each is sharing the thinking and feelings of the other. We do not wonder at this since we know God made them to be one. Each receives strength in the realization that he, or she, is constantly in the thoughts of the other. The difficulties of life can be more easily borne, and the tasks of living can be much more successful in the realization of the love of one who is so much a part of yourself that one does not even consider life without the other.

God did not create woman to hurt her man. God made her as a help meet. Love does not seek to hurt, but to heal. Love does not seek to cast down, but to lift up. Love does not discourage, but encourages. Love will always find a way to help. That love is not based on help for self, but helping the one loved. True love never says "if" under any circumstances. It is not necessary to bargain for true love. It cannot be bought. It is not for sale. Any so-called love that must be bought or bargained for is not the kind of love God intended for a woman to have for her man.

God knew the needs of man and they are many. Among others are his great need for a companion and to be loved. For that reason God created woman. Had it not been for man's needs she would never have been created. Thus her role in life is to fulfill those needs and she can only find complete happiness in doing what she was created to do.

CHAPTER TWO

She Called Him Lord

*Love can say more than the sum of all the intellects
of all the ages could ever write.*

She Called Him Lord

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement” (1 Pet. 3:1-7).

One little statement in these verses tells us so much about the heart of this great woman of Old Testament times. It points out the respect she had for her husband and the genuine feeling of admiration she had for him. “She called him Lord.”

In our day when the pressure of society seems to force women to try to compete with men, and when so many women have forgotten what it is like to be a woman, this statement seems all out of place. To a woman who thinks of her husband as a business partner or a necessary convenience, whose spirit

is so separated from his that she insists that the word "obey" be removed from a marriage ceremony, it seems like blasphemy. But there it is in the Bible, standing out like a beautiful flower surrounded by weeds, casting a glow on a horizon that has almost forgotten that it can be beautiful. It is used concerning a woman who became a successful wife and lived with a successful husband.

Not much is said about this great woman in the Bible. When Abraham was called to leave his home and people she did not hesitate to go with him. She was a beautiful woman. She wanted so much to be the mother of a son by her husband and this great desire was finally fulfilled. When God told Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice we have no word that she tried to interfere. She died at the age of one hundred and twenty-seven years and was buried in the "cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan." Later Abraham died and was buried in the cave with her.

We do not read of any great accomplishments of this woman from the standpoint of the world. We do not get the idea that she became an outstanding leader in social circles, or that because of her great brilliance she was able to guide her husband on to the goals he sought. But all is revealed that needs to be said about the love and respect she had for her husband in this one little statement: "she called him lord." What joy must have filled the heart of her husband! What love must have been in that home! And how much that love had to do with the successful life of Abraham we can only imagine. We have heard men called many things by their wives, but it is doubtful that many of us have ever heard one refer to her husband as "my lord".

This term reveals her recognition of the position of Abraham in their relationship and how completely she accepted and loved that relationship. The little we know of Sara, the longings to be the kind of wife a dearly beloved husband should have, suggests the great joy and admiration with which she used the term. And what we know of Abraham, and the great love he had for this woman, tells us something of the joy

in his heart to be thus recognized by the woman he loved. When two are involved in a relationship it cannot be complete without each recognizing and occupying the position intended. The greatest joy in loving comes from the manner in which that love is received by the one who is loved and loves in return. No person can command and receive such respect. There must be both giving and receiving in all relationships. Thus, when Sara called Abraham lord she acknowledged his position as head of the home and first in her heart, and he received this recognition as coming from one who was his life, his world. We get no idea that she used the term in the way one might say "Sir" to a superior or that one in that day might refer to the owner of slaves as lord over those servants. She was fully aware of what Abraham meant to her life and from a heart filled with love for this man who was her way of life she could use the term as naturally as she breathed. He was her lord. He had right-of-way in her heart and life. None other could find such a place in the heart of this great woman. He would always be enthroned in her heart. How much she must have loved him!

This term also tells us that she recognized her position in the home and in the life of Abraham. It reveals that she was willing to remain in that place and that she found completeness in it. We cannot even picture her as feeling sorry for herself, believing that she occupied an inferior place, and finding ways to strike out against it. It would not be possible to picture her reading poetry about how difficult it was to be a woman living a life of drudgery and endless toil. But rather it is easy to see her as being glad to be a woman, to be the wife of the man who loved her, who had found her way of life and received great joy and happiness in living it.

God never made anything so beautiful as a woman who is proud to be a woman and finds fulfillment in being the wife of the man she loves. It is doubtful that it was ever necessary for Abraham to remind Sara of her place in this home because we cannot imagine her ever having any desire to occupy any position but her own. Neither can we think that it was ever necessary for Abraham to try to bribe her to be the kind of wife she should be. Nor can we ever picture her as making any demands

of him before she would be the wife she should be. And it is doubtful that she ever read a book or sought proof from any great minds concerning her place in the home, because when love fills the heart no proof is needed. Love can say more than the sum of all the intellects of all the ages could ever write. God made woman for a purpose and Sara had found that purpose. She knew where she belonged and where she wanted to be. She knew where to place her husband and she found the only place where a woman married to a man ever finds any complete satisfaction.

This term also tells us something of the great love she had for Abraham. What we call terms of endearment are often used in an exchange between husband and wife. They may have some meaning or they may be meaningless. But a term like Sara used is not heard without love filling the heart. Too many other terms could be used if one only wanted to indicate something that was not there, or if one wanted to speak only in general terms. When a woman says "my lord" in addressing her husband, and if the term involves all that it implies, she truly loves him. A love like that cannot help but make love grow in the heart of her husband.

The use of this term reveals gentleness in the heart of Sara when she thought of her husband. We cannot connect any harshness or bitterness with it. It rather seems to be a flowing out of a heart that was filled with gentleness. Gentleness is beautiful in a woman and nowhere could harshness be more out of place. It is a great loss to man when a woman is forced into a position where it becomes necessary for her to lose her gentleness in dealing with others.

The term also tells us of the tenderness in the heart of Sara. How tenderly she thought of her husband! What tender memories must have been stored in her heart during the years she was the wife of the man she loved! What tender hours they must have spent together in the many years they belonged to each other! A woman must be tender to be truly a woman.

This term reveals something of the beauty of character of this good woman. True character is revealed by the words we use. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"

(Matt. 12:34). The manner in which one person talks to and about another reveals much that is in the heart. There is no way to deny the force of the words we use. Words that come naturally, without effort or planning, flow out of the thoughts that are in the heart. It is doubtful that anybody who was fortunate enough to be in the company of Sara failed to see the beauty of her character. And it is difficult to think of anyone who might not consider it an honor to be near her.

The use of this term reveals how proud she was of her husband and how happy she was to be his wife. We do not get any indication of her thinking how fortunate he was to have her, although we can easily see he was a fortunate man. Such thoughts never find a place in a heart like that of Sara. We feel sure his accomplishments were her accomplishments. No doubt she lived and breathed the very actions of his life. His dreams were her dreams. His life was her life. His desires were her desires. It is doubtful that she ever thought of his mistakes, to say nothing of making his life miserable because of them. It is also doubtful that she ever made any effort to make him over. He was what she wanted him to be because what he wanted to be she wanted him to be, and we feel sure when he came home at the end of his work she was proud to have him come home to her. With what joy he must have turned toward her tent at the end of a long hard day!

We would get the idea that Sara had great admiration in her heart for this man she loved. What we know of the history of Abraham reveals much to be admired, but it is doubtful that she admired him for the same reasons others did. She knew him better than others. She could admire him for what she alone knew he was and what he meant to her life. To be admired and loved by the woman a man loves is one of God's greatest blessings to man.

The use of this term tells us of the respect Sara had for God. Peter speaks of her as a holy woman. Since man is made in the image of God, his life is out of harmony until the ideal and his behavior can be harmonized by allowing God to rule in his life. If God has created a person to occupy a certain position he will never find harmony until he occupies it. In our

relationship to every avenue of expression in our lives we find the will of God standing out above everything. It is above what society would designate as duties and obligations. It is above what the trend of the time might indicate, or what the intellectuals of the ages have determined it to be. It is above the various decisions and patterns that are based upon man's knowledge of human behavior. Though it may sometimes run contrary to the discoveries of man it is still right because God made it right. What God made right can never be wrong. Neither can it ever be changed by man or by the passing of time, or the changes that take place in social behavior. What was right in one age is right in another unless God has specifically made a change. Ages may come and go but God is eternal. Thus man may make many rules and espouse many philosophies, but nothing he learns or teaches can ever take the place of God's order. "We ought to obey God rather than man" is not only true in what we preach, but also in how we live. When we recognize the higher order of God it is not difficult to comply with rightful demands of human relationships. In fact it sanctifies these relationships. They are so much a part of each other that the human blends into the Divine. When our conduct can receive the favor of God it becomes more meaningful and sacred. Since Sara was a holy woman the great love and respect she had for her husband found full meaning because of her love for God. And since she loved God so much we do not wonder at her great love for this man of God who had become her life.

God is so much a part of our lives that no action can be separated from our relationship with Him. A woman cannot have proper respect for God when she does not have proper respect for her husband. Neither does she love God when she does not love her husband. How could she love God whom she has not seen when she does not love her husband whom she does see? If her love for God would cause her to say "my God", why would it seem out of place to refer to her husband as "my lord"? We cannot separate Divine acceptance from human relationships. Throughout the Bible, and especially in the New Testament, we are taught that our conduct toward

one another is related to our conduct toward God. Since this is true with such actions as feeding the hungry and visiting the sick, who could argue that it is not true in the relationships of the home? When the human and the Divine can become one we have found the place God intended for us. Only then can life be truly meaningful.

It takes years to tell a complete story. Man's life cannot be judged by one isolated act or the accomplishments of an hour. But when the years unfold the richness of the life and conduct of individuals it is revealed. Today we have the advantage of the years as we look back across the centuries to see what came from the life of these two who loved so much.

Out of this union grew a faith that spanned the centuries. When the Holy Spirit through Paul wanted to present an example of the kind of faith that pleases God, He turned to the life of Abraham. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3). "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:18-23).

James mentions the faith and works of Abraham in the offering of Isaac. "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God" (Jas. 2:23).

The kind of faith Abraham had believed God whether he understood God or not, and did what God wanted done regardless of the cost or difficulty. How much Sara made such a faith possible only God knows, but we have no doubt that as the life of Abraham has become an example and inspiration for multiplied thousands across the centuries, the love he shared with Sara must have been his strength and his anchor in the human relationships so necessary to the growing of a great life.

The growing of a great nation began with these two ancient lovers. When Sara was only ten years less than a hundred the

boy she had wanted so much was born. What a climax this must have been to the years of waiting and wanting! How her life must have been fulfilled in this one desire that had been withheld from her through the years! Think how fortunate Isaac was to be born into this home. From Isaac came twelve sons who became heads of twelve tribes finally growing into a nation to which God sent the law that held them together until He was ready to fulfill His complete plans for man's redemption.

From the union of this couple came a blessing for the entire world. Listen to the Holy Spirit speaking through Paul in Galatians 3: "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. . . . Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the spirit through faith. . . . Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

Therefore, the unfolding of the eternal purpose of Almighty God for the benefit of all mankind took place through Abraham and his beloved wife, Sara. From the day Christ died to redeem the world multiplied millions have found the true way of life and the complete fulfillment of the natural yearnings in the lives of men made in the image of God. And that which presents such a lovely picture of complete happiness in the distant ages finds its way into the lives of true followers of God. God's plans for man have become complete. There is no more God can do for man than that which He has done. There is nothing more man could seek or want. And as our sins are washed away in the blood of the Lamb we see the red glow of that blood reaching all the way back to a tent where a woman loved her man and called him lord.

CHAPTER THREE

"I Have Nothing To Wear"

*Physical beauty without a beautiful heart is no more
than a faded flower.*

"I Have Nothing To Wear"

We must be certain we understand what people mean by statements they make or we could easily fail to get the meaning of what they say. The statement, "I have nothing wear" is a very common one among women. It is difficult for a man to understand it when he sees a clothes closet so filled with dresses that it would seem an imposition to try to hang another in it.

But women may mean many things when this statement is made. It may mean she has nothing that pleases her for the particular occasion they are discussing. It may mean she has grown tired of the clothes she has. Or it may mean that she wants the thrill of purchasing new clothing. But this is not our interest in this chapter. We are interested in something that can make women more beautiful and we are more interested in the woman than in clothing selected for the body.

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Pet. 3:1-5).

“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works” (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

It is easy to miss what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell us by looking for something that it does not say. Some have taken this statement to mean that it is wrong for a woman to try to make herself beautiful and they miss the real beauty mentioned in these verses. We believe it is a serious mistake for any woman to fail to make herself as attractive as possible. There is nothing vain about it. It just makes good sense. It is as important for her to keep herself as attractive after marriage as before she is married. If her reasons for making herself attractive before marriage were sound, they do not lose any of their reasonableness after marriage. A woman should never allow her husband to forget the sweetheart with whom he fell in love.

Physical beauty, however, without a beautiful heart is no more than a faded flower. In fact a beautiful heart can create beauty where it otherwise might not exist. What is in the heart is more important than outward apparel. **“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). “But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible.”** It is easy to lose the complete meaning of a word by looking at it in only one way. When we use the word **“corruptible”** we may find ourselves limiting it to morality only, but the manner in which it is used here involves more than that. In fact the Holy Spirit is discussing the influence a woman may have over her husband and the importance of her conduct as it has to do with that influence.

A pleasant disposition is becoming to any woman who desires to be beautiful. No one can deny that life has its difficulties any way you try to live it. Christ warned His faithful followers that they could not escape hardship. Only a woman could know the problems that a woman must face, but anyone could see that it would be foolish to deny that she has problems. But every woman must decide what she will allow these

problems to do to her. She alone has the answer. If she allows the difficulties she encounters to rob her of a pleasant disposition she gives up one of the most becoming dresses she could ever wear.

A pleasant disposition is something that is developed in the heart. It is not something that can be put on and off because it fits certain occasions but is not considered so important at other times. To make an effort to wear something outwardly that does not exist in the heart is to make a sham out of life. When people try to develop a mechanical habit of trying to look pleasant when it is easy to see there is no depth to it they lose all their charm. Jesus was very critical of the Pharisees because they tried to appear to be something outwardly when their hearts were filled with corruption. He did not have any patience with this kind of hypocrisy. Jesus insisted that people be genuine in their lives and conduct. It is the only kind of living that can be beautiful.

Most of us can see how wrong it is to allow the incidents of life to create within us such a disposition that will destroy the happiness of those who must share life with us. There is no way to make right the disposition that heaps its disappointments and frustrations on others. One of the greatest tests of character that all of us face is what we will allow life to make of us. We are assured that God will not allow any of us to be tempted beyond that which we are able to bear. Any failure we experience is by our own permission. We have all the strength we need if we are willing to use it properly. Although we cannot deny that a woman has her share of trials, we do know that it is never right to allow these to create a sour and critical disposition.

The disposition of a woman has much to do with the happiness of a household. She should have her greatest power and influence in the home. There is where character is molded. There is where attitudes will be developed that will stay throughout life with those who grow up in that home. And the attitudes that are developed in the home will have much to do with the success or failure, happiness or unhappiness, of those whose lives are touched by the home. It becomes, therefore,

very important that the one person who can have more to do than any member of the household toward developing real character wear a genuine and attractive disposition.

Trust is a dress that looks good on a woman. Suspicion never looked good on anyone. A woman with a suspicious heart never finds happiness because happiness must begin in the heart. Neither does she contribute any happiness to the lives she touches when she is suspicious. In fact, she makes other people miserable. Regardless of the reason we may use to allow suspicion to fill the heart it is wrong and very destructive to the heart that entertains it. If we live suspicious of others we might find the answer to our difficulties by examining our own hearts.

A suspicious person may boast of the fact that he (or she) does not trust anybody. Such a statement is not made with a feeling of regret but a feeling of superiority. A person of this nature feels wiser than "foolish" people who trust others. When suspicion is entertained in the heart a person will develop a look or grin that is designed to say, "You inferior people may believe in others but I know something you do not know."

A suspicious person is forever spying on others. If a woman is suspicious of her husband because she has a suspicious nature, she cannot be satisfied until she proves he is doing something wrong. This is not because she has so much interest in finding him wrong as she has in finding that she is right in being suspicious of him. Actually she receives more joy in finding him wrong (because it proves her suspicions to be right) than she would in finding that he did no wrong. The same attitude is developed toward others. Such a person may boast of the fact that she does not pry into the lives of others because of an area of privacy that she claims to respect, but a suspicious person counts nothing sacred to others and assumes the right to make, or change, whatever rules may be necessary to the continuation of spying on others. A person with this nature can always justify having such a disposition.

One who is always suspicious of others will be forever accusing, charging, and contradicting. One with this disposition never feels that others can be right unless they agree with her

and develop her nature. There is something wrong and this person feels an obligation to learn what it is. The accusations may not be based on facts but may be made for the purpose of trying to learn something that is not known. Naturally one with this attitude does not consider that making an accusation where no proof can be found is lying, but believes it to be a form of superior thinking and strategy. If making charges does not uncover any information, this person is not satisfied because information is not what is really being sought, but proof of the righteousness of warped thinking.

A suspicious person will find wrong where it does not exist. First convinced, this person will go on to try to convince others, taking advantage of all the weaknesses to be found in others, playing with their natural envy and jealousy of the one selected to be destroyed, but never making any direct statements of accusation. A suspicious person is usually good at planting seeds in the minds of others and watching them grow. Then this person can stand on the sideline and enjoy the harvest of the seed sown without getting involved or being questioned for anything done or said.

A suspicious person does not know love. "Love thinketh no evil" (1 Cor. 13:5). Such a person may make many vows of love, but such love is only from the lips. A woman who is suspicious will use anybody, even the members of her own family, to prove herself more righteous than others. She can feel righteous in destroying the good name of another regardless of the relationship. She will not hesitate to warp and twist the minds of others, even those who should be near and dear to her, while at the same time vowing her love and protection of them. And she will not hesitate to turn one against another to have her own way.

One who wears suspicions is forever waiting around for the kill. If someone else can be persuaded to make a move to destroy the good name of another, this person will rush in, often blindly, without any regard for anyone or anything, to destroy another and feel very righteous in so doing. If this sounds like an ugly dress, it is only the beginning. You can never look good in this dress. Neither can you ever really enjoy wearing it.

One reason people do not trust others is because they are jealous of them. Jealousy is one of the most unbecoming dresses a woman can wear. It comes in many colors. Our first thought of jealousy is related to people. We think of a woman being jealous of another woman because she thinks she is trying to lure her husband away from her. Most of us know, however, that in most cases this is not the real foundation of jealousy. When a woman loses her husband to another woman it is generally her fault. I do not believe many women give much concern to this kind of jealousy. In most cases that of which we are jealous is something else, but since we are unwilling to admit any other kind of jealousy we must find an outlet for our feelings in something that does not exist.

A woman who is an introvert can very easily be jealous of one who is out-going in personality. "She is constantly talking about herself" is a criticism often made against such a person. A close examination of the conversation of the two may reveal that the critic talks about herself much more than the one being criticized talks of herself, but she does not consider what she is doing in the same way she would the other. It is easy to justify what we do while condemning it in others. It is not difficult to find an excuse for what we do, but we do not find it easy to be generous in our attitude toward others.

One who is of an unhappy nature can very easily be jealous of one who seems to be always happy. "She never experienced the kind of troubles that have come to me," is a criticism often expressed. Usually, however, people do not really know how to be happy until they have had some troubles. Some of the happiest, yet most criticized, people in the world have known more troubles than the critics could ever bear. Happiness is not always having our way about everything. It does not depend so much on circumstances as what we make out of circumstances. It comes from within, never from without.

A woman who feels that she has failed may very well be jealous of one whom she considers to be a success. Yet, strange as it may seem, she may never allow herself to believe that the other person has succeeded in anything. Of course, the word "success" is used in many ways. Many people have become

greater than they realize, but if they are jealous of the success of others it will never be realized or enjoyed.

A discontented person may be jealous of one who seems to be contented. We may find ourselves making our own rules about what we call contentment. Anyone who does not measure up to these rules must of necessity be wrong in our own thinking. Sometimes we allow these self-made rules to cause us to try to meddle in the lives of others. If they do not react as we believe they should we resent it. We just cannot understand how anybody could be contented who does not react to every situation as we do. This resentment may cause us to imagine many things and the imagination may manufacture things that never really existed.

Jealousy is out of place in the life of any person. A woman could not dress herself in anything more unbecoming than this. Jealousy will cause us to try to destroy others "in the name of righteousness." It will destroy true Christianity if we allow it to remain in our hearts.

Humility will look good on you regardless of your age or the color of your hair. It will look good on all occasions. But a feeling of superiority will always clash with Christianity.

Perhaps nothing has done more to destroy right relationships in every phase of life than the feeling that we are, or must be, superior to others. It has caused a reaction in our society that is as wrong as the feeling itself. And it has contributed its share to the breaking up of many homes that otherwise would have known happiness.

A person who must feel superior cannot bear to hear others complimented without finding some fault. Neither can such a person compliment another except in a condescending manner. A woman with this attitude cannot enjoy any good thing said about her husband unless the statement is followed by another statement that gives her credit for making him a success. Neither is she able to enjoy the success of her children unless she can either feel that she has made them what they are or that she has suffered very much to make it possible for them to do so well.

A person with a superior attitude can only tolerate certain people if they "stay in their place." Of course, "their place" is never defined, but you can always be sure it is somewhat down the social ladder from where you find the "superior" person. To one who feels superior certain people are "off limits". There are some social sins this person cannot tolerate. A person of this nature reserves the right to determine what sins to tolerate. This gives the right to determine what person is to be tolerated. Anyone who does not fall in line becomes one of the un-tolerated. And, strange as it may seem, a person with this attitude will join other people who otherwise would not receive a second look in order to destroy one to whom she feels inferior.

It is easy to see this dress could not look good on anybody. But humility is very beautiful. It looks as good on one person as another and even those who dress otherwise cannot keep from envying the woman dressed in humility.

Gratitude is a dress that looks good in all seasons. A martyr complex never looks good regardless of the person who tries to wear it. If we would spend half as much time considering the blessings for which we have every right to be thankful as we do the things about which to complain, life would be much more pleasant for us and for all those with whom we associate.

It is easy to allow familiarity to breed forgetfulness. Most of us "never had it so good." But we can become so accustomed to our blessings that we take them for granted. Many women have wondered what happened in the home but have not considered the fact that they have ceased to be grateful. Thoughtlessness is a very common cause of ingratitude. Men are no different from women in their need for gratitude. No man can do his best, or be his best, who does not believe that the woman who claims to love him appreciates him and what he tries to do for her. There is no joy in doing things for, or even associating with, a person who does not appreciate your efforts. No task is too difficult for the man who believes he is loved and appreciated.

Some people have never known gratitude because they are too selfish and there is nothing that breeds more evil than selfishness. A selfish person lacks proper consideration for others. A selfish person is too busy thinking about self to be concerned about others. To a selfish person having his own way or getting what he wants is more important than how others feel or what happens to them. The true cure for ingratitude is a desire to make other people happy.

Good works is about the most beautiful dress a woman can wear. Good works covers a multitude of activities. When we consider the needs of humanity, many people within our own environment, there is no reason for any person failing to be busily engaged in good works. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). No woman is ever more beautiful than when she is helping others, not for selfish reasons, but because of a genuine love for others and love for God who loves everybody.

A woman who possesses a "meek and quiet spirit" is truly a beautiful woman. She has beauty that cannot be found in a beauty parlor. Without this spirit she has no real beauty. A boisterous, loud, boastful, harsh disposition in a woman is entirely out of place, but a quiet and meek spirit reveals that she has found her place in life and has found the contentment that God intended for her to enjoy. People cannot help but see the beauty in this woman.

The most beautiful thing God ever made is a woman who is really the kind of woman God intended her to be. She brings joy into the lives of all those who may be honored to share a part of her life.

CHAPTER FOUR

Winning A Husband

*Until God is enthroned in the heart a shadow is cast
over any other love we may think we have.*

Winning A Husband

A man was speaking to an organization made up of women. Somewhere in the speech he said, "There is a man for every woman and you can't improve on that." A single lady in the audience stood up and said, "I don't want to improve on it. I want to get in on it."

Winning a man for a husband is not what we want to discuss in this chapter, but winning a husband for Christ.

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear" (1 Pet. 3: 1-2).

The word "conversation" in other versions than the King James is translated "conduct." Thus we are speaking of what a woman does that can win her husband. Every Christian woman who has a husband who is not a Christian naturally wants to win him for Christ. She would not love him if this were not true. Neither could she be a genuine Christian if she did not desire his salvation. Her home will never be complete until he is won for Christ.

Divided homes have been responsible for losing many young people. When one parent is a Christian and the other is not, children who are born into that home may never belong to

Christ. Even if the parent who is a Christian has enough influence on the children to lead them to obey the Lord, the frustration of living in an environment where one who is loved obeys the Lord and the other does not will have its effect on the happiness in the lives of the children. A woman who has a husband who is not a Christian should be seriously concerned about his soul and do everything within her power to win him for Christ.

She cannot teach her husband to love God if she does not love Him. How much we love God is determined by our willingness to listen to Him and to live according to His instructions. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 Jno. 5:2-3).

Every person has a choice between being directed by his own desires, based upon the teaching of man, or desires planted in the heart by the call of the flesh, and being directed by the God we claim to love. No number of words can make up for failure to act. No doubt one of the greatest attractions those out of Christ saw in the lives of the early saints was the great love they had for God. Such love does not go without being noticed. Neither does it exist without investigation.

God is first in the life of one who loves Him. This does not mean that any love that belongs to others is taken away, but until God is enthroned in the heart a shadow is cast over any other love we may think we have. In order for a person to be perfectly happy in any relationship God must be first in his life. This love for God will create harmony in other relationships. Regardless of what happiness we think we have in other relationships no part of life is complete unless God rules the entire life.

If a woman would win her husband to Christ she must avoid being critical of the church, the preacher, the elders, or other members of the Lord's body. We destroy any influence another can have on the one we want to win when we become critical of that person. Any way you look at it, Christianity does not produce a critic. If a woman criticizes her preacher

in the presence of her unconverted husband she need not expect her husband to listen to him. Even if she does not criticize, but only listens to criticism by her husband without any word of defense she renders the preacher helpless as far as her husband is concerned. The influence of preachers in the lives of many people has often been destroyed by critical Christians.

Sometimes a woman who is married to a man who is not a Christian may be tempted to listen to him, or believe some report he may bring to her about her preacher, without investigation, merely because she sees it pleases her husband. Or it may be that she takes advantage of criticism to ease the burden of her own failure to bring her husband to Christ. But regardless of the reason for doing so she is wrong and need not expect the preacher she criticizes to have any influence on her husband.

Not only is this true but she is rendering other preachers helpless, because if she joins with him in casting a shadow over the life of one preacher she has created in his mind suspicion of all preachers. Every act of this nature moves him farther away from Christ.

This principle is also true regarding other members of the Lord's body. If we create a situation that can cause one to remain outside the body of Christ because he feels himself to be as good or better than some within, we move him away from Christ. Every critical statement one Christian makes about another in the presence of one who is not a Christian merely increases his satisfaction in being what he is and refusing to obey the Lord. The church is the body of Christ and every member is a part of that body. We cannot be critical of those who make up the body of Christ without including Christ in our criticism. We cannot sin against the church without sinning against God. Neither can we do something good for the church without doing something good for Him. Since we belong to Him we cannot separate our conduct toward Him from our conduct toward those who belong to Him. We cannot live one life in our homes, businesses, or social circles, and live another life at worship and have any influence for good on the lives of those who know us. Either we are a Christian all the time or we are a Christian none of the time. It will do no good to tell others

they should read their Bibles if they find something they do not want when they read us.

A woman cannot win her husband to Christ by trying to force him to be a Christian. She could argue the need of a proper example before the children, but if a man does not see the value in being a Christian himself it is not likely that he will see any great need for his children being Christians. Also, if a person merely submits to certain requirements for no higher purpose than being a good example for his children he has not really obeyed the Lord. And children will recognize it. It is much more difficult to get by with sham in dealing with children than with adults.

Or a woman might insist that it would make her much happier if her husband obeyed the gospel. This might cause a man to wonder why she married him in the first place, vowing her happiness in being his wife, knowing at the time she married him he was not a Christian. If the importance of Christianity can be overlooked at one time why should it become so important at another time? Making her happy is not enough reason for obeying the Lord, even if a husband would be willing to do it. A woman once said she wished her husband would obey the Lord so they would have more time together. Although we can fully understand the human desire, obeying the Lord is for a much greater purpose. If that is her only reason she is thinking more about what she wants than what the Lord wants. If a woman is motivated by reasons of this kind she is prone to nag, criticize, and bargain in order to get what she wants. But we insist that obeying the Lord must be for a greater purpose than satisfying another human being regardless of how much satisfaction it might bring.

It is unfortunate when anyone gets the idea that going through certain forms is equal to obeying the gospel. Because this idea seems to prevail many people turn away from any action insisting that what a person does has nothing to do with obedience. The heart must be involved in obedience. The Bible speaks of "obeying from the heart". Merely submitting to outward forms is not obedience any more than refusing to submit to those that are required constitutes obedience. Not every per-

son who submits to certain acts obeys the Lord. When we obey from the heart we are made right inside as we do what is demanded of us. Jesus spoke to the Pharisees of this very thing when He said they were very strict in observing outward forms but their hearts were filled with evil. He said they should have done the things they did but they should not have omitted the other. An unconverted person is not converted by merely submitting to certain demands that are made.

If a woman wants to convert her husband to Christ she must be faithful in her position as a wife and to the Lord. "Without the word" is a very strong statement. It points to the power of a good example. People do not believe the Lord's church is important because of what others say. They look for what believing the Bible and obeying produces. Jesus pointed to this truth when He said a tree is known by its fruit.

Faithfulness to her Lord will cause a woman to attend all the services of the church. If they are not important enough to attend they are not important at all. If they are important, and one who claims to be a Christian refuses for any reason to attend, we cannot expect the unconverted to believe in their value. It will do no good to preach to one about the value of the Lord's body when the assembly is not of enough value for us to be present. And we do not have the right to decide which service is important and which is unimportant. If we assume the right to decide that certain assemblies are unimportant as compared to others, an unconverted person will believe he has the same right in deciding what acts are unimportant as he compares them to others. If the faith of a Christian is not strong enough to create a desire to attend services, why should we expect the unconverted to have faith strong enough to cause him to obey the Lord? Since the Bible is the inspired message from God and the only message we have, if we believe it we will want to know more about it. Lack of respect for the word of God on the part of one who claims to believe it will create no respect in the heart of the unconverted for the word of God.

Faithfulness to her Lord will cause a Christian woman to be diligent in prayer. If God is not important enough to pray

to He is not important enough to obey. If a husband who is not a Christian never hears his wife pray, he cannot believe she is very close to God or that God is very important to her. If we truly believe in God we will want to pray to Him just as we will want to listen to Him through His word. There is no better test of how much one believes in God than how fervently and earnestly he prays. If God does not listen when we pray He does not see when we obey.

Faithfulness on the part of a Christian woman will cause her to be more interested in the work of the Lord's body than any other organization on earth. If a woman gives more attention to some other organization than she does to the church she reveals that it is not the most important part of her life. Although it may please some husbands to see their wives rise in social circles or civic organizations it is not the kind of pleasure that will lead to Christ. A Christian woman should be more concerned about being what the Lord wants her to be than being anything else. If she reveals more interest in other things her husband cannot think the Lord's way is very important. A woman who is diligent in searching for members of some human organization but is not interested in searching for souls does not leave an impression that souls are very important.

A woman who had a husband who was not a Christian was a member of a human organization and worked diligently in it until she became president of it. Her interest in the church amounted only to attending one service a week. She never taught a class. She never became a part of a group that did personal work. She showed no interest in the conversion of souls. But she wondered why her husband was not interested in the church. No doubt she would have said that she had given him a perfect example to follow but following her would have led to a lodge meeting more often than it would to an assembly where the Lord was worshipped. Following her would have led to more conversation about a lodge than it would to a discussion of the word of God. Following her would have led into more worldly activities than work for the Lord.

A preacher once related something that happened to him while he was still a young man. He was preaching the gospel

in a village back when open air meetings were being conducted. One night a man who had been the husband of a Christian woman for forty years obeyed the gospel. Naturally everyone was happy and people gave the preacher credit for converting him. Many of them congratulated him for being able to do what no other preacher had done. He said all of this made him feel exceedingly important. The next day he went early to the place where the meeting was conducted and soon the man who had been baptized arrived. The preacher decided this was his opportunity to learn what secret power he had to move a man like this to obey Christ. He asked the man, "What did I say that caused you to obey the gospel?" Just then they saw his wife coming up the road and he replied, "Son, it was nothing you said. Living for forty years with the woman we see coming converted me to the Lord." A woman makes a serious mistake who is not faithful in all things if she expects to win her husband for Christ.

The way a woman treats her husband may have much to do with his failure to obey the Lord. We cannot expect to produce in others something we have not experienced in our own lives. If one who claims to be a Christian does not act as a Christian should in the presence of others she cannot expect to have much influence in bringing them to Christ.

A preacher was conducting a meeting in a certain city some years ago and some flowers had been placed on the pulpit near where he stood. It so happened that these flowers were his enemies and as the meeting continued he was becoming ill. He knew that it would be necessary to remove the flowers or else he could not continue the meeting. He told one of the elders about his problem and the elder promised to have them removed. Some time later the elder related to the preacher what happened. He said when he informed the woman who had brought the flowers about the difficulty she took them out of the building, threw them on the ground, and said, "I will never bring another flower into this building as long as I live." When the preacher expressed his regret for having caused such a demonstration the elder explained, saying, "If she did not have a fit over that it would have been something else. That is

why her husband is not a Christian. She once told him he was going to hell and she was glad of it." No doubt this woman often wondered why her husband never obeyed the gospel. He could not see that it had done anything for her.

Chaste conduct involves more than good morals. It includes the entire life. It is easy to put a premium on some sins and forget that others are bad. We are more prone to judge wrong by what society says than by what the Lord says.

Another woman wondered why her husband did not obey the gospel. But she was always speaking uncomplimentary about him both privately and publicly. Sometimes even in the presence of guests she would say very harsh things to and about him. She did her best to cause him to feel inferior. She was critical of his family and her words were often mean even to the point of vulgarity and cursing. No one could interest him in obeying the gospel. He could not see that it had done anything for his wife. Clean living calls for a clean mind and produces clean words and proper action. If a woman wants her husband to become a Christian she must be a Christian.

If a woman is to have the best influence on her husband she must be his wife in more than a legal sense. When Paul said, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh," he did not leave out the responsibility of the woman in the matter. Unfortunately some women never really belong to their husbands. So long as father and mother live their word remains above the word of their husbands. With such women it is not difficult to see where their loyalty is. The desires of parents stand above the desires of the husband. If children are born to this couple this woman will lavish her attention on the children to the neglect of her husband. If discipline is necessary she does not hesitate to stand against her husband. It is not uncommon for a woman with this attitude to do her best to build a wall between father and children and, in her own way, try to destroy the affection the children have for their father. She may even convince herself that while she is doing this she is actually trying to increase their regard for their father. If a woman does not believe in God enough to be the kind of wife

God wants her to be it will be difficult for her husband to believe God can do anything for him.

If a woman would influence her husband to become a Christian she must be fair and honest in her relationship to him. A woman who lies to her husband cannot expect him to be attracted to the truth by which she claims to live. The same Bible that says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," also says, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." In fact in this verse liars are associated with the fearful, unbelievers, abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, and idolaters. Yet it is strange how easy it is to become very exacting in condemning others for these other sins mentioned and lie without thinking anything about it.

Not only must she refuse to be dishonest with her husband, but a Christian woman must be honest in her dealings with all people. It is as much a lie when we fail to tell the truth about something purchased as it would be about something else. It is as much a lie when a woman manufactures some excuse for refusing to be a wife as it would be to lie about other things. If a husband hears his wife lie about others he will not trust her in her relationship to him. No Christian can be dishonest and please Christ and it is doubtful that any dishonest so-called Christian ever led anyone to Christ.

An unbelieving husband must be able to see Christ through his wife. Christ said those who follow Him are lights in the world. Christ is the real light and we are reflectors of that light. If others can see what Christ can do in our lives and how much more meaningful life can become because we are followers of Him, they will be attracted to the way of life we have found.

If a woman is to win her husband she must try real Christianity and keep on trying. Do not give up because of the passing of time and do not give in because of other pressures. Without the word many a Christian woman has brought her husband to the Lord.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Golden Years

*The latter years of a person's life can be really golden years
in service to the Master.*

The Golden Years

All the years in the life of a Christian should be productive. God's work touches the lives of all ages, and never ceases. Every age has something to offer in helping others in building up the body of Christ. It is a temptation for an older person to believe that because of age the years of production for the cause of Christ have ended. Some believe it so much that they are heard to say, "I have done what I could and it is time for me to step aside and let some younger person take my place." There is no question about the fact that on some occasions it is necessary to turn certain works over to others, but this does not mean that we should cease to be active in the Lord's work. The latter years of a person's life can be really golden years in service to the Master.

“. . . The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Tit. 2:3-5).

Here is a work that women cannot do effectively until they have lived many years. Sometimes it takes years of experience and success to equip us to be able to help others. People are

much more prone to listen to one who has enjoyed success than they are to listen to one of their own limited experience.

Every age has its peculiar dangers. While most of us are prone to major on the dangers facing young people we forget that other ages have their dangers also. After the days of our youth we pass through three periods that are very dangerous and which often take people away from Christ.

First is the time of marriage. During the early days of marriage it is a temptation for young people to become so interested in each other and the new way of life they have begun that they forget to be loyal to Christ.

The second is when the first child is born. There is no experience like that of becoming a parent for the first time. If they are not careful young parents will become so absorbed in the first child that Christ is crowded into the background.

The third, many times more dangerous and often overlooked, is when the last child has gone from home and elderly parents are once again alone. At this time there tends to be a letting up because it is no longer necessary to be a proper example before the child. Also, it is possible to get the feeling that our work is about finished and we can become less active than we were in earlier years. Or, because these responsibilities are gone we can easily get the feeling that we are no longer needed or that our services are no longer of value. We may get to feeling that we are somewhat worthless. Then we may feel that because of the struggle of the years that we have earned a rest and that very little is required of us or expected of us. In some ways this is the most dangerous period of the three.

A close look at the cause for non-productiveness in most churches is found among its older members. While we have been giving our attention to youth we were unaware that more people are lost later on than when they are young. And while we have been demanding the energy and excitement of youth to make the cause of Christ prosper, we have forgotten that the seasoning of the years brings richness to life that nothing else can. Those who have lived through experiences that youth has yet to face have much to offer in the guidance of those who are younger. Younger women need the help of those who are

older and aged women need to give that help for their own well being.

If older women are to help younger women they must first be of good behavior themselves. The behavior of an older woman must be of such nature that a younger woman can follow her example and be right. Certainly no person is willing to listen to one who does not live according to what is taught. Every generation has spent a lot of time discussing the sins of youth, but most of the time young people are what we have made them. Most of what they do they have seen older people doing. Nothing is quite so important as setting a good example. When Paul wanted to give some sound advice to Timothy that would help him in the effectiveness of his teaching he said, "Be thou an example of the believers." If younger women are unable to see in older women what they want to be they will not be willing to listen to what they say.

If an older woman wants to help those who are younger she must be a good example in her home and her home life. There is where God placed the woman and there is where her responsibilities are to be found. If she fails here her life cannot be complete. Neither will she fulfill the God-given purpose of her life. And the desires that are naturally in her heart because she was made for a specific purpose will never be realized and complete happiness will never be known.

No woman is born with the knowledge needed to guide the home. Someone must be responsible for her teaching and she will be the product of what she has been taught. Unfortunately, she does not always find the information needed in the home where she grew up. She may have grown up in a home that was not Christian. Although in such a home she may learn many things necessary to being a good home-maker she will miss the greatest asset to be found in any home. Christianity will make every relationship better and will give meaning to everything that is done. Even if she did grow up in a Christian home she may not have been taught many things she needs to know. Sometimes people are Christian only to a certain degree. It is possible for people to learn how to obey certain commandments that have to do with the removal of past sins and the

manner in which to worship God, and still miss many important truths that have to do with the ordinary relationships of life. Many people who are Christians in the sense of obeying certain commands know little about what Christianity has to do with the home. And many who practice being Christians one day a week have not learned that Christianity is a way of life and becomes a part of everything we do. If we stress obeying certain commands to the neglect of the rest of life we leave the idea that all of Christianity is summed up in these commands. A young woman who grows up in this kind of home may not learn many things that are necessary to her happiness and the happiness of others when she becomes the builder of a home. Because of this it is often necessary to remove some things from the hearts of young women which they have been taught by well-meaning parents, or which parents have neglected to teach, so that they may be replaced with something better.

It is no wonder that young people go wrong when we realize how little of life they are taught by those who are older. Many things they are forced to learn from the wrong sources—things that should have been taught by parents when they were young. Many young people find themselves in difficulty, not because they intended to do evil, but because they did not know what is right. The responsibility of their ignorance belongs to those who are older. It is a betrayal of trust when we allow young people to grow up without the knowledge needed to insure their happiness and well-being.

An older woman should be an example in her attitude and conduct toward her family. Serenity in a home depends more on the attitude of the woman in that home than anyone else. A woman can be nearly everything else she should be in the home, but if her attitude is wrong she will create frustrations in the household that will destroy happiness in the lives of others that may never be restored. A woman who is not pleased to be a woman and who receives no genuine happiness in the calling for which she was created can hurt, rather than help, the lives of those with whom she comes in contact. One who does not appreciate her purpose in life may become resentful

of what life brings. When this is true she will be prone to express her resentfulness, thus doing harm to others. All the vows we make concerning our happiness say very little compared with the way we conduct ourselves. A woman who resents her place in the home cannot be of any help to those who need her help. All the teaching she does will avail nothing unless her own attitude in her own home is what it should be.

If older women are to be helpful to younger women they must be an example in purity. People are not born to do wrong. All wrong doing is learned with the passing of years. And it is learned from others. Not only is this true with wrong doing, but it is also true in learning how to do right. We are much more prone to follow the example others set before us than we are to listen to what they say. Every person will either learn to do right or wrong. If someone does not teach what is right others will teach what is wrong. Because of this reason we can see the importance of the work older women can do in setting a proper example before younger women so that both by example and instruction they might teach them to do right.

She must be an example in her speech. The language she uses reveals what is in her heart. We all know that unclean speech should never be used by those who are Christians. But while we have insisted on the absence of unclean speech we have failed to give enough attention to the danger of speech usually not considered unclean. The manner in which a woman talks to her husband can have much to do with the attitude of children toward their father. It can also have much to do with the happiness he enjoys in the home. If she is prone to be critical of others she will build some attitudes in the hearts of her children that may never be erased. We do much more harm by the manner in which we say things, as well as what we say, than we imagine.

The older woman should be an example as a neighbor. A man once asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" "And Jesus answered and said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that

way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" (Lk. 10:29-37).

We cannot read this record without knowing what neighborliness is. Being a good neighbor is part of the building of a good life. We cannot separate ourselves from the needs of other people and find fulfillment. But this must be learned. We are not born with this knowledge.

She should be a good example in her faithfulness to God. God is either first in our lives or He is not in our lives at all. In all the history of God's dealings with man He has never taken second place to anybody or anything. Throughout the Old Testament we find God insisting on being first in the lives of His people. When God is first everything else is in its proper place. This is also true in the New Testament. Jesus said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37). Thus in all our activities faithfulness to God comes before everything else and without this faithfulness nothing is ever right.

An older woman should teach younger women to be sober. Being a wife and mother in a home is serious business. It is not something to be taken lightly. The future of what the world will be is found in the teaching children receive in the home. While our generation has talked and written much about building a better nation, better schools, and cleaning up society, we have forgotten that all this is done in the home.

Until we build better homes we will never be able to make anything else better. The responsibility of the home is staggering. It is something to be serious about because there we build attitudes toward right and wrong, toward our responsibility to others, toward our nation, and toward God. Not only do we shape the lives in that home for happiness or unhappiness, but we also help to shape the destiny of the lives that will be touched by those who grow up in our homes. If we want better citizens, better government officials, better businessmen, and a better society we must begin by drilling the principles that will make this possible into the hearts of children in the home. We cannot afford to think of the home relationship merely as it has to do with our own happiness, but also with the well-being of those in the home and those they will influence when they take their places in the world.

Older women should teach younger women to love their husbands. We either learn by experience or by being taught by others. Experience sometimes comes too late to be of help, especially to our early years. A woman does not love her husband merely because she is married to him. If she is the kind of woman she should be the years may teach her much, but if she has an older teacher who knows what life is about she is very fortunate. By engaging in this teaching service an older woman brings happiness to the entire family and productivity to the church of our Lord. Unfortunately many people do not know what love is all about because they limit it to physical attraction and physical needs. This kind of love cannot last longer than it takes for the attraction to fade or the needs to be fulfilled. Too often love is thought of as something that comes like a puff of wind without our having anything to do with it or without any need for anything on our part to make it grow and last. The years teach us better than this and those who have had the experience of the years can teach others many things they need to know.

She should teach them to love their children. It is very easy for our love for our children to be selfish and destructive without our realizing it. Children cannot enjoy life to its fullest without proper love. This love will involve being wanted.

Every person desires to be wanted. This is true in the life of a child. If we are not careful we will cause the child to believe that he is a burden rather than someone we wanted to share our home. It also includes proper discipline. Allowing a child to grow up without the discipline and teaching needed to make a good life is not the kind of love God intended that a parent should have for children. To allow a child to grow up without proper discipline is to make life difficult for him. It will take away much of the happiness he otherwise could have enjoyed. Many young mothers do not understand what love is all about. It is easy for them to get the idea that having children is for their own pleasure and forget what is necessary to a good life for the child. Without knowing, improper love may do much damage to a child for life. Thus older women who have lived and known what life is all about, and who have loved and known what love is can render a great service by teaching younger women to love their children.

Older women should teach younger women to be keepers at home. Most of the impressions we take with us through life are made in the home. A properly kept home is a place where people like to be. And in this matter as well as others we do what we want to do. What is not known can be learned. Of course, keeping a home involves more than keeping it clean and orderly, but these are not to be ruled out. When members of the family had rather be in the homes of others than in their own homes chances are there is something wrong with the keeping of the home where they should be. The home should be the place where people are the most loved and wanted. It should be a place where strength can be received that cannot be found elsewhere. How women keep their homes will have much to do not only with the lives of those who are a part of it but the lives they touch and the work they do. It is hardly possible to think of anything a woman can do that would render greater service to the world and especially to the church than to be a good home-keeper.

Since many of the other things that older women should teach younger women are discussed in other chapters, we leave

them here. But we need to notice that without this proper teaching the word of God will be blasphemed.

The rewards of the older woman who thus teaches younger women can hardly be imagined. She will bring happiness to the younger woman she teaches that she otherwise would never know. She will bring happiness to the lives of those who grow up in that home. She will make possible greater contributions to the building of a better world and the building of better churches. And long after she is gone the way of all the earth multiplied thousands of people will find a better way of life because she rendered a humble and often unrecognized service that continues to bless the world.

CHAPTER SIX

Helpful Women

Whose names are in the book of life.

Helpful Women

“And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help these women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life” (Phil. 4:3).

It is a well known fact that the gospel spread over most of the world during the first century of its being preached. And it is equally well known that women had a great part in making this possible. Many of them are mentioned in the New Testament. Here we are not told what these women did, but it is very easy for us to imagine what their work consisted of when we recall what we have seen some women do who were exceedingly helpful.

A young man once decided to preach the gospel. At that time he was just entering high school, and his father had died. It was necessary for him to find some work that would help him receive his schooling and develop his ability as a preacher. It was also necessary for him to find some real friends who were willing to help him. One elderly lady became interested in him and allowed him to live in her home for a time. She had a son about the age of this young preacher who became like a brother to him. The lady treated the young preacher as she would her own son, mending his clothing, doing his laundry, and otherwise looking out for his welfare as only a good

mother can. As this man in later years looked back over the years he had lived and the opportunities he had enjoyed in preaching the gospel, living in this home stood out as one of the bright spots in his life. In fact he believed that it would have hardly been possible for him to have obtained an education and develop his ability as a preacher had it not been for this good woman who was willing to take him into her home and love him as her own son. He could very well say this Christian lady was a helpful woman.

Another year in the life of this young preacher was spent in the home of an older gospel preacher who had a son about his age who also was preaching the gospel. The wife of the older preacher was as interested in the boy as she was in her own son and did much to encourage them in their study habits. As is so often true with boys these two enjoyed playing more than studying. One day she called them in from their play and talked with them concerning their future as preachers. She said, "People come to hear you now because you are young boys, not because you know much. But the day will come when you will no longer be boys and people will not come to hear a boy preach just because he is young. Then it will be necessary to know much more than it is now and you would do well to take advantage of your opportunities for study."

As the years went by both these boys came to realize the meaning of what she said. And as they developed into preachers—one her own son and the other a boy she took into her home and treated as a son—neither of them ever forgot her faithful care and training and the gentle rebuke they both needed. She could also be called a helpful woman.

Anyone who knows of the work being done in the Lord's kingdom is fully aware that much of it is being done by women. Whether men are forcing women to do some things they should not be doing is not to be discussed here. If we understand the Lord's teaching every member of His kingdom must do all within his power to advance the Lord's work. The failure of one cannot be replaced by the diligence of another. But there are some works for which women seem to be especially fitted and those who are dedicated to the Lord do their

work well and the kingdom grows and many lives are made happier because of the work they do.

Some women are especially good teachers of the word of God. We have watched women in their patient teaching of children who were not yet old enough to attend public schools. These are important years in the lives of children because most character traits are developed during these years. It is at this time that they develop attitudes toward God, toward life, and toward others that will remain with them as long as they live. These children come from almost every environment possible. Some of them receive very little help from any other source than these devoted teachers. It is especially important that children develop the right attitude toward God and His word during these years. It is important for them to begin to learn the value of the Lord's church and what it can mean to their lives. It is necessary that they learn about Jesus and His great love for them and His desire to make them happy throughout their lives and happy when life is over. The years that follow will grow on the foundation that is laid in the hearts of children during these early years. And it takes much skill, patience, and devotion for a woman to help these young and innocent children get started in the right way for the years that are ahead. Fortunate indeed are children who have devoted teachers who are interested in their having a right understanding of God during these years.

Some women are very good at teaching these children as they grow older. A group of boys were studying to become preachers or elders in the Lord's church. They began this study when they were only in junior high school and continued through their high school years. They were brilliant young men and no doubt headed for outstanding service in the Lord's church. One lady had taught these boys in a Bible class for several years. In fact she had been teaching young boys for many years in this same church. We remember well her comments concerning these young men and how thrilled she had been to teach them during the years when they were growing older and wise enough to obey the Lord. These boys never forgot the patience and skill of this helpful woman who began

building right principles into their lives in their early years. And she was rewarded by seeing each of them obey his God and grow stronger in His service. She was a helpful woman.

Another woman was especially good at teaching young girls. She began with them while they were young and had much to learn about life. With patience and skill she molded their thinking and guided them in their study of the word of God. She watched them become outstanding young Christian ladies. She was present when they married and thrilled to see them develop Christian homes of their own. She was a helpful woman.

Some women who may have never trained themselves to be teachers have other talents that make people happier and advance the kingdom of God. Some women are good at entertaining. They enjoy making other people happy and seeing that those who are less known become better acquainted with people with whom they would enjoy associating. These women will provide a dinner and invite a family who may have recently moved to the community or who may have recently obeyed the gospel, along with others whom it would be well for them to know, into their homes. In this way they not only make it possible for people to find greater happiness but many times help them find a place of service in the Lord's kingdom. Man is a social creature. He was not made to be alone. And the closer the family of God can become the more happiness people will share one with the other and they will also do better work for the Lord. These women who open their homes to those who especially need some attention are doing no small work. They are also helpful women.

No man could ever be able to comfort those who need comfort like a woman can comfort them. We watched a woman stand by the bedside of a Christian lady who was dying. Many times during the night while the sick woman was seemingly unaware of anything that was going on, we watched this woman whisper to her that things were all right at times when she seemed to be restless and disturbed. The woman died peacefully and there is no doubt that her friend and companion in the Lord contributed much to the peace of her going. Years

later this woman had a great sorrow to come into her own life and she was able to bear up under her burden in an almost unbelievable manner. As we watched her bear her burden we could not help but recall that in her helping others through the years when sorrow came into their lives she was building strength into her own life that would help her in time of trouble.

Some women are very good at doing visitation work. Most visitation programs in the church would die without the help of faithful women who see that necessary visiting is done. There are many people who need to be visited. Let us list a few:

People who have recently moved to a city are lonely and very much in need of someone to visit them. Usually the first people who get to them make a lasting impression on their lives. Many people have become interested in the gospel because of women who visited them during these lonely hours and invited them to attend Bible school and worship with them.

Those who are sick need to be visited. A wise woman knows just when one needs company and when one needs to be left alone. She also knows how long a visit should last and is able to determine in each case when a visit should end. She is aware of the value of conversation that is engaged in with the sick. A good helpful woman can visit those who are sick and leave them feeling better because she came. A visit that produces anything else does more harm than good. It seems that many women have more knowledge about these things than men and in many ways can be more helpful.

There is a great number of people who are shut in and who become very lonely. Many times they are forgotten. When people remain in this condition for a long time it is easy for people to forget their needs as they busy themselves with other matters. But wise and devoted women see these needs and are always looking for an opportunity to help these people. If we are not careful we will develop the habit of giving our attention to people only in what we would call their productive years and forget that one of the greatest works that can be done

is in being helpful to those who are not able to help themselves. We forget that our business is helping people and we are not limited to a certain number of people we can help or the kind of people we help. The fact that they need help is our invitation to help them. We have watched women who seemed to make it their business to be helpful to those who could not help themselves.

Every church will have members that become negligent. There are many reasons why this happens, but just here we will not discuss these reasons, but rather emphasize helping these people to become faithful again. Here women are also able to render a great service. The soul of a person is of so much value that Jesus died that it might be redeemed. We do not want one soul to be lost. We do not want to refuse to do anything that would help save a soul. Bringing people who have gone astray back to faithfulness is a very important work. Unless we are both watchful and helpful at the right time they may remain lost. It is much easier to persuade one to return to the happiness of loyalty when he first becomes careless than it will be later on. Helpful women can find these people and restore them to faithfulness to their Master. In so doing they save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. In addition they receive the joy that one can only experience in being helpful in the redeeming of a soul for which Christ died.

Women who are alert to the value and needs of visitation give careful attention to new mothers. Many young people are lost to the church when their first child is born. If ever a woman needed the help of another it is during this period of her life. It is easy to assume that a woman busy with a new baby does not need any attention at all, but there is a time after the birth of a child when a woman can use the companionship of another woman. If she is a young mother she may need much help and advice about many things. We have seen women make themselves especially helpful to new mothers.

New members of the church need a certain amount of attention, whether they be those who have recently moved into the city and placed membership with the church or people who have recently obeyed the gospel. The strength of future years

depends a lot on what happens during this new period of their relationship to God and to the church. Not only do they need to feel welcome but they also need to see that there is a place for them to serve and be helpful to others. This is a work that many women do with much success and satisfaction.

Many preachers would not be able to do effective work, or at least some extra work they are called upon to do, were it not for the work of helpful women. Some women are good at writing. They may do much copy work or correcting and re-writing work that preachers have done. Sometimes they may know how to take a thought from a preacher and become creative in developing it as he would if he were writing it himself. The hours that some women have saved for preachers so they could be doing something else would be beyond our ability to count. The work of these women is seldom known. They do not care that it be known. They receive satisfaction in the knowledge that they are using their talents in such a way that the kingdom of God is being advanced and souls are being saved.

There are many areas in which women can be helpful which may not call for any special talent and yet are as needful and worthy as the work that anyone else may do.

We remember being with a church once engaged in a gospel meeting. On Saturday people of the church, many of them women, would go throughout the city gathering up children most of whom were underprivileged. Sometimes it was necessary to get them out of bed and dress them so they could bring them to the church building. Others would teach them for about two hours in the morning. While they were busy in classes other women were preparing a meal for these children. No doubt it was the best meal of the week for many of them. When these good women had served them others would return them to their homes. Many of these children, and some with their parents, were present for the night services of the meeting and most of them were in Bible school on Sunday morning. Because of this many homes were opened to those who were engaged in cottage meetings. Some of these women were good at conducting home studies and were responsible for converting a number of people. Beyond that was another work in

which a number of women were engaged. Some men had furnished the funds to purchase land on a mountain not far from the city. During the summer these women were busy making it possible for these children to be able to attend a camping session and there they not only looked after their daily physical needs but every day they taught them the word of God. Some were cooking, others were seeing after the children, others were cleaning the rooms and doing other necessary work in keeping the camp, while others were engaged in teaching. Together they made a powerful force for the development of the kingdom of God and many young hearts were made happy by these helpful women who were interested in them.

One day I drove into a city where a meeting was to be conducted. It was a cooperative effort between four churches but I was not sure of the address of the church where it was to be conducted. While passing a church building I noticed several cars parked there so I stopped to see if this was the place or if it would be necessary to go further. Some women were there busily engaged in putting together a quilt top. It had been some time since I had seen women engaged in this work, but many scenes flashed through my mind. That quilt and many others like it would warm the bed of some destitute family or some homeless child in the cold months to come. Scenes like this always bring to mind Dorcas who was full of good works and almsdeeds. Her story is related in Acts 9. When she died the widows were found standing and weeping as they showed the coats and other garments which Dorcas made.

Some women who may never teach a class make it much easier for those who do by preparing things they need to illustrate their lessons, especially to younger students. One woman we knew who had an extra amount of talent in doing this work could make almost anything a teacher could want, whether it was the ark of Noah or the Temple or the baby in a manger. She served many teachers for many years and made it possible for them to present better lessons because of the work she did.

A woman can be helpful by being a good "listening post". To be helpful in this way she must be able to listen to the secrets and hurts of others and keep these to herself. If people

know they can confide in you and trust you, just having someone with whom they can talk can be of great value. Unfortunately many people are not this trustworthy, but those who are can be much more helpful than they imagine.

We will stop here and allow you to think beyond this to the many scenes you have witnessed of the work of helpful women. As we look back across the centuries we cannot see these women at work when they were helping Paul, but we are sure they were doing many works similar to those we have mentioned and by so doing they made the work of this great apostle easier and more effective. And when eternity unfolds the scene, if our eyes are permitted to gaze upon it, we will see the works of multiplied thousands of women, some of them having stood in the shadows diligently working for many years, but in the eternal scene it will be well known how helpful they were. And as millions stand before the throne of God and hear Him say, "Well done," among them will be these faithful women who in whatever way they could labored in the gospel. And many of those who enter into glory could never have been there had it not been for these helpful women.

May God bless the good women who throughout the world, and across the centuries, have been so helpful in making it possible for people to know the Lord and enjoy salvation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Tattling Women

*Most of the talking people do about others is something
they know little or nothing about.*

Tattling Women

“And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not” (1 Tim. 5:13).

“Idleness is the devil’s workshop” is an old saying, but all of us can recognize it as being true. Nothing contributes more to the destruction of character and the working of evil than having nothing constructive to do. It is certain we will do something. If we have nothing good to do we will do something that is not so good. The mind is constantly thinking. If we are not thinking about things that are good we are thinking about things that are evil. We think about people. We either find their good points to think about or we seek to discover something bad in them. As the mind thinks the tongue is apt to express what is on the mind. So the only cure for the mind drifting into evil thinking is to keep it occupied with thoughts that are good.

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

One great sin of idleness is neglecting to do what we know to be right. “By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and

through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through" (Eccl. 10:18). "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (Ezek. 16:49).

It is easy to see how idleness contributes to tattling. Most people will talk about something or somebody. It would be difficult to find a person who did nothing that could not be criticized. So if we want to find something to say about a person we can find it, even if we have to appeal to the imagination. Most of the talking people do about others is something they know little or nothing about. They may have heard it or imagined it. And the pleasure with which we tell it reveals what is in our hearts. Why any Christian should desire to pass on any information of a critical nature about others is difficult to understand, but the doing of it reveals that the Lord is not completely in charge of that life.

Improper use of the tongue is a much greater sin than most people realize. We are more prone to measure sin as society does. Thus we listen to man instead of God. Those sins that are condemned by society we condemn and the sins society tolerates we tolerate. But society will not judge in the last day. God will be the judge. Therefore we should confine our interest to what God says rather than what man says.

Under the old law when God was teaching His people the way of righteousness, He said, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor: I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:16). It is interesting to notice that this is followed by the statement, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart."

"Love thinketh no evil." One would be lying to vow his love for another while bearing tales about him. Love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

Because we speak so much of the love of God it is easy to forget that God can also hate. Only a few things are mentioned in the Bible that God hates, but a lying tongue is one of them. "These six things doth the Lord hate: Yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and

hands that shed innocent blood. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:16-19). Knowing this it is easy to understand why God said, "He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool" (Prov. 10:18). Those who slander others do not love them and any pronouncement of love is only an effort to hide hatred with lying lips. While speaking of fools He said, "A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul" (Prov. 18:7). Also, "It is an honor for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling" (Prov. 20:3).

Let us notice some other statements in the Old Testament that reveal the mind of God concerning talebearing:

"The words of a talebearer are his wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (Prov. 18:8).

"He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips" (Prov. 20:19).

"Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth" (Prov. 26:20).

"The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (Prov. 26:22). You will notice this is the second time this statement is made.

The preceding verses reveal how God feels about the talebearer. God cannot love such action. To be guilty of such, one is not worthy of God's love. God hates talebearing or tattling.

Notice whom God says will abide in His tabernacle: "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward

against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved" (Psa. 15).

In the New Testament we learn that the mind of God concerning this matter remains the same. "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about the whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 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 out 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" (Jas. 3:1-12).

Not only does God condemn those who use their tongues falsely, but He also will not tolerate those who listen to the falsehoods of others. "A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue" (Prov. 17:4). It is easy to see by this statement that God does not believe a person with a true heart will listen to those who are prone to gossip. Thus we need to be careful that we be not condemned along with those who are talebearers. It is not difficult to recognize these people. Let us notice some opening sentences of those who tattle:

"They say" is the most common beginning. We have yet to learn of anyone who can identify "they". It is more often true than false that people who use this statement are the "they". In many cases there is no "they" at all. But no one wants you to think he would wilfully say something that is not true. Also, by identifying self with another, or saying another is responsible for something, seems to relieve the talker of feeling any responsibility for what is about to be said or any guilt for the harm that may be designed for others. You can almost be sure in cases when a person says, "They say", that something is about to be said that should not be said or listened to. So keep a good watch out for "They say". She is a tattler and very dangerous.

"You know me, I'm the last to learn" is a statement that reveals much more than the one who makes it would like to be known. You can be sure that the person who begins with this statement is about to reveal some choice bit of gossip and will enjoy doing it. You may not even know the person at all beyond knowing her name. But "You know me" is designed to catch you off guard or to cause you to think that this person is so religious and good that she would not gossip at all. The statement is designed to lead you to believe that this person is so free of any impurities or wrong ideas that people could commit sin in her presence for a long time without her even knowing what they were doing. But when you get to know this person for what she really is you will generally find she is one of the most corrupt gossipers that can be found. She will not hesitate to destroy the character or the good name of any person of whom she is envious or who does not give her the attention she thinks she deserves. To this person it does not matter what God thinks about her manner of talking. It does not matter to her at all who she may hurt. She is not concerned whether the church is hurt or not. All she is concerned about is to find a listening ear and someone stupid enough to believe she is all righteousness while she pours out some evil about another and does harm to one much better than she could ever be. Be alert to the one who begins a story in this way or you might be listening when God would rather have you walk away. We must re-

member that our lives are never made better by receiving the filthy rantings of degraded souls that feed on the scum of conversation and delight themselves in seeing the eyes of those light up who enjoy receiving it because they, too, have a taste for the baser elements of communication.

"Have you heard . . .?" may mean a number of things. It may mean nothing. And if you stopped the person there if he were honest he might admit he had not heard anything, but was merely using that statement to introduce some gossip he wanted to get started. Or it may mean that the gossiper that is about to tell something has heard it and does not care whether you have heard it or not. This is merely a way of getting your attention. Actually this person is not interested in whether you have heard what she is about to reveal or not. It may be something that you would be much better off not hearing, but if you do not stop this person in a hurry you are going to hear it. This statement is also used to cover the tracks of this person who is about to make an effort to destroy the character of another. The indication is that this is something that is commonly discussed and known and that you were just one of the unfortunate ones who had not heard it. If you find what you hear to be false this person has created a defense by saying, "Have you heard . . .?" Beware! She is a dangerous tattler.

"I wonder where she digs up those silly hats" is a statement dripping with envy. Such a person would give almost anything to be able to copy them and may make many efforts to do so, but having failed she can always say critical things about the one she envies. And, of course, that statement will be only the beginning if you are willing to lend a listening ear. A person with a heart filled with envy can become very bitter in trying to destroy another.

Then there is a leading statement closely related to the above: *"I wonder what she would look like without all that make-up?"* This statement usually comes from one who may have dyed her hair, used all the make-up she thinks permissible, painted, powdered, and perfumed beyond necessity, but has been unable to make herself look as good as she thinks the other person looks.

"She always looks well dressed; I wonder what her house looks like" is a statement that is intended to cause you to believe that the person making it is being complimentary, but suggests that the person is not all she appears to be. It does not say anything of a positive nature against the person but asks a question for which those who hear may not have the answer, thus establishing a fertile field for the mind that is prone to imagine that something is wrong. If the one making the statement is ever questioned she can always say she actually did not say anything uncomplimentary.

"I saw her downtown and she looked a fright." This statement usually follows some complimentary statement one woman might make about another. An envious person cannot stand for someone else to be complimented, especially if she does not like that person.

"She surely must neglect her family. Every time I am downtown I see her." Those who begin with this statement expect others to overlook the fact that every time she saw the other downtown the one doing the seeing was always downtown. But in her case it is different.

"I'm sorry to say this, but . . ." is the beginning of a sentence expressed by the most gleeful gossiper. After all, it is not necessary to say it. If the one who begins with this statement is sorry to say it she is not sorry enough not to say it.

The most dangerous tattler is the one who can make a tattler out of you without ever making any positive statement about others. She leads you to believe, either by some statement or a look, that something is wrong with another. This type of tattler is a coward who can hide behind suggestive statements, denying having said anything, while she persuades someone else to do her dirty work. "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears. As a mad man who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbor, and saith, Am I not sport? Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth" (Prov. 26:17-20).

Tattlers are busybodies. They meddle in matters of others. They meddle in things that do not concern them. If we took the energy used in meddling into matters that are not our concern we might be surprised at how much time we would have to do the work the Lord wants us to do. And if we would remove from our minds the evil we think of others and replace it with something good we would be amazed at the happiness we would find in living and how many good things we could see in one in whom we otherwise only see evil.

“Speaking things they ought not” will relate to everything we say. “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:35-36). These are words that will injure others.

We have no right to pass on information that we have only heard but have not investigated to see whether it is true or not. Neither do we have the right to tell something about another that will injure that person. We do not even have the right to tell the truth if it will injure another. Of course, we have no right to lie, but there is nothing in the Bible that tells us it is necessary for us to tell everything we know. Many times people feel very righteous in passing on some story about another if they are convinced it is true, but there is no Christianity in such a heart.

We need to ask ourselves first if we know what we are about to say is true or not. Is it something we have only heard? Is it something we imagine? Is it merely based on circumstantial evidence? Can a person ever know a thing is true because circumstances seem to point in that direction? What do we know about the circumstances? Would we be willing for others to condemn us on the basis of what we call “circumstantial evidence”? Is it not possible that we will find “circumstantial evidence” if we have some reason to want to hurt somebody? These are questions that all of us should answer before we pass on some information about another that might hurt him.

All of us need to keep in mind what the Lord said: “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother” (Matt. 18:15). If he does not hear us we are told what to do next. In no place are we told anything that would indicate that it is right to become a tattler. Rather, tattling is condemned. No person who is guilty of tattling can be happy or have a right relationship with his Lord.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Silent Women

*Equality does not depend on being able to do what another
person can do but in being what we are capable
of being or what we were created to be.*

Silent Women

For many years we have heard and read much about women having equal rights with men. This means women having the right to do everything men do and the right to be everything men are. When such rights are not granted people feel that they are being considered to be inferior. In the eyes of God this kind of reasoning is worthless. Equality does not depend on being able to do what another person can do but in being what we are capable of being or what we were created to be. Let us get a lesson from an illustration of Jesus concerning His kingdom.

“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money. After a long time the lord of these servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents

more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 25:14-31).

There are many lessons in this parable but we are looking for only one. Equality in this case was not what one had but what he did with what he had. The lord said the same thing to the man with two talents that he did to the one with five. Had the man with the one talent been as faithful as the other two his lord would have said the same to him that he did to the others. And he would have been equal with the others. When one does what he is capable of doing or what he has been told to do he is equal with all others in the eyes of God. And there is the only place where equality counts for anything.

Jesus taught a lesson concerning who is great in His kingdom in these words: "And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou

shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him. We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mk. 10:35-46).

We look at only one lesson in this parable. Greatness in the eyes of our Lord is serving others. It is not being equal, as men think of being equal, but occupying the position we were created to occupy. When we fail here all the so-called equality men talk about is of no value at all. Having the same amount of money that others have, being able to go to the same places and do the same things can in no wise make us equal. We can gain all the equality men and laws can provide and still be very unequal and can also lose our souls.

Let us keep these lessons in mind as we study the subject of "Silent Women."

"Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1 Tim. 2:11-12).

The position of a woman is a position of subjection or submissiveness. This is the position where she exercises her

greatest influence. This is how she brings happiness to herself and to all those who are a part of her life. She cannot be otherwise and be a real woman. Neither can she be otherwise and find any complete satisfaction. When a woman tries to be anything other than a woman or tries to occupy a position she was not created to occupy she lives in complete frustration and disappointment. If by some method she gains what men call equality, such equality only becomes inferiority and she loses much more than she gains.

God is not of such a nature that He desires to take anything good away from anyone. His law for all of us is for our good. Since God is our Creator we would expect Him to know more about us and what is right for us than we could ever know. Any move against His arrangement is to our own hurt. Regardless of what goes on around us, what our society has learned to accept, or what might be done by people in other organizations, we must expect to be directed by the will of God. In the history of God's dealings with Israel we learn that when they followed God's pattern everything was well with them. When they failed, trying to be like nations around them, they always suffered. God knows what is best and we cannot place our judgment above His. When the Lord insisted that women be in subjection and not usurp authority over a man He was insisting that she occupy the position for which she was created. Anything other than this will cause her more harm than good.

It is very easy to find excuses or reasons for doing what we want to do. If we insist that men will not do certain things this does not change the law of God. Neither does it give a woman the right to become what God did not want her to be. Failure on the part of one person does not make right the failure of another. If a man does not obey God a woman is not given the privilege of also disobeying God to fulfill the failure of man.

God does not take from a woman the right or responsibility to teach others. We have seen various avenues through which she may give expression to her ability to teach others, but He does prohibit her from usurping authority over a man. She will have opportunities to use her ability to teach people privately. Many who have the ability will also have opportunities to teach

in classroom periods. Women helped in taking the gospel to the world in the early days of the church and there is every reason for their using their talents and time to teach people in our day. But the power of persuasion is lost by a woman who tries to become what God did not intend for her to be.

God does not take away from women the right to be women. He gave her exceeding charm, persuasion, and ability when He made her a woman. She has every right to be proud of being a woman and no reason to want to be anything else. As a woman she can do great things for God if she is willing to remain what God intended for her to be.

This statement of the Holy Spirit, written by Paul, would prohibit a woman from being a preacher in the sense we usually speak of preaching. Any woman who has such ambitions and does not rid herself of them will try to find a way around what the Lord said while justifying herself in fulfilling her unholy ambitions. A woman does not have the right to build a church within a church, even if she uses women to do it. She is out of place when she tries to take on the work of being a preacher while not occupying the pulpit in the "main auditorium." When we speak of building a church within a church we are thinking of occasions where women have taken a class and tried to teach that class to do many things that belong to the work of the church. Permission from the elders to do these things will not make them right. Elders may sometimes be weak enough to give permission for things in which they see no harm, but permission from God is what is needed. A woman with such ambitions may take a class and, in a sense, separate it from the rest of the church by doing its own mission work, benevolent work, and other works which within themselves are right but were never intended to be used as a means for giving expression to unholy ambitions. If such are questioned women might say, "But this is the Lord's work," which truly it is, but the Lord's work must be done in the Lord's way and the way of doing the Lord's work is as important as the doing of it.

The wife of a preacher will find fulfillment and happiness if she confines herself to being the wife of her husband and

otherwise teaching as opportunity permits as any other woman should do. She must not seek to be a preacher, not even by proxy. Neither should she allow the elders or anybody else to keep her from being what she should be to her family. When elders are seeking a preacher, if they have any question at all concerning the preacher's wife it should be whether she is a good wife and not how much of the preacher's work she might do.

Preachers' wives are sometimes forced into positions they should not occupy by brethren who seem to be trying to employ both a male and a female preacher at the same time and for the amount they would pay only one. If any man ever needed a wife to love him, appreciate him, and encourage him in his work it is a preacher. And when she does this she has a full time job and should not be expected to have any more time for extra church work than the wives of other members. Many preachers could do much better work if they had wives instead of competitors. The best way the wife of a preacher can help him in his work is to be the kind of wife she should be, looking after the needs of her husband and other members of her family. The wife of a preacher should refuse to allow people to force her into a position where she would assume the role of being a preacher. She needs to be his wife. That is her first responsibility and should be her first desire.

"Authority over a man" would prohibit a woman from being an elder. God did not intend for women to occupy positions of authority in the church. She is not allowed to do this by proxy any more than the wife of a preacher should become a preacher in such a manner. A woman who has not learned how to be a woman, and thus is unwilling to occupy the position God intended for her, can easily assume a position of authority without seeming to do so. Elders who must consult with their wives before making decisions concerning the church are too weak to be elders. And wives who insist that their husbands do so are neither being fair to their husbands nor occupying the place of subjection God intended for them. Many women are forced into positions over men who do not have the strength to stand on their own feet. Many times when

we see women occupying positions God did not intend for them it is because they have been forced to do so by husbands who are not the kind of men God intended for them to be. If a woman is permitted to make the decisions of an elder and otherwise do his thinking for him she might as well be appointed an elder. She could not be more wrong in the appointment than she is in the manner in which she usurps the authority of her husband. If her husband insists on forcing her into such a position she should refuse and if he is unable to stand on his own feet she would do him a favor and much good for the cause of Christ if she persuaded him to ask to be released from serving in such an important position until he could become the kind of man God wants to oversee His church. There have been occasions where women were proud to occupy a position of doing the thinking for their husbands, but such a condition is something of which to be ashamed instead of proud. It can bring no satisfaction nor happiness to anybody.

The idea of a woman not usurping authority over a man is not confined to our work in the church, but it involves every relationship of husband and wife. She cannot usurp his authority in the home and be what God intended for her to be. Neither can she do this and find the happiness God intended for her to enjoy. Men have often forced such positions on their wives in the home by neglecting to be any part of it except one who just stays there. The responsibility for the home belongs to the man, especially in providing for his family, ruling his home, and teaching his children. Every time God mentions the responsibility of children being taught He always speaks to fathers because He intended for them to be the head of the home. It is possible that some women are unfortunate enough to have husbands who will not assume their proper place in the home, but a little encouragement from the wife might be all a husband needs to help him assume his responsibility. She should never try to take the responsibility from him. A woman can have much to do with a proper relationship existing between a father and his children. The greatest power she has is the example of subjection she allows her children to see in her life. A woman who tries to satisfy her emotions by separating

children from their father or teaching them to love and respect him less than they do her will not find happiness because she was not created to occupy such a position. And she only creates frustration for her children and her husband.

We must keep in mind that God did not intend for a woman to be over a man, but for the man to be over the woman. She cannot have authority over the man and be able to give her best to her home or to the cause of Christ. Neither can she find the happiness God intended for a woman to enjoy. At the same time she refuses her man the happiness God intended to be the fulfillment of their relationship together.

CHAPTER NINE

The Wives Of Elders and Deacons

*A man cannot be the kind of elder or deacon God wants
him to be unless his wife is everything
she ought to be.*

The Wives Of Elders and Deacons

“Likewise even must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things” (1 Tim. 3:11).

This statement comes at the end of a discussion concerning the qualifications of elders and deacons. It points out the fact that a man cannot be the kind of elder or deacon God wants him to be unless his wife is everything she ought to be. A man who does not have the respect of his wife enough to cause her to conduct herself properly should refuse to allow himself to be appointed to such an important position. Moreover, more attention should be given to the qualifications of the wives of men whom we seek to appoint. Too many times we look for proper qualifications in a man and forget that it is equally important that his wife measure up to the proper standard or otherwise he is not qualified for the position. A man whose wife is not what she should be reveals that he does not occupy the proper place in his home or that his wife will not allow him to do it. In either case he does not meet the qualifications God set forth for those who are to serve as elders and deacons in the church.

The wife of an elder or deacon should not desire to know anything that is decided by their husbands that the entire church should not know. The fact that this statement may appear several times in this book is not an oversight in the writing. It is something that we believe should receive emphasis.

Of course, most of the things discussed by these men are things that the whole church should know. But occasionally there are some delicate matters with which they are called to deal that should be kept to themselves. When matters of this kind are discussed men should not relate them to their wives and neither should the wives desire to know them. Much harm has been done to the church where this rule is not followed. A woman once asked for a meeting with the elders to discuss a very delicate matter concerning some dealings she had with another member of the church. She believed she was talking to men who had her best interest and the interest of the church in their hearts. But soon after the meeting the entire discussion was known throughout the church because an elder went home and related the whole story to his wife and children. In this case he not only revealed his lack of qualification in being an elder, but his wife revealed her lack of qualification by allowing him to relate the story and then telling others about it.

Christians should be the most ethical of all people, and especially is this true of those who have the oversight of the Lord's church. No one would have any respect for a physician who went home each day and related to his wife all he found wrong with the people who came to his office for help. An attorney who went home and related to his family everything that came to his attention would soon lose his practice. Having the oversight of the Lord's church is much more important than either of these positions because we are dealing with souls. If we expect to be ethical in these temporal matters why should we expect less in weightier matters? There have been occasions when a delicate matter was discussed by elders who said, "We must be sure that nothing we have discussed leaves this room," but within minutes from the time they left the meeting they were talking to their wives and by the time a few hours had passed these wives had passed the information on to others. Sometimes elders have been known to talk to people who were not Christians about delicate matters in the church.

Of course, if elders and deacons were ethical and their wives did not demand to know things they should not know, most of their discussions would bring no harm. Occasionally,

however, some information may come to the knowledge of the wife of an elder. It may be something that may have not been discussed by the elders or should not even call for a discussion by them. But whether it is something they have discussed or not women do harm to the Lord's work and position of their husbands when they repeat anything that might do harm. Some people are prone to gossip. Someone gave me this definition of gossip: "Gossip is an insect without any wings or legs but with many tales and in each of them is a stinger."

A member of a church once related something to another member which was only gossip. The one who was told said to the one doing the telling, "I do not believe it." Her answer was, "Two of the elders' wives told me." She believed what she heard was true because these women, who should have represented the best of women, told her. She also believed this gave her the right to repeat it to others. She either forgot, or did not know, what the Lord said about such matters. "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (Matt. 18:15). Evidently the wives of the elders who were peddling the gossip simply ignored this statement of the Lord because they should have known He said it.

The Lord continues to tell what to do if the brother refuses to hear, but no one has the right or is acting the part of a Christian, to tell others. Their first duty is to talk with him alone. Talking to someone else about him cannot be substituted for talking with him. Telling someone else is not equal to telling him regardless of the position held by the person to whom we may talk. But the pathetic thing is that the elders' wives were talking about something they did not know to be true, and what they were saying could do nothing but harm. Christians cannot so conduct themselves and please the Lord. Anything that is designed to do harm to the character of another is wrong. Jesus taught us not to speak anything to any man's injury. We do not have the right to relate the truth about another if our relating it is designed to do him harm.

One of the qualifications mentioned concerning the wives of elders and deacons is that she must not be a slanderer. "He

that uttereth slander is a fool" (Prov. 10:18b). "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off" (Psa. 101:5a). To slander would be to "defame, to injure by malicious false report, to discredit or disgrace, to accuse falsely or to charge blame, to misrepresent or distort or depreciate."

Another word for a slanderer is a backbiter. Many people who would seriously condemn others for some sin they committed, or they thought they committed, think nothing of engaging in slander or backbiting. But notice what sins the Holy Spirit associates with backbiting. "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, *backbiters*, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. 1:29-32).

No wonder the Holy Spirit said through James: "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and is set on fire of hell" (Jas. 3:6). With this it is not difficult at all to see why one could not properly serve as an elder or deacon if his wife engaged in slander.

The wife of a deacon became angry with her preacher because he corrected her for some gossip peddling and she began to devote her energies to his destruction. When she was asked by another woman to whom she was peddling her slander why she was so worked up about the matter she replied by saying, "He ignored me when we were at a certain dinner." She did not consider the fact that she was trying to hurt one of God's preachers. She did not go to him about the matter. She did not consider that she was disqualifying herself as the wife of a deacon and also her husband as a deacon. Neither did she consider what might happen to the church. Nor did she obey the Lord's command to "go to him alone." She was only concerned in "getting even" for having been offended. When the wife of

an elder or deacon so conducts herself and is unwilling to be subject to her husband who should be trying to help her to do right, her husband should remove himself from such an important position in the Lord's church. If this is not done he should be asked to do so by the other elders.

The wives of elders and deacons should not make the decisions for their husbands in matters pertaining to the church. Any elder or deacon who must go home and talk with his wife before he can make up his mind is not qualified to occupy that position. Neither is his wife qualified to be the wife of an elder or deacon. God did not say that the wives of elders should take the oversight of the church.

The term "faithful in all things" sums up the life of the wives of elders and deacons. They must be faithful to their husbands as a wife should be. They must be faithful to their children and their responsibilities in the home. They should be faithful as Christians in doing the work of the Lord. They should be faithful in dealing with others in an honorable and upright manner. They should be faithful in their talk and the manner in which they live before others. "Faithful in all things" would make of her the kind of a woman others could follow and know they were right in what they were doing.

"How can I help my husband be a better elder or deacon?" is a question sometimes asked. Let us look at some ways women can be of great help.

Be sure you are everything a Christian wife should be. People are prone to look to you for a good example as they are to look for such an example in your husband. If you are not the kind of Christian you should be you will destroy the influence of your husband. People who know what Christianity is all about are aware of the position a woman who has given herself to the Lord should occupy. They are especially watchful of those whose husbands occupy positions of importance. Women are most critical of women. If you are not what a Christian wife should be others will soon know it and they will blame your husband for your faults—which well they might since a woman should be subject to her husband. Jesus told all of us, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your

good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Wives of elders and deacons must be particularly aware of the wisdom of this advice.

Encourage him in his work. He has grave responsibilities. All people need encouragement and few of us get enough of it. But the encouragement most needed must come from those who are a part of our lives. Men are as much in need of encouragement as women. There are times when the need may be greater. When we consider the responsibility of an elder, the constant load he carries, and the importance of watching over souls for which he must give account in the day of judgment, it is easy to see his great need of encouragement from one he loves and who loves him and is so much a part of his life. Many men would be much better elders and deacons if they received more encouragement at home.

Never demand that he tell you anything you should not know. Never question him about what was discussed in the meetings he attends. A man should not be placed in the position of being torn between the unlawful desires of his wife to know something that is not her concern and his faithfulness to God and the church he serves. A woman is not fair to her husband when she places him in such a position. It is no lack of his love for her when he does not relate church business to her. Neither is it a sign of her love for him when she demands that he tell her.

Never place a burden on his heart by criticizing others. Genuine Christians do not only refuse to engage in saying critical things about others, but it hurts them to hear such things repeated. Wives have been known to think their husbands condoned certain things because they did not like to hear their wives being critical of others. Some have even thought their husbands were taking the part of another because they did not engage with them in their critical remarks. But when Christianity rules the heart such statements are not made in the first place. One who watches over the affairs of the Lord's church hears enough criticism without having to hear it from his wife.

If you learn something that is not general knowledge never repeat it to anyone. And always be aware that there will be

people who will try to gain any information from you that they can, especially if it is something few people know. The wife of an elder or deacon must be very careful what she says before other people. It hurts the influence of your husband when you relate anything that is not general knowledge.

Do not try to run the life of your husband by making his decisions for him. Some women are not willing to allow their husbands to be what they ought to be either in the home or the church. Such women are never happy with themselves or their husbands. If a man is not qualified to make up his own mind he certainly is not qualified to be an elder or deacon.

Do not complain about the time it takes for him to do the work of an elder or deacon. Keep in mind that there is no work on earth more important than the work we do for the Lord. Little enough time is given to Him by all of us. It takes much time to be a good elder or deacon, and a man should have whatever time is necessary to do this work without anyone complaining, especially his own wife.

Help him grow in his work for the Lord and become stronger in His service. Study with him and pray with him. Talk to God about him and the great work he is doing. Let him know that you are interested in him and his work for the Lord and that you are proud of what he is and what he is doing.

We may have been a little blunt in some statements, but our only concern is that God's great women help God's great men.

CHAPTER TEN

The Ideal Wife

She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

The Ideal Wife

Proverbs 31 is well known to all Bible readers, yet it might be well for us to read it again beginning with verse 10:

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue

is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."

At least twelve outstanding traits are mentioned in these verses and thirteen can easily be seen.

The ideal wife is trustworthy. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust her." This trustworthiness is summed up in the statement about her husband, "She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." Many a woman feels that she is trustworthy who has little to show for it except for the fact that she may have been true to her husband in that she has not committed adultery with another man. One who limits being trustworthy to this one thing has not even learned the meaning of the word.

A wife who is trustworthy can be trusted not to discuss the weaknesses of her husband with others. A woman who really loves her husband would not even consider talking with others about anything that might be considered a fault. Places where women gather or go for services such as beauty parlors are often noted for the talk that takes place. Sometimes women come away from such places with their minds filled with disturbing thoughts that have been planted by women whose husbands cannot trust them to be faithful in keeping to themselves things they consider a weakness. A woman who truly loves her husband will be found looking for and admiring his strength and not searching for faults to either discuss or point out to him or others.

A wife who is trustworthy can be trusted not to discuss the intimate things of her relationship to her husband with others. Part of the relationship between husband and wife belong to them alone and, although there may be nothing in their relationship of which to be ashamed, it is still something that be-

longs to them. A woman who feels compelled to discuss the intimate things of her life with other women is neither true to herself nor to her husband.

A wife who is trustworthy does not make statements that are of such a nature as to hurt her husband. This would be the opposite of "doing him good." Sometimes statements are made that appear on the surface to be innocent but are designed to create sympathy for the woman which cannot be done without leaving the wrong impression about her husband. A woman who seeks the sympathy of others at the expense of her husband's good name is exceedingly weak and unworthy of the love of a good man.

A woman who is trustworthy is truthful to her husband about everything. It is amazing how easy it is to create our own feelings about what sin is and, while refusing to do some things on which our society might frown, become guilty of sins that will corrupt and destroy a right relationship with those we claim to love, and finally condemn the soul.

A woman who is trustworthy does not ridicule her husband privately or in the presence of others. She may laugh with him but she does not laugh at him. We are sure there are no husbands without faults and weaknesses, as is also true with wives, but love covers a multitude of sins. In fact love can find something to praise in what others might criticize. Love sees something valuable in what others might think of as weakness. Love sees something sweet in what others might consider awkwardness. Love loves and never hates, seeks to do good and honor, and in so doing finds real and lasting happiness.

The ideal wife is industrious. In the day when Solomon said, "She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands," the work of a woman included some things that it is not necessary for her to do today. However, doing what is required of her still remains her task, and, whatever it is, she will gladly accept it if she is the woman she ought to be.

An industrious woman is a good keeper of her house. What is in a home is not nearly so important as how it is kept. It is not necessary to have an expensive house and expensive furni-

ture in order to be a good housekeeper. Neither is it necessary to become so involved that those who live there do not enjoy life. For a house to have that "lived in" look it is not necessary for everything to be out of place. The most comfortable homes are the best kept homes.

An industrious woman cares for her husband and children. It is not necessary for her husband to ask or insist that she do the things a woman should do. She is aware of buttons that are missing from clothing because she handles the clothing. She is aware of clothing that needs to be mended and takes care of the matter. It is not necessary for a husband to call such things to the attention of an industrious wife.

An industrious woman sees that her family has a well-balanced diet. She is a good cook. If her mother has not taught her before marriage she learns. In this day when so many things can be bought either canned or frozen it is easy for a woman to neglect becoming the kind of cook that can make meal time a delight for the entire family. An industrious woman does not seek a short-cut in providing food for her family any more than she would in anything else.

Most women of our day do not know what it was like to bring water from a well some hundred yards away, fill tubs and wash pots, build a fire and do the washing with a rub board. Neither do they know what it was like to grow their own vegetables and fruits, can them for the winter months, and in other ways provide for their families. But the blessings that have become ours should not take away our desire to do our best. In fact, with the conveniences women have in their homes today, they should excel in all that a woman's work should be. An industrious woman will do it.

The ideal wife is business-like. Keeping a home is important business. Besides the Lord's body there is no business its equal. Here is where character is made. Here is where happiness is created and enlarged. From here people look out to a world which can be made better only by the character that is developed here. Here is where great preachers, great elders, great statesmen, and great women are made. And the ideals

developed here will continue through the lives of those who live here and will touch the lives of multiplied thousands either for good or bad. By operating a home in the proper business-like fashion a woman will bless the lives of many thousands of people who will never even know that she lived. For all time to come her influence will be felt in the lives of others and many will bless her who do not even know her name. Anything so important as the home and so far reaching in its effects on the lives of so many should be kept in the most business-like manner possible. If businesses were operated in the way many homes are they would all fail. We do not wonder that so many homes fail.

A business-like keeper of the home does not take the joy out of living there. She does not take away the warmth and the glow that should belong to every home. But she makes creating happiness and character her business. What greater business could one become engaged in than this?

A business-like keeper of the home realizes the value of time. By proper respect for time she is able to make everything possible that should be in the home. A time for worship and study can be found there. A time for enjoying the togetherness of the family and a time for the many pleasures that are to be found in the ideal home will always be found. She does not become one-sided by giving one task her entire attention and energy, but recognizes the many needs that exist in a home. And she finds time to supply those needs. Keeping a home is big business and a well-kept home requires a proper respect for time.

The ideal wife is compassionate and helpful. "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." Compassion for others can generally be measured by the compassion existing in the home. A woman who feigns compassion for others while no compassion exists for those in the home is an empty fraud. One of the many outstanding things we recall about our Lord is the compassion He had for others. This was as much a part of His life as breathing and who the person was or what position he occupied made no

difference to Him. He looked with compassion on those who grieved, those who were hungry, and those who were sinful. His compassion reached out in the direction of all people who were in need regardless of what that need might be. And the ideal woman is like that. She is compassionate toward those without because she is compassionate toward those within. It is a part of her that will find expression in her relationship with humanity wherever needs are to be found or of what nature they may be. It is a part of loving and none can love like a good woman.

Preparedness is another important trait of the ideal wife. "She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet." I suppose it is impossible to keep what we call emergencies from arising in any household, but the ideal wife is ready for them when they come. They do not find her unprepared. Preparedness involves the anticipation of the many needs of a family and preparation for that need when it arrives.

We all recognize physical needs. It is not difficult for a loving, thoughtful woman to anticipate the physical needs of a family and provide for them. Of course, to do this she must be industrious, as we have discussed before. The seasons of the year do not find her family unprepared. And the various demands that are made on the members of a household in the many functions of the lives they live are never overlooked.

It is easy to forget that there are emotional needs. When children are allowed to grow up without these being properly cared for they can easily be warped in their thinking for all time to come. The emotional problems of youth are big to them. We cannot afford to consider them to be of no consequence and try to laugh them off. It will do no good to point to problems we have encountered that were much bigger than those they have encountered. The only way we can be helpful is to be prepared to deal with them when they come. The various stages through which children grow call for much wisdom in dealing with them. The woman who is unprepared cannot be of much help to her children.

She must not forget that her husband also has emotional needs. The fact that he is a grown man, perhaps a few years older than she is, does not erase the fact that he also faces many problems in dealing with life and looks to his wife for the proper care of the emotions that have a way of creating havoc in his living.

Then there are the spiritual needs of the family. Fathers are especially mentioned in the Bible when the Holy Spirit speaks of proper nurturing of a child, but the position of the mother in the home does not remove her from the scene. In many ways she sets the pattern for the spiritualness that exists in the household. When spiritual needs are not provided a family can never be what God intended for it to be and what every member of the family wants it to be. All the preparation that can be made in other matters will not suffice for a lack of preparation in fulfilling the spiritual needs of a family. Here is where Christ has His way in the lives of people. And here is the only source of real happiness.

The ideal wife is well dressed. "She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple." A well dressed woman is not necessarily expensively dressed. Of course, we use the word "expensive" as it is commonly used which calls for spending a lot of money. Some of the best dressed women are not those who wear clothing that costs more than clothing worn by others, but those who are able to take what they have and look well dressed while wearing it. The amount of money spent has nothing to do with how well dressed a woman looks. Women who find it necessary to purchase clothing at the most expensive places in order to feel well dressed are more interested in labels than looks, or they have mistaken labels for looks. To them the place a dress was purchased determines how it looks. But these women are usually envious of women who can take very inexpensive things and make them over in such a way as to look better dressed than those who depend on price tags to look well dressed.

The well dressed wife does not confine being well dressed for those who are strangers. She does not keep the best of her-

self to waste on those who do not love her, but recognizes the need of those who love her to see her well dressed. And being well dressed for those who are loved and who love her can have much to do with the happiness that should be in a home. It is a mistake to apply being well dressed only to one situation or occasion. A wise woman learns how to be well dressed for all occasions and, in so doing, enlarges the appreciation and admiration of those who love her most.

Being well dressed does not necessarily demand that every closet be filled with clothing. Many clothes closets are filled with clothing that is never worn while much of the world is in need. This happens because of the feeling that being well dressed demands a number of different garments for each and every occasion. Such a woman has seldom gotten beyond the feeling of purchasing and dreaming and has not learned to make practical use of what she has. Wise women can take very little and be better dressed than many who have spent a fortune on clothing they never wear and perhaps would not know how to wear if they tried.

The ideal wife assists her husband. "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land." He presents the picture of a well cared for and loved person. They see him as one coming from an ideal home where needs are properly supplied. Such wisdom and fair dealings with which he discusses the problems of those in the gate can only grow in the heart of one who lives in an ideal home.

It is not difficult to see the home in the life and conduct of those who live there. In dealing with children we do not find it difficult to determine what their home environment is like; and that which is true of children is equally true of husbands.

"How can a woman assist her husband?" is a question often asked. Some try to assist by doing the thinking for their husbands. Others try to assist by being critical and ridiculing their husbands. Still others try to assist by trying to show their husbands how superior they are and how much the husband needs them and could not operate without them. Such methods

only destroy character and relationships and never make them better.

A woman can best assist her husband by being what a wife ought to be. He has had one mother and it is doubtful that he needs another. He has plenty of competitors in the business world without having to contend with one in the home. A woman can assist her husband by loving him as a wife should. She can assist him by being his best friend. She can assist him by listening to him and making whatever comments are helpful and necessary. She can assist him by being sure that he is treated properly and presents the picture of a well cared for person before those with whom he is called upon to deal. She can assist him by making him happy. Where happiness is we seldom see a failure regardless of weaknesses or lack of ability.

The ideal wife is thorough and does her work well. "She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant." Some women wonder why the happiness they think they see in other homes does not exist in their own, but in looking for the answer they never look at themselves. To them someone else or some circumstance causes their difficulty. They do not recognize any failure on their own part and, if they do, they feel it should be excused without any effort on their part to do better. Let us look at a few of these women.

First, there is the woman who "sweeps the dirt under the rug." To some this may appear to be an ancient proverb handed down from generation to generation, but it is often more than a proverb. It is often a fact. Some women have excused themselves by saying they are not good housekeepers when they have not cleaned a room in a long time except in places that are seen at first glance. Most people enjoy having a clean place in which to live and seeing that it is clean becomes the responsibility of the woman. It is just as easy, and certainly more satisfactory, to do a thorough job than it is to pretend by doing only half a job.

Then there is the woman who only does "hit and miss" work in caring for her family. Her husband often finds a button missing when he looks for a clean shirt in the morning, and

sometimes he may find no shirt at all. Although she may have had a week or two to do the laundry she has stuffed it away somewhere and become so involved in less important matters that the needs of the family are forgotten. This woman may send her children to school poorly dressed and with little or no food.

Also there is the woman who has no place for anything and spends most of her time searching for something she has left where she used it last. When she does some sewing, the needle and thread are as apt to be found in the cushion of a chair as anywhere else. Others often find that is not the best place to leave a needle.

People who live in homes "cared for" by women of this kind usually live in confusion and unhappiness. And women who keep a home in this fashion often wonder why members of the family prefer to spend much time in the homes of others.

Usually habits of this kind have a way of spilling over into everything else and no work is ever thoroughly done.

The ideal wife is of excellent character. "Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come." Excellent character involves much. If we limit the idea to only one or two acts we miss the full force of it. Of course, the idea would include morality but we cannot limit good character to this alone. Other traits are necessary.

A woman of excellent character is as careful with the character of others as she is of her own. She is careful about what she says about others whether she is expressing her own opinion or repeating what others have said. What value is there in saying something evil about another person? What good comes from it, whether what is said is true or not? Real character does not feed on such things and a woman of excellent character finds something good to say about others if anything at all needs to be said. After all, what we utter from our lips is often a picture of what is in our own hearts. Some people who believe they have excellent character because they have not committed what is commonly called moral sin, think nothing of trying to destroy the character of another by the use of

the tongue. Excellent characters do not seek to destroy the character of others.

A woman of excellent character is a woman with a good disposition. This does not mean that she does not experience the common troubles that come into the lives of all people, but she does not allow the happenings of life to create within her an evil disposition. Some of the best dispositions we have seen were developed in the very midst of difficulty. It is not what happens to us that counts most, but what we allow what happens to do to us.

A woman of excellent character develops proper attitudes toward life and toward others. The attitudes we have toward life determines what we get out of it. People with good attitudes find much joy in living although they may not be surrounded with what we call material blessings.

The ideal wife watches her tongue. "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness." What is said in a home and the manner in which it is spoken has much to do with the happiness in the home and the building of proper attitudes in the hearts of those who live there. Difficult as it may be to imagine, there are some children who grow up seldom hearing a word of kindness from their parents. How some children have done so well under the circumstances under which they grew up is a constant source of amazement. Hungry for love and approval, they are forced to feed on disapproval and scolding. Usually these children are taught only one thing thoroughly and that is what will happen to them if they do certain things. It is no wonder that children who grow up in such an environment are often found doing these things they are taught to be wrong for the purpose of receiving some attention, though the attention may not be to their liking.

When the law of kindness governs the tongue critical and harsh words are never uttered. It is difficult to see how one can feel kindly toward another and critical at the same time. What we say to others and the manner in which we say it has much more to do with their happiness than we are sometimes aware. The disposition developed in the lives of children and the at-

titude of a husband toward his wife are often determined by the manner of her speech.

The ideal wife is watchful and is not idle. "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." Keeping a home is a full time job and cannot be properly done by a lazy woman. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man" (Prov. 24:30-34).

Whoever said, "A woman's work is never done," spoke more truth than we realize. The multiplied duties of a woman in the home are such that there is no time for idleness for those who would be the kind of home keepers God wants them to be.

The ideal wife is beloved of her children and her husband. "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her." This is not true merely because she is a wife and a mother but because she is the kind of wife and mother she ought to be. A woman who feels she should be praised merely for being a mother has missed the point altogether. Being a good mother is more than giving birth to children. And being a good wife is more than a marriage license and a wedding ceremony. We do not command respect and praise. These we earn. Any woman who does not receive the kind of praise and respect she should from her family would do well to check up on her own attitude toward and devotion to the family. "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."

It seems almost needless to say that the ideal wife finds happiness that many other women miss. As we have said before, no person can be completely happy until he finds the

place God intended for him to occupy. The woman who becomes what she ought to be finds real happiness without seeking it. It comes to her because of what she is and what she does. It happens because she is the kind of wife and mother she was meant to be. And of all the lovely creations of God none can equal the life of a woman who has found true beauty, real joy, and complete happiness by being a real woman.