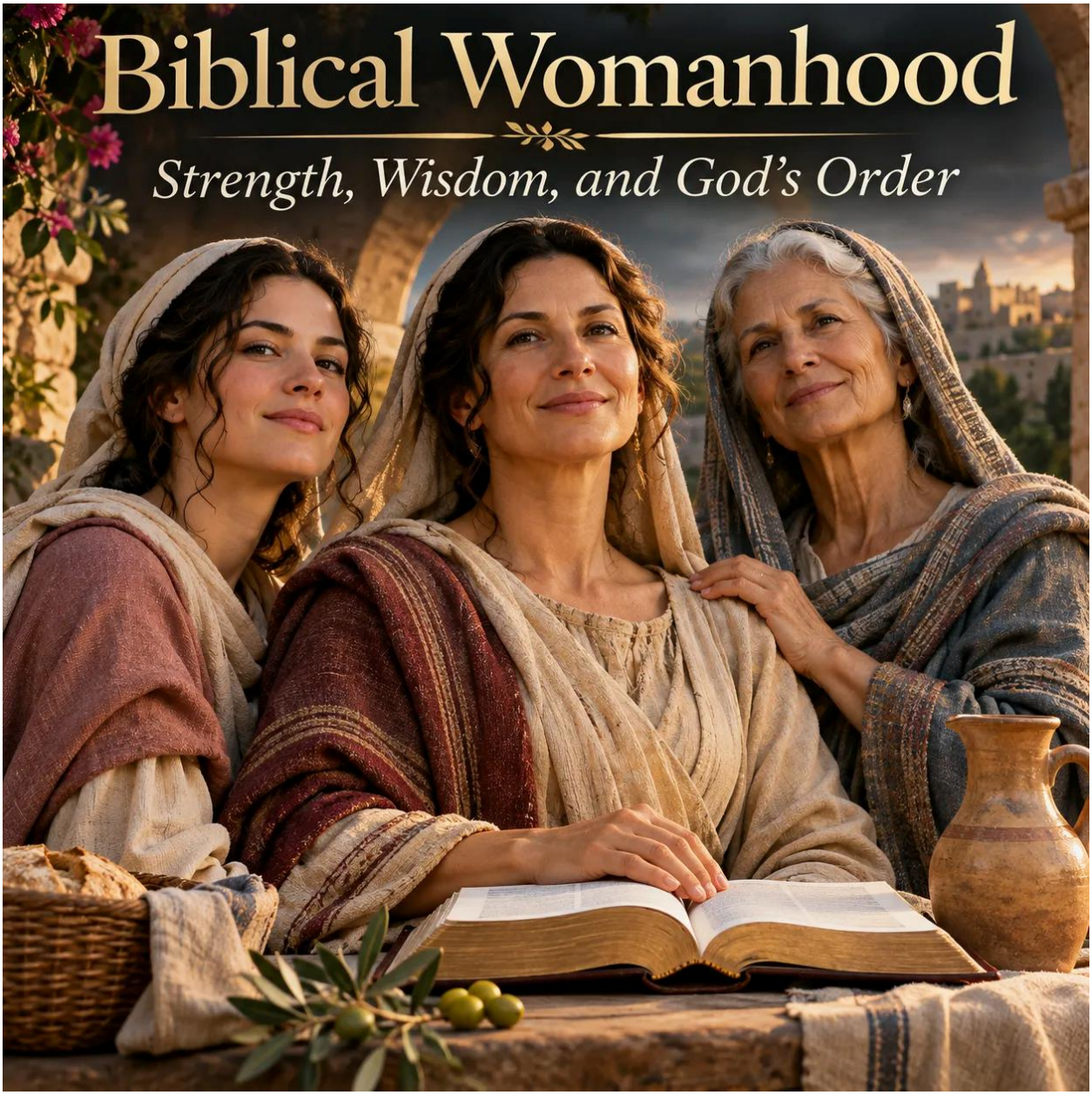
**Biblical Womanhood**

*Strength, Wisdom, and God's Order*

Series 1-10

By Paul Tackett

VerseQuest Ministries




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**Biblical Womanhood**

**Strength, Wisdom, and God's Order**

**Author:** Pastor Paul Tackett
**Published by:** VerseQuest Ministries
**St. Johns, Florida, United States**

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**Introduction — Biblical Womanhood: Strength, Wisdom, and God's Order**

There is a question sitting in Proverbs 31:10 that ought to be answered before anybody opens his mouth to explain what a woman ought to be. “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.” That is quite an assessment coming from the Author of the universe! God did not say a virtuous woman was worth a handful of pocket change, an occasional compliment, or whatever consideration somebody felt generous enough to offer her. He compared her to something precious and declared her value exceeded it. Yet we are living in a generation that has managed to turn womanhood into a battlefield where the world attempts to redefine it, religious people sometimes misrepresent it, and women themselves are left sorting through a mountain of contradictory expectations. One crowd insists that a woman must abandon everything traditionally associated with femininity before she can be considered strong. Another crowd behaves as though a godly woman should possess about as much independence of thought as a kitchen appliance. Both groups ought to close their mouths long enough to open their Bibles. **God has already established what biblical womanhood looks like, and His description is considerably more beautiful, substantial, and dignified than anything this confused world has manufactured.**

Before discussing submission, marriage, motherhood, modesty, homemaking, or any other responsibility, we must establish something fundamental. Genesis 1:27 declares, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” There is the foundation. God created man and woman, and neither was an accident of nature, an afterthought in creation, or an inferior species requiring the approval of the other to possess human dignity. When God formed Eve, He did not create a decorative attachment for Adam's personal enjoyment. Genesis 2:18 records His declaration, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” The woman was God's deliberate provision for something that was lacking. Adam possessed a garden, a responsibility, fellowship with his Creator, and an entire collection of animals whose names he had been assigning, but none of those things supplied the companionship God intended. **The woman was not created because the man needed someone beneath his feet. She was created because God's design included someone beside him.** The relationship would have order, but that order was never intended to abolish dignity.

Now there is a distinction that must be maintained throughout this entire study. Biblical equality of spiritual worth does not require the abolition of every distinction between male and female. Galatians 3:28 declares, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” The context

concerns justification by faith and the believer's standing in Christ, not the elimination of God's created order or the qualifications for church leadership. A saved woman does not receive a smaller salvation, a defective inheritance, or a reduced portion of the Holy Spirit because she is female. She is complete in Christ according to Colossians 2:10, justified by faith, and accepted in the beloved. But spiritual equality does not authorize anybody to tear Ephesians 5, First Timothy 2, or Titus 2 out of the Bible. **The Scriptures do not contradict themselves simply because modern society has difficulty accepting that equal worth and different responsibilities can exist at the same time.** God's word establishes both, and our responsibility is to believe both without manufacturing contradictions.

This series is not intended to tear women down, place impossible burdens upon them, or reduce their usefulness to a handful of religious stereotypes. Quite the contrary. It is intended to strengthen women by showing them what God actually says about their worth, their character, their responsibilities, their influence, and their opportunities to serve Jesus Christ. There is enough discouragement in this world without preachers adding unnecessary condemnation to burdens that women are already struggling to carry. Some are exhausted from raising children. Some are caring for aging parents. Some are working long hours because their families need the income. Some have lost husbands, endured painful marriages, or experienced disappointments that few people know anything about. Others are unmarried, childless, or living in circumstances that do not resemble the familiar picture of a wife and mother surrounded by a large family. **The Bible does not require every woman to possess identical circumstances before she can become faithful to God. It requires every woman to obey the Lord within the responsibilities He has actually given her.** That is a distinction worth understanding.

We will begin with a woman's worth because the world has done a remarkable job of teaching women to measure themselves by nearly everything except the fear of the Lord. Physical appearance, popularity, income, public recognition, marital status, and social approval have all become measuring instruments in a society that changes its standards about as often as it changes its fashions. A woman may spend thousands of dollars attempting to satisfy an ideal that will become unfashionable before she finishes paying the bill. Proverbs 31:30 answers the entire operation with one sentence: “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.” There stands God's evaluation. Physical attractiveness is not sinful, and a woman does not become holy by neglecting her appearance. But beauty is temporary, and human admiration is unreliable. First Peter 3:4 identifies the inward ornament of a meek and quiet spirit as something “which is in the sight of God of great price.” **The world can sell a woman expensive decorations for her appearance, but it cannot manufacture the**

**godly character that makes her life truly beautiful.** The mirror will eventually change its report. God's standard will not.

We will also examine the remarkable strength of godly women throughout Scripture. Proverbs 31:25 declares, “Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.” Evidently, the virtuous woman was not required to become helpless before God would consider her feminine. Deborah demonstrated courage during a period of oppression in Israel. Esther risked her life when her people faced destruction. Ruth displayed extraordinary loyalty when she followed Naomi into an uncertain future. Abigail possessed enough wisdom to prevent David from committing a disastrous act of vengeance. These women lived in different historical settings, and their circumstances must not be confused with the instructions governing the New Testament Church. Nevertheless, their examples demonstrate that courage, intelligence, discernment, and faithfulness are not masculine possessions that women must borrow without permission. **A godly woman can possess a gentle spirit and a backbone of iron. She can speak respectfully without surrendering conviction, stand firmly without becoming rebellious, and exercise courage without trying to become a man.** Godly strength is not the rejection of womanhood. It is strength brought under the authority of God.

Then there is the matter of a woman's words, and heaven knows our generation could use some instruction concerning the proper operation of the tongue. Proverbs 31:26 declares, “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” Notice that she opens her mouth. The Bible does not commend her because she has been successfully frightened into silence or because she has nothing intelligent to contribute. It commends her because wisdom governs what she says. Abigail's words helped prevent bloodshed. Esther's words exposed a wicked conspiracy. The mother of King Lemuel instructed her son concerning moral purity, judgment, and responsibility. But the same Scriptures that honor wise speech also condemn gossip, slander, bitterness, manipulation, and careless accusations. James 3 warns that the tongue can become a fire capable of tremendous destruction. **A wise woman's words can strengthen a household, encourage a weary husband, guide a child, and preserve a friendship. A foolish woman's words can set fire to all four before breakfast.** The issue is not how much a woman talks, but whether the fear of God governs what comes out of her mouth.

We will give careful attention to the home because Scripture does, and we will not apologize for that. Titus 2:3–5 instructs aged women to teach younger women concerning their responsibilities, including being keepers at home. There is nothing shameful about making a household a place where children learn Scripture, hospitality is practiced, necessary work is performed, and Jesus Christ is honored. But neither will we invent

commandments that God never established. Proverbs 31 describes a capable woman who purchases a field, plants a vineyard, produces merchandise, and manages resources. Acts 16 introduces Lydia, a seller of purple whose home became useful to the servants of Christ. Apparently, those women never received the announcement that diligence, practical judgment, and productive work were incompatible with biblical femininity. **A woman does not become insignificant because her work is performed inside her household, and she does not automatically become ungodly because some of her work is performed outside it.** The question concerns faithfulness to her actual responsibilities. A beautiful house is not necessarily a godly home, and an expensive address cannot compensate for a household where the word of God is neglected.

Marriage will receive the same straightforward treatment. Ephesians 5 establishes the husband's headship and the wife's responsibility to submit to her own husband. Those commandments are Scripture, and they will not be explained away because they offend modern expectations. But the same chapter commands, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” That is an extraordinarily demanding standard, particularly for the fellow who believes headship consists of issuing instructions from his favorite chair. Christ's love was sacrificial. His example does not authorize cruelty, arrogance, violence, intimidation, or selfish domination. Nor does the wife's submission mean she must abandon discernment, conceal wickedness, or become an accomplice to sin. **God's order was not established to make a woman insignificant or to provide a sinful man with a private dictatorship. It establishes responsibilities for which both husband and wife must answer to the Lord.** A help meet is not a helpless woman, and a biblical husband ought to appreciate the wisdom, faithfulness, and strength of the companion God has provided.

Motherhood deserves particular attention because some of the most important spiritual influences recorded in Scripture began long before anybody stood behind a pulpit. Second Timothy 1:5 remembers the unfeigned faith that dwelt in Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Second Timothy 3:15 declares that Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures from childhood. Think about that. Before Timothy traveled with Paul, ministered to churches, or received inspired instruction concerning his responsibilities, there were women in his family whose genuine faith helped shape his early understanding of God's word. That is an extraordinary testimony. Yet we must not turn faithful parenting into a mechanical formula guaranteeing that every child will eventually become a preacher, a missionary, or even a faithful Christian. Every person remains accountable for his own response to the truth. **A mother can teach the Scriptures, pray faithfully, demonstrate godliness, and correct wrongdoing, but she cannot believe the gospel on behalf of her**

**child.** Her responsibility is to teach truth faithfully, not to assume the powers of the Holy Ghost.

And while we honor marriage and motherhood, we will not treat unmarried women, widows, or women without children as though they are incomplete members of the body of Christ. Colossians 2:10 declares that believers are complete in Him. First Corinthians 7 recognizes that unmarried believers may possess particular opportunities to serve the Lord without certain earthly distractions. Anna served God faithfully as a widow, while Dorcas became known for the charitable deeds that blessed others. Their testimonies do not become less significant because their circumstances differed from the familiar picture of a young wife raising children. Some women desire marriage and have not found it. Others have buried husbands they dearly loved. Some have endured abandonment or divorce, while others have devoted years to caring for relatives or serving the Lord in ways that receive little recognition. **A woman is not an unfinished life waiting for a husband to supply the missing pieces. If she belongs to Jesus Christ, her spiritual completeness rests upon Him.** Marriage may be a wonderful blessing, but it is a miserable substitute for a Saviour.

We will also examine the tremendous opportunities available to women in the service of Jesus Christ. Romans 16 contains the names of women Paul commended for their faithfulness. Phebe was a servant of the church at Cenchrea and a succourer of many. Priscilla and Aquila were helpers in Christ Jesus. Mary bestowed much labor. Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis were recognized for their work in the Lord. Acts 18 records Priscilla participating with her husband in explaining the way of God more perfectly to Apollos. Titus 2 explicitly commands older women to teach younger women. These passages must be considered alongside First Timothy 2 and the qualifications for church leadership, not placed in opposition to them. **The church does not need women who reject God's order, but neither does it need men who imagine that women become useless the moment they are forbidden to occupy a particular office.** There are children to teach, souls to reach, widows to encourage, families to assist, believers to strengthen, and countless opportunities to labor for Christ without violating one syllable of Scripture.

Yet none of this discussion can be separated from the gospel. A woman does not become saved because she is modest, virtuous, obedient, industrious, married, unmarried, devoted to her children, or active in Christian service. Romans 3:23 declares, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” That includes men and women alike. First Corinthians 15:3–4 establishes the gospel: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares salvation by grace through faith, not of works. Biblical womanhood begins

with understanding that no amount of respectable conduct can purchase eternal life. Jesus Christ saves sinners who believe on Him, and those who belong to Him are then instructed to walk in holiness. **Good works do not purchase redemption; they belong to the life of obedience that follows it.** The Christian woman's greatest identity is not found in the world's description of femininity or even her earthly family relationships. She belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, we will consider the legacy of a godly woman, because eventually every earthly responsibility reaches its conclusion. Beauty fades, physical strength diminishes, children grow older, circumstances change, and the possessions that once seemed so important pass into somebody else's hands. But the Lord does not measure a life merely by what it accumulated. Mark 14 records Mary of Bethany's costly act of devotion to Jesus Christ. Some considered her offering wasteful, but the Lord declared, “She hath done what she could.” He also announced that her act would be remembered wherever the gospel was preached. There stands a remarkable difference between human judgment and divine approval. The critics calculated the expense. Jesus recognized the devotion. Second Corinthians 5:10 reminds believers that their service will ultimately be examined at the judgment seat of Christ. **The woman whose name is forgotten on earth may discover that heaven kept an accurate record of every faithful act performed for the glory of her Saviour.** Public recognition is temporary. Christ's judgment is eternal.

Throughout these ten studies, the purpose will be to encourage women without flattering the flesh, teach biblical responsibilities without inventing additional commandments, and uphold God's order without excusing the sins of men. We will speak plainly where Scripture speaks plainly, distinguish the Church from Israel where doctrine requires it, and refuse to replace biblical truth with either fashionable rebellion or religious tradition. There will be correction where correction is necessary, because genuine love does not require pretending that sin is harmless. But there will also be encouragement, because Christian women need to understand that their labor matters, their spiritual growth matters, their knowledge of Scripture matters, and their faithfulness to Christ matters. **The Bible never required a woman to be perfect before she could be useful, but it certainly never encouraged her to remain spiritually ignorant, morally careless, or content with mediocrity.** God's grace provides salvation, and His word provides instruction for the life that follows.

So to every woman reading these words, whether young or old, married or unmarried, a mother or without children, beginning her Christian walk or approaching the end of a long life of service, open your King James Bible and discover what God has actually said. Do not allow the world to convince you that biblical womanhood is something to be ashamed of.

Do not allow religious foolishness to convince you that God's design makes you insignificant. Do not measure your worth by a changing appearance, a difficult marriage, an empty house, an impressive career, or the approval of people who will never stand in God's place at the judgment seat. Fear the Lord. Know His word. Walk in the Spirit. Exercise wisdom. Speak truth. Serve faithfully. Fulfill the responsibilities He has genuinely entrusted to you. **A godly woman does not have to become somebody else to be useful to God. She needs to become the woman God intended her to be. The world may admire beauty, applaud rebellion, reward ambition, and overlook quiet faithfulness, but the Lord's estimation has not changed. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." That is where this series begins, and that is the truth we intend to carry all the way through it. Biblical womanhood is not weakness dressed in religious clothing. It is strength, wisdom, dignity, faithfulness, and godly character brought under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. And there is nothing insignificant about that.**

**1 of 10 — Biblical Womanhood — Far Above Rubies: What God Says a Woman Is Worth**

**Key Passage — Proverbs 31:10:** "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies."

There is a question sitting in Proverbs 31:10 that ought to settle a great deal of foolishness before anybody opens his mouth about what a woman is supposed to be. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." Notice who said it. Not a fashion designer, not a university professor, not a television personality, and certainly not some fellow who thinks a woman's greatest accomplishment is keeping his coffee hot while he sits around explaining how important he is. God said it. The words appear in the instruction associated with King Lemuel and the teaching of his mother, and the Holy Ghost preserved them in the Scriptures. That makes them considerably more important than the latest opinion of a society that cannot decide what a woman is while pretending to be an authority on what she ought to become. Before discussing responsibilities, submission, marriage, motherhood, modesty, or service, we had better establish the foundation. **A woman's worth is not determined by the world that examines her, but by the God who created her.**

We are living in a generation that has managed to cheapen womanhood while congratulating itself for liberating women. The world photographs a woman, measures her, markets her, compares her, exploits her appearance, and then announces that she has

finally achieved dignity because somebody is willing to pay attention to her. What a bargain! She trades the approval of her Creator for the applause of strangers who will forget her name before the next advertisement appears. Meanwhile, certain religious circles have committed an entirely different blunder. They can preach for an hour about what a woman must not do and barely find five minutes to explain what God says she is worth. One crowd turns her into a commodity, and the other risks treating her like a subordinate piece of church furniture. Neither approach begins where the Bible begins. Genesis 1:27 declares, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” There is the foundation, and no human opinion has the authority to move it.

Now understand something at the outset. This is not an argument that women are sinless, spiritually superior to men, or exempt from the commandments of Scripture. Eve sinned, Adam sinned, and every descendant of Adam stands in need of the grace of God. Romans 3:23 does not provide a separate exemption for the female population. Neither does the Bible erase the distinctions between a husband and wife, overturn the qualifications for church leadership, or pretend that God created male and female without purpose. Biblical womanhood must be examined according to biblical truth, not modern rebellion dressed up in religious vocabulary. But there is a tremendous difference between recognizing God's order and despising someone God made. A woman does not become less valuable because her responsibilities differ from a man's. A widow is not incomplete because her husband has died. An unmarried woman is not a failed project awaiting a wedding ceremony. **Before God tells a woman how to walk, He has already told us whose creation she is.**

**1. The Image of God Came Before the Opinions of Men**

The first chapter of Genesis establishes a truth that every discussion of biblical womanhood must recognize. Genesis 1:26 records God saying, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion.” Notice that expression, “let them.” The command did not say that the man would possess all human significance while the woman merely occupied space somewhere behind him. Genesis 1:27 identifies both male and female in God's creative purpose, and verse 28 declares, “And God blessed them.” Both were included in that blessing. Both belonged to the created human race, distinguished from the animals and accountable to their Maker. The image of God was not something a woman had to obtain by marriage, childbirth, education, or the approval of a man. It belonged to humanity by creation. Sin would later corrupt human conduct, but the creation account provides no foundation whatsoever for declaring women spiritually

worthless. **The woman was not an afterthought in God's creation; she was part of His declared design.**

Genesis 2 supplies additional details concerning the creation of woman. God formed Adam from the dust of the ground, placed him in the garden, and gave him responsibilities before the woman appeared. Then the Lord declared in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” There is nothing insulting about that expression unless somebody has decided beforehand that helping another person must indicate inferiority. The Lord Himself is repeatedly called the help of His people throughout the Psalms. Obviously, providing help does not automatically make the helper inferior to the one receiving it. The woman was made suitable for the man, corresponding to him in the relationship God intended. When Adam saw her, he did not announce that the household had acquired a new servant. He said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:23). That sounds considerably more like recognition, kinship, and wonder than the language of ownership.

Of course, sin entered the picture in Genesis 3, and the beautiful arrangement of creation was immediately disfigured by disobedience. The serpent deceived Eve, and Adam knowingly transgressed. First Timothy 2:14 specifically distinguishes their involvement, while Romans 5:12 declares, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” The Bible does not permit us to blame every woman for the fall while conveniently overlooking Adam's responsibility. Adam himself attempted something similar when he told God, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat” (Genesis 3:12). There stands the first recorded example of a man trying to make his wife responsible for his own disobedience. It did not work particularly well in Eden, and it has not improved with age. The consequences of sin introduced sorrow, conflict, and death, but those consequences do not erase the woman's original dignity as God's creation.

**2. Far Above Rubies Is Not a Price Tag**

Return to Proverbs 31 and examine the expression carefully. “Who can find a virtuous woman?” The subject is not merely a woman possessing physical attractiveness, social refinement, or financial prosperity. It is a virtuous woman. The chapter proceeds to describe her character through her actions. Her husband safely trusts in her. She does him good and not evil. She willingly works, exercises diligence, manages resources, cares for her household, and demonstrates compassion toward those in need. The point is not that a woman must accomplish every activity mentioned in the chapter before God considers her valuable. That would turn a beautiful description of virtue into a religious obstacle course. The passage presents an outstanding example of godly character in a particular household

setting. Virtue is valuable because character matters to God. A ruby may be expensive, but it cannot exercise faithfulness, speak truth, show mercy, or fear the Lord. The Scripture compares lasting moral excellence with earthly treasure and declares which is superior.

Consider the extraordinary picture of this woman. Proverbs 31:16 says, “She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.” Verse 17 tells us that she strengthens her arms. Verse 20 shows her extending her hand to the poor, and verse 24 describes her making fine linen and delivering girdles to the merchant. Somebody had better inform the people who imagine biblical womanhood consists entirely of sitting quietly in a corner looking delicate. This woman is making decisions, conducting business, performing difficult work, exercising judgment, and helping the needy. She is not running away from responsibility; she is meeting it. Yet her activities are not described as rebellion against God's order. They are presented as evidence of remarkable diligence. **She has enterprise in her hands, compassion in her conduct, and the fear of God governing her life.** The Bible's portrait is considerably richer than the cramped caricatures sometimes presented in its name.

The final explanation appears in Proverbs 31:30: “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.” There is the controlling principle. Physical beauty fades, social favor changes, and human applause is notoriously unreliable. The fear of the Lord, however, produces a character worth honoring. Do not confuse that with the notion that a woman must become Proverbs 31 in every detail before she deserves respect. A sick woman may not possess the strength described in the passage. A young woman may have little money. A widow may have no husband to praise her. A childless woman may have no children to rise and call her blessed. None of those circumstances cancels the dignity of her creation or her opportunity to fear God. Proverbs 31 celebrates virtue; it does not declare every woman outside its particular domestic circumstances worthless. **Godliness is not measured by how closely a woman's circumstances resemble another woman's life, but by her faithfulness to the Lord within her own.**

**3. The Hidden Ornament God Calls Precious**

First Peter 3:1–4 brings us to another passage that is frequently discussed and sometimes badly handled. Peter is addressing wives and their conduct toward their own husbands, including husbands who do not obey the word. His instruction concerns godly behavior that may bear witness in a difficult household. Verse 3 says, “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel.” Then verse 4 directs attention to “the hidden man of the heart” and describes “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” Notice the contrast. Peter is directing attention away from external decoration as the foundation of a

woman's beauty and toward inward character. There is nothing difficult to understand unless somebody arrives determined to turn the passage into a personal dress regulation that goes beyond what God actually commanded.

Some interpreters have taken the outward adornment language so mechanically that they effectively treat every hairstyle or piece of jewelry as a spiritual emergency. But notice that Peter also mentions putting on apparel. If the verse absolutely prohibited everything in its list, a woman would be forbidden to put on clothing! That would create a rather serious problem for the modesty campaign. The contrast is between outward display and the inward character God prizes. Modesty certainly matters, and Scripture plainly opposes vanity, pride, and immodesty. But biblical modesty cannot be reduced to a collection of somebody's personal preferences promoted to the rank of divine commandments. The woman's inward beauty is not purchased from a shop, maintained by cosmetics, or preserved by fashionable clothing. A meek and quiet spirit concerns an inward disposition before God, not an absence of intelligence, courage, or the ability to speak. **A woman can speak firmly without possessing a rebellious spirit, and she can remain outwardly silent while harboring a heart full of pride.**

Then notice something that is remarkably convenient for certain readers to overlook. First Peter 3:7 turns directly toward the husbands and commands them to dwell with their wives according to knowledge, “giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” The reference to the weaker vessel does not pronounce the woman spiritually inferior or less precious to God. The command is to give her honor, not contempt. Peter also recognizes that believing husbands and wives are heirs together of the grace of life. And what happens when a husband refuses to fulfill his responsibility properly? His prayers may be hindered. There goes the theory that God is interested only in keeping the woman in her place while the man does whatever he pleases. **The Lord who commands a wife to conduct herself properly also holds the husband accountable for how he treats her.** God's order is not a permit for arrogance.

**4. Neither Male Nor Female: Equal in Christ Without Erasing Creation**

Galatians 3:28 is one of the clearest declarations concerning the spiritual standing of believers in Jesus Christ. Paul writes, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Before anybody tears that verse out of the chapter and begins using it to support every fashionable idea imaginable, read the context. Paul is discussing faith, the law, and the believer's relationship to Christ. Verse 24 identifies the law as a schoolmaster bringing men to Christ, “that we might be justified by faith.” Verse 26 declares, “For ye are all the children of God by

faith in Christ Jesus." The subject is salvation and spiritual standing before God. A woman does not need a man's permission to believe the gospel. She does not receive a smaller portion of justification because she is female. She does not enter Christ as a second-class Christian. **The blood that saves a man is the same blood that saves a woman, and the grace that receives one does not shortchange the other.**

Now observe what the passage does not say. It does not announce that physical distinctions between male and female have disappeared, that marriage no longer has an order, or that every instruction governing conduct in the local church has been abolished. Paul does not contradict Genesis by explaining salvation in Galatians. Neither does the mention of Jew and Greek erase Israel's national history or transfer every specific covenant promise made to Israel to the Church. The verse concerns unity in Christ, not the destruction of every distinction established elsewhere in Scripture. On the other hand, those who use created distinctions to deny a woman's equal standing in salvation have missed the verse just as completely. One group reads equality in Christ and tries to eliminate God's order. Another reads God's order and behaves as though spiritual equality never existed. **The Bible says believers are one in Christ; it does not say that one believer becomes more valuable because he wears trousers.** We had better learn to distinguish spiritual position from earthly responsibilities.

Consider what a saved woman actually possesses in Jesus Christ. She has been justified by faith. She belongs to the body of Christ. First Corinthians 12:13 declares that believers are baptized by one Spirit into one body, and there is no announcement that women enter through a separate door. Ephesians 1:13 speaks of believers being sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Romans 8:16–17 describes the children of God as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. These blessings are not distributed according to gender, marital status, employment, education, or public recognition. A believing woman possesses the Holy Spirit and has direct access to God through the one mediator, Jesus Christ. She is capable of studying sound doctrine, exercising discernment, praying with understanding, and growing in the knowledge of Scripture. **A woman who knows her Bible is not trespassing on masculine property; she is doing what every Christian ought to be doing.** Scripture is the inheritance of God's people, not a private library reserved for men.

**5. The Women God Deliberately Put into His Record**

One of the surest ways to discover what God thinks about women is to examine the women He deliberately preserved in His written testimony. Take Rahab, for example. She was a harlot living in Jericho when Israel approached the city. By the standards of respectable society, she had very little to recommend her. But Joshua 2 records her acknowledgment of the Lord's power and her decision to receive and protect the Israelite spies. Hebrews 11:31

remembers her faith, declaring that she “perished not with them that believed not.” Her former occupation was not commendable, but her faith demonstrated that the mercy of God could reach someone whose past was stained by sin. Then consider Ruth, a Moabitess whose declaration to Naomi included the words, “thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God” (Ruth 1:16). The Lord included her in the family line leading to David. God was not impressed by worldly pedigree. He recorded faith, loyalty, and obedience where human pride might have expected little.

Consider Mary of Bethany in Luke 10. While Martha was occupied with much serving, Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. Martha complained, and the Lord answered that Mary had chosen the good part. Notice that Christ did not rebuke Mary for seeking spiritual instruction. He defended her decision to hear His teaching. There is a lesson there for any religious system that imagines women should be kept too busy with ordinary duties to become serious students of the Bible. Yes, service matters. Yes, responsibilities must be fulfilled. But fellowship with Christ and attention to His words cannot be dismissed as unimportant because a woman is listening. Later, in John 12, Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with costly ointment and wiped them with her hair. Judas objected to the expense, but John exposes the corruption behind his complaint. **The woman was expressing devotion while the thief was pretending to be an expert in stewardship.** Apparently, religious criticism has been providing cover for crooked motives for a very long time.

Then there is Mary Magdalene, standing near the empty sepulchre in John 20. When the risen Lord spoke her name, she recognized Him, and He instructed her to go to His brethren with the message He gave her. Her testimony did not establish a new pastoral office, but it certainly demonstrated that Christ was not ashamed to entrust a woman with a truthful report concerning His resurrection. Think also of Anna in Luke 2, an elderly widow who served God with fastings and prayers and spoke of the child Jesus to those looking for redemption in Jerusalem. Think of the poor widow in Luke 21, whose small offering received the attention of Christ while wealthy people were contributing much larger amounts. The Lord did not confuse the size of her gift with the measure of her sacrifice. These accounts demonstrate a consistent truth: **God notices faithfulness that powerful men overlook, and He records devotion that the world would never consider worth a headline.** A woman does not have to become famous to matter to the Lord.

**6. God's Order Is Not an Excuse for Religious Contempt**

Now we must deal with a problem that has caused considerable unnecessary injury. There are people who become extremely enthusiastic about biblical authority whenever it gives them an opportunity to tell a woman what she cannot do. They can quote First Timothy 2:12 before breakfast, but somehow Romans 16 escapes their attention for years. The

Scriptures do establish distinctions concerning authority and teaching in the assembled church. First Timothy 2 and the qualifications for bishops in First Timothy 3 must be handled according to what they actually say. But a restriction concerning a particular office is not a declaration that every woman is ignorant, spiritually useless, or incapable of teaching anything. Titus 2:3–5 expressly instructs aged women to be teachers of good things and to teach younger women. That is not a loophole somebody discovered in the Bible. It is part of the Bible. **A boundary around a particular office is not a padlock on a woman's mind, her Bible, her testimony, or her usefulness to God.**

The same principle applies within marriage. Ephesians 5:22 instructs wives to submit themselves unto their own husbands, as unto the Lord. Notice the word "own." The passage does not command every woman to obey every man who happens to be standing nearby. It concerns the marriage relationship. Then verse 25 commands, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." That is not a small responsibility. Christ did not love the Church by intimidating her, humiliating her, or treating her as an inconvenient servant. His love was sacrificial. Colossians 3:19 also commands husbands to love their wives and not be bitter against them. Any man who uses headship as an excuse for cruelty has substituted selfishness for biblical leadership. **God did not give a husband authority so he could become the household tyrant; He gave him responsibilities for which he must answer to the Lord.** A sermon that demands obedience from wives while excusing wickedness in husbands is not rightly dividing the word of truth.

Romans 16 further exposes the foolishness of treating faithful women as unnecessary in the Lord's work. Paul commended Phebe, described as a servant of the church at Cenchrea. He greeted Priscilla and Aquila, his helpers in Christ Jesus. He mentioned Mary, "who bestowed much labour on us," and named other women who labored in the Lord. Acts 18:26 records Aquila and Priscilla taking Apollos unto them and expounding unto him the way of God more perfectly. The circumstances of that instruction do not abolish New Testament requirements for church office, but they certainly demonstrate the usefulness of a knowledgeable Christian woman. These women were not embarrassing exceptions that somebody forgot to remove from the record. Their names were preserved by divine inspiration. God recognized their service, and Paul publicly acknowledged their labor. **If the apostle could recognize faithful women without surrendering sound doctrine, there is no reason the modern church cannot do the same.** Biblical authority and genuine appreciation are not enemies; they belong together.

**7. The Worth of a Woman in the Light of Calvary**

There is an even deeper matter than the dignity of creation or the excellence of virtue. It concerns the salvation of a woman's soul. First Peter 1:18–19 declares that believers were not redeemed "with corruptible things, as silver and gold," but "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Notice the contrast with Proverbs 31. The virtuous woman's price is said to be far above rubies, yet even silver and gold cannot purchase redemption. The most precious jewels on earth are worthless when offered as payment for sin. Here we must distinguish two truths that people often confuse. A woman possesses dignity because God created her, and godly virtue possesses exceptional worth because God approves it. But neither creation nor personal virtue makes a sinner deserving of eternal life. Romans 3:23 declares that all have sinned, and Isaiah 64:6 declares that our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. **A woman's worth as God's creation must never be confused with the false doctrine that human goodness can purchase salvation.**

The gospel settles that question plainly. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." A woman is not saved because she is a faithful wife, a devoted mother, a diligent worker, or a charitable neighbor. Neither is she excluded from salvation because she has failed in those responsibilities. The woman with a shameful past needs the same Saviour as the woman with an admirable reputation. The widow, the unmarried woman, the wealthy woman, and the woman struggling to obtain her daily necessities must all come to God on the same basis. Jesus Christ is the only Saviour. **The blood of Christ is not a reward for women who have lived impressive lives; it is God's provision for sinners who cannot save themselves.** That is why salvation by grace is such marvelous news.

When a woman believes the gospel, her spiritual position changes because she is now in Christ. Second Corinthians 5:17 declares, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The expression concerns anyone who is in Christ, not merely males. Colossians 2:10 states, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." That completeness cannot be increased by marriage, motherhood, public recognition, or the approval of a religious establishment. She remains responsible to grow in grace, obey the Scriptures, and bring forth fruit pleasing to God. Her works as a believer will be examined at the judgment seat of Christ, according to Second Corinthians 5:10, but that examination must never be confused with earning or retaining salvation. The woman who belongs to Christ has been sealed by the Holy Spirit. **The world may refuse to acknowledge her, men may**

**fail to appreciate her, and circumstances may limit her opportunities, but none of those things can overturn what God has established in His Son.**

**Conclusion — Her Price Is Far Above Rubies**

Perhaps you are a young woman surrounded by a culture that constantly tells you what you ought to look like, how much attention you ought to attract, and what you must accomplish before your life becomes significant. Perhaps you are a wife whose ordinary labor goes largely unnoticed, a mother exhausted by responsibilities, a widow adjusting to an empty chair, or an unmarried woman tired of hearing people speak as though your life cannot be meaningful without a husband. Perhaps you are an older woman whose appearance has changed and whose physical strength is not what it once was. Listen carefully to what the Scripture has established. Your dignity did not originate in the opinions of strangers, and your spiritual standing in Christ does not depend upon the recognition of other people. Fear the Lord. Believe His word. Walk in the responsibilities He has actually given you. Do not borrow the world's false standards, and do not allow somebody else's religious traditions to become a substitute for God's commandments. **You do not need to manufacture a worth that God has already established through creation or earn a salvation that Christ has provided by grace.**

And to the men reading these words, there is a responsibility here that cannot be ignored. If God commands husbands to honor their wives, the church has no business cultivating contempt for women. If God records the faithful labor of women in Romans 16, Christians ought not pretend their service is insignificant. If God gives commands concerning marriage and church order, those commands must be taught without adding human restrictions or excusing the failures of men. A father should teach his daughter to know the Scriptures, fear the Lord, and recognize the dignity of being His creation. A husband should value his wife as a person, not merely appreciate the services she performs. A pastor should teach women sound doctrine rather than assume they are capable of nothing more substantial than listening to elementary instruction. **You cannot claim to honor God's order while despising people who stand within that order.** Respect for Scripture demands respect for the distinctions God established and the dignity He bestowed.

So return once more to the question with which we began. “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.” God did not select that comparison because rubies are ordinary stones lying worthless beside the road. He selected something precious and declared that genuine virtue surpasses it. Proverbs 31:30 provides the final measure: “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.” There is biblical womanhood at its foundation. Not a counterfeit femininity manufactured by the world. Not a helpless caricature produced by religious ignorance. Not

a rebellious rejection of God's design. A woman created with dignity, accountable to her Maker, invited to receive eternal life through Jesus Christ, and capable of living a life of extraordinary faithfulness to Him. The world can praise beauty and forget character; God does not make that mistake. **Rubies may adorn a woman's neck, but they cannot compare with the virtue that governs her heart. And when the beauty of this present world has faded, the woman who feared the Lord will have invested her life in something that eternity will not erase.**

**2 of 10 — Biblical Womanhood — Strength and Honour Are Her Clothing**

**Key Passage — Proverbs 31:25:** "Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come."

Somewhere along the way, somebody got the peculiar notion that a godly woman ought to be about as strong as wet tissue paper, as courageous as a frightened rabbit, and as incapable of independent thought as a fence post. Evidently, whoever came up with that description had been spending considerably more time examining religious traditions than reading the King James Bible. Proverbs 31:25 declares, "Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come." Notice what the Holy Ghost selected to describe this woman. Strength. Honour. Not helplessness, not cowardice, not ignorance, and certainly not the inability to stand firmly when trouble comes knocking. The woman described in this chapter is industrious, discerning, resourceful, compassionate, and thoroughly occupied with responsibilities that require considerable fortitude. She is not waiting around for somebody to carry her through every difficulty. She has learned to face the work God has placed before her. **Biblical womanhood does not require a woman to become weak. It calls her to become strong in the things God considers worthy of strength.**

The world has its own version of female strength, of course, and like most things manufactured by a civilization determined to improve upon Scripture, the finished product bears little resemblance to the original. According to the modern sales pitch, a woman demonstrates strength by needing nobody, answering to nobody, refusing correction, discarding God's order, and treating independence as the highest possible virtue. The more loudly she announces that she requires no assistance, the more courageous she is supposed to be. That is an interesting definition of strength, considering that the Bible identifies pride as the road to destruction in Proverbs 16:18. But another crowd has managed to travel into an equally unscriptural ditch. They imagine that biblical femininity

requires a woman to remain timid, agreeable, dependent, and practically invisible. One side worships rebellion; the other mistakes weakness for holiness. **The Bible does not require a woman to become a rebellious man, nor does it require her to become a helpless child.** God's design is better than either counterfeit.

Open the Scriptures and look at the women God actually placed in the record. Deborah judged Israel during a period of national oppression and spoke the commandment of the Lord to Barak. Esther approached a Persian king at the risk of her life because the Jewish people faced destruction. Ruth followed Naomi into an uncertain future, choosing loyalty and the God of Israel over the security of familiar surroundings. Hannah carried her anguish to the Lord in prayer. Abigail possessed enough discernment to intervene when her husband's foolishness threatened disaster. These are not stories about women who abandoned their identity to become useful. Neither are they invitations to overthrow every distinction God established between men and women. They demonstrate courage, wisdom, faithfulness, and obedience in their proper biblical settings. Before we discuss the responsibilities of a godly woman, we need to understand the strength required to fulfill them. **Godly strength is not measured by how much authority a woman can seize, but by how faithfully she obeys the authority of God when obedience becomes costly.**

**1. Strength and Honour — The Two Garments That Never Go Out of Fashion**

Proverbs 31:25 does not merely say that the virtuous woman possesses strength and honour. It says they are her clothing. That is a remarkable figure of speech. Clothing is what a person wears openly, something associated with his daily appearance and manner of life. In this passage, the woman's most important adornment is not the expensive fabric she can purchase, the jewelry she can display, or the fashion she can afford. It is the character she demonstrates. Strength describes her ability to meet responsibilities with diligence and determination. Honour describes the dignity and moral excellence governing that strength. Put those two together and you have something considerably more valuable than a wardrobe full of imported garments. Strength without honour can become cruelty, stubbornness, or pride. Honour without the courage to uphold it can become little more than a respectable intention. The virtuous woman possesses both. **She has strength enough to stand and honour enough to know where she ought to stand.**

Look at the expression that follows: “and she shall rejoice in time to come.” This woman is not promised a lifetime without trouble, disappointment, illness, or sorrow. Proverbs does not teach that good character purchases exemption from the consequences of living in a fallen world. The description concerns a woman whose diligence, foresight, and conduct provide grounds for confidence concerning the future. Earlier, Proverbs 31:21 says, “She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.”

She has made preparation instead of waiting until the weather changes to discover that winter exists. There is a practical lesson here that has apparently escaped a generation accustomed to treating preparation as a lack of faith. God gave people brains before He gave them emergencies. The woman who prepares responsibly is not demonstrating unbelief. She is exercising wisdom. **Faith is not an excuse for neglecting responsibilities that God has already placed within our reach.**

The chapter concludes by identifying the foundation of her excellence. Proverbs 31:30 declares, “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.” There is the source of her character. She fears the Lord. Her strength is not merely an unusual personality trait, and her honour is not merely a reputation polished for public inspection. Both are governed by reverence toward God. A naturally outspoken woman can be spiritually weak if she refuses correction. A naturally quiet woman can possess extraordinary spiritual courage when she obeys Scripture despite her fears. Strength must never be confused with temperament. Nor should this passage be turned into a cruel measuring stick against women whose bodies are weakened by age, disability, or illness. Physical limitations do not destroy spiritual strength. **The woman who fears God has discovered a source of courage that does not depend upon her muscles, her circumstances, or the approval of the people watching her.**

**2. She Strengtheneth Her Arms — The Virtue of Doing Difficult Things**

Proverbs 31:17 declares, “She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.” That is not the description of a woman whose greatest ambition is to avoid responsibility. She prepares herself for work and applies herself to the duties before her. The surrounding verses make the meaning unmistakable. She seeks wool and flax, works willingly with her hands, considers a field and purchases it, plants a vineyard, and manages household affairs with diligence. This woman has evidently never been informed that productive labor is beneath her dignity. Neither has she discovered the modern religious theory that a capable woman somehow becomes unfeminine whenever she exercises sound judgment concerning practical matters. The inspired record commends her activity. She is not merely busy; she is purposeful. The difference is important. A person can spend an entire day running in circles without accomplishing anything more substantial than disturbing the dust. **Biblical diligence is not the worship of activity; it is the faithful accomplishment of worthwhile responsibilities.**

There is another side to this woman's strength that deserves attention. Proverbs 31:20 declares, “She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.” Those strong arms are not reserved exclusively for advancing her own interests. They extend toward people who need assistance. That is where genuine godliness

separates itself from selfish ambition. The world admires power that can acquire, command, and conquer. Scripture praises strength exercised in compassion. Consider what this means for women who serve elderly parents, care for children, assist struggling neighbors, prepare meals for suffering families, or quietly perform ministries that seldom receive recognition. Such labor may be physically exhausting, emotionally costly, and almost entirely invisible to the public. Yet God recognizes faithfulness even when there is no audience. **Strength becomes especially beautiful when the hands capable of building something for themselves are willingly opened to help somebody else.**

Now let us avoid turning this passage into another impossible religious burden. Proverbs 31 presents an excellent example of a virtuous woman; it does not command every woman to purchase property, operate a business, sew garments, rise before daylight, and perform every household duty without assistance. A wife recovering from surgery is not ungodly because somebody else prepares dinner. A mother caring for an infant is not lazy because exhaustion occasionally overtakes her. An elderly woman with painful joints has not lost her virtue because she can no longer perform the work she accomplished forty years earlier. Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” Faithfulness concerns the responsibilities and abilities actually entrusted to us. The Lord does not demand that an injured soldier run as though he has never been wounded. **The question is not whether a woman can do everything, but whether she is willing to do what God has genuinely given her to do.**

**3. Deborah — When a Woman Stood While a Nation Trembled**

Judges 4 introduces us to Deborah during one of the darkest periods in Israel's history. Israel had again done evil in the sight of the Lord, and the nation suffered oppression under Jabin, king of Canaan. Sisera commanded a formidable military force with nine hundred chariots of iron, and Israel endured twenty years of oppression. In that setting, Judges 4:4 declares, “And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.” There is no need to embellish the verse, apologize for it, or pretend it says something else. Deborah was a prophetess, she was married, and she judged Israel. Her position belongs to the historical period of the judges under the Mosaic covenant, before the establishment of Israel's monarchy. It must not be carelessly transferred into New Testament instructions concerning pastoral qualifications. Nevertheless, God placed her in that position, and the inspired account does not portray her courage as an embarrassment. **When God records a faithful woman's service, religious prejudice has no authority to erase it.**

Deborah summoned Barak and delivered the commandment of the Lord concerning the battle against Sisera. Judges 4:6 records her question: “Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded?” There is the foundation of her authority in that historical setting. She was

not inventing instructions to advance her own importance. She was communicating what the Lord had commanded. Barak answered in verse 8, “If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.” Deborah agreed to accompany him but warned that the honor of the victory over Sisera would go to a woman. Later, Jael fulfilled that prediction when Sisera met his death in her tent. Apparently, nine hundred iron chariots were no guarantee of safety when the Lord had determined the outcome. Yet Hebrews 11:32 later includes Barak among the examples associated with faith, reminding us not to flatten the entire account into a childish contest over which sex was superior. **The issue was never whether men or women could claim the greater glory; the issue was whether Israel would obey the Lord.**

Judges 5 records the song of Deborah and Barak following the victory. In verse 7 Deborah declares, “The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel.” Notice that expression, “a mother in Israel.” Her remarkable service did not require her to despise the identity of womanhood. She understood herself within the nation and the circumstances in which God had placed her. Her courage was exercised for the deliverance of others, not the enlargement of her personal reputation. There is an important lesson here for Christian women today, although the dispensational setting must be preserved. A woman does not have to occupy Deborah's historical office to imitate her faithfulness, courage, and willingness to speak God's truth. **The strongest woman in the room is not necessarily the one giving the most orders; sometimes she is the one who refuses to retreat when everybody else has forgotten what God said.**

**4. Esther — Courage That Walked Toward the Throne**

The book of Esther presents an entirely different setting. The Jewish people were living under Persian rule, and Esther had become queen in the court of Ahasuerus. Haman's wicked conspiracy threatened the destruction of the Jews throughout the empire. When Mordecai learned of the decree, he urged Esther to intervene. This was no ordinary request for a royal favor. Esther 4:11 explains the danger involved in approaching the king without being summoned. Unless the king extended the golden sceptre, the person could be put to death. Esther understood the danger perfectly well. She was not ignorant of court procedure, nor was she imagining that being queen exempted her from the law. She faced a genuine decision involving personal safety and the lives of her people. **Courage is not the absence of danger, and it is certainly not the absence of understanding. Courage becomes meaningful precisely because the danger is real.**

Mordecai's answer in Esther 4:13–14 deserves careful attention. He warned Esther not to assume that her position inside the palace would guarantee her escape from the

destruction threatening the Jews. Then he asked, “and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Notice the question. Mordecai did not hand Esther a blank check guaranteeing that everything she attempted would succeed. He challenged her to consider the responsibility connected with her circumstances. The book of Esther does not explicitly name God, although His providential preservation of the Jewish people is evident throughout the narrative. We must not turn Mordecai's question into a universal promise that every Christian woman has been appointed to some spectacular public assignment. Esther's circumstances were exceptional. But the principle of responsible obedience under pressure is unmistakable. **An opportunity to do right does not become less important because doing right may cost something.**

Esther answered by instructing Mordecai to gather the Jews in Shushan and fast for her. She and her maidens would do likewise. Then she declared, “and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16). There is courage without theatrical boasting. She did not pretend that death was impossible. She acknowledged the danger and resolved to act. Then, when the king received her, she proceeded with considerable wisdom. Rather than immediately blurting out every accusation, she arranged the banquets through which Haman's wickedness would be exposed. Her courage was accompanied by patience, judgment, and deliberate action. There is a lesson for women facing difficult conversations, serious responsibilities, or opposition from powerful people. **Boldness does not require recklessness, and wisdom does not require cowardice.** Esther knew when to prepare, when to wait, when to speak, and when to risk her position for something more important than her own comfort.

**5. Ruth — The Strength That Refused to Walk Away**

Not every demonstration of courage takes place in a royal palace or on a battlefield. Sometimes courage appears on a dusty road beside a grieving widow who has nothing impressive left to offer. Ruth chapter 1 records the devastating circumstances surrounding Naomi and her daughters-in-law. Naomi had lost her husband, and her two sons had also died. Ruth and Orpah were widows, facing uncertain futures. Naomi urged them to return to their own people. Orpah eventually departed, but Ruth remained. Her answer in Ruth 1:16 contains one of the most remarkable declarations of loyalty in Scripture: “Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” Ruth was a Moabitess, and her decision involved leaving familiar surroundings to accompany Naomi to Bethlehem. **The woman had no earthly guarantee of prosperity, but she possessed a conviction stronger than the uncertainty before her.**

Ruth's loyalty was not merely a beautiful speech delivered during an emotional farewell. When the two women arrived in Bethlehem, Ruth went to work. Ruth 2:2 records her request to glean ears of corn after those in whose sight she might find grace. The law given to Israel made provision for the poor and the stranger through the practice of gleaning, as seen in Leviticus 19:9–10. Ruth entered that arrangement as a needy foreign widow. She did not arrive with wealth, influence, or an impressive social position. She possessed willingness, diligence, and faithfulness. Boaz later recognized her conduct and said in Ruth 2:12, "The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." Notice that her labor and her trust in the Lord were not enemies. **Faith does not despise honest work, and honest work does not eliminate the necessity of trusting God.** Ruth demonstrated both while caring for Naomi.

In Ruth 3:11, Boaz declared, "for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." There is that word again: virtuous. Long before the description in Proverbs 31 became familiar to generations of readers, Ruth's character was being recognized among the people of Bethlehem. Her circumstances were difficult, but her conduct was honorable. Eventually, the Lord brought Ruth into marriage with Boaz, and their family became part of the ancestry of King David. Ruth 4:17 identifies Obed as the father of Jesse, the father of David. But do not twist that outcome into a promise that every faithful widow will receive another husband or that every difficult beginning guarantees earthly prosperity. The Lord has not made such promises to every believer. Ruth's testimony matters because of the loyalty and faithfulness she demonstrated before she knew how the story would end. **Real character does not wait until the reward is visible before deciding whether obedience is worthwhile.**

**6. When Strength Has Tears in Its Eyes**

There is another kind of strength that is seldom celebrated because it does not make an impressive public appearance. It is the strength required to continue trusting God when the heart is heavy and the circumstances refuse to improve. First Samuel 1 introduces Hannah, a woman deeply afflicted because she had no children. The account does not describe her as emotionally unaffected by her circumstances. Verse 10 states, "And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore." Notice that Hannah's tears and her prayers appear together. She was sorrowful, but she carried that sorrow before the Lord. Eli initially misunderstood her conduct and accused her of drunkenness. That was quite a judgment from a priest who had not even understood what he was watching. Hannah answered respectfully and explained her condition. **The presence of tears does not prove the absence of faith, and the ability to weep before God is not evidence that a woman lacks spiritual strength.**

The Lord eventually answered Hannah's prayer, and Samuel was born. But we must be careful with the application. Hannah's experience is a historical account of God's dealings with her, not a universal guarantee that every barren woman will conceive or that every grieving believer will receive the particular outcome requested. Scripture contains accounts of remarkable deliverance, but it also records faithful saints enduring affliction without immediate relief. Paul himself received the answer recorded in 2 Corinthians 12:9: “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” That statement was given in connection with Paul's thorn in the flesh, yet it demonstrates an enduring truth about the sufficiency of divine grace. God is able to sustain His servants when their strength fails. A woman living with chronic illness, carrying grief, or facing responsibilities beyond her natural ability should not be accused of unbelief simply because she cannot maintain a cheerful appearance every hour of the day. **The Lord does not measure courage by the dryness of a person's eyes.**

Consider also the widow in Luke 21:1–4. Jesus observed wealthy men casting their gifts into the treasury, and then He saw a poor widow contributing two mites. Her offering was small in earthly value, but Christ recognized the sacrifice involved. He declared that she had cast in more than the others because she gave from her poverty. This is not permission for religious organizations to pressure struggling widows into surrendering the money necessary for their survival. It is a testimony to the Lord's perfect knowledge of what human observers cannot measure. People see the amount; Christ sees the circumstances. People count the coins; Christ knows the cost. The same principle should caution us against judging women by outward displays of strength. One woman may accomplish more publicly because she possesses greater resources and fewer burdens. Another may be exercising extraordinary faith merely by fulfilling the difficult responsibilities of another day. **Heaven's accounting department does not use the world's measuring instruments.**

**7. The Courage to Obey God Without Becoming Rebellious**

Now we come to an essential distinction. Biblical courage and rebellion are not the same thing. A woman does not demonstrate spiritual strength merely by refusing instruction, rejecting correction, or announcing that nobody has the authority to tell her anything. Proverbs 12:15 declares, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.” That applies to women and men alike. The modern world has made an idol of independence, as though receiving help or accepting legitimate authority were humiliating admissions of weakness. But Scripture places wisdom, humility, obedience, and faithfulness above the satisfaction of always getting one's own way. Esther submitted to the responsibilities connected with her position while courageously confronting a deadly threat. Ruth showed loyalty without surrendering moral conviction. Deborah acted

according to the commandment of the Lord. **A strong woman is not the woman who refuses every authority; she is the woman who understands which authority must govern every other one.**

That highest authority belongs to God. No human relationship gives another person permission to command sin, excuse wickedness, or replace the authority of Scripture. Acts 5:29 records the apostles declaring, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” The immediate setting concerns their refusal to stop preaching Jesus Christ, but the principle establishes the supremacy of obedience to God when human commands directly contradict His word. A wife is commanded to submit to her own husband according to Ephesians 5, but the husband is also commanded to love his wife sacrificially and not be bitter against her. Biblical headship is not a license for violence, cruelty, or coercion. A woman does not become godly by assisting somebody else's sin or pretending that wickedness is righteousness. Nor does submission require surrendering the responsibility to seek safety from genuine danger. **God never gave one sinner the right to become another sinner's substitute for the Lord.** Every believer remains accountable to Jesus Christ.

Second Timothy 1:7 provides a fitting instruction concerning the Christian life: “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” Paul wrote those words to Timothy in the context of Christian service, not as a promise that believers would never feel afraid. Nevertheless, the combination is instructive. Power without love becomes harshness. Love without sound judgment can become foolish indulgence. Sound judgment without courage may recognize the right course and still refuse to follow it. The Christian woman needs the word of God governing all three. She needs courage to reject sin, humility to receive correction, wisdom to recognize manipulation, patience to endure hardship, and faith to obey the Lord when obedience brings opposition. She must never confuse stubbornness with steadfastness or emotional excitement with spiritual conviction. **The strongest Christian is not the one who never bends before another person, but the one who refuses to bend the truth of God to accommodate the fear of man.**

**Conclusion — Strength Worth Wearing**

To the woman who has been taught that godliness requires helplessness, open your Bible and examine the record for yourself. Deborah was courageous, Esther was discerning, Ruth was loyal, Hannah was prayerful, and the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 was industrious and honorable. Their circumstances were different, their responsibilities were different, and their experiences were not interchangeable. Yet their testimonies demonstrate that faithfulness to God does not require a woman to abandon courage, intelligence, diligence,

or sound judgment. Perhaps your responsibilities seem ordinary. Perhaps you are caring for children, supporting a struggling husband, working to provide necessities, ministering to an elderly parent, or facing a burden that few people understand. Do not despise the place where God has called you to faithfulness. The Scriptures do not teach that only spectacular assignments produce valuable service. **Some of the greatest victories in the Christian life are won without an audience, without applause, and without anybody realizing that a battle was being fought.**

And to the men who have mistaken a woman's godly submission or gentle disposition for permission to treat her with contempt, the Bible has something to say to you as well. First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to give honour unto their wives and warns that their prayers may be hindered when they fail in their responsibilities. Ephesians 5:25 demands sacrificial love. A husband ought to appreciate the courage required of a wife who faithfully stands beside him through hardship, disappointment, financial difficulty, illness, and the ordinary struggles of life. A father ought to teach his daughter to know Scripture, exercise discernment, and possess the courage to refuse evil. A church ought to encourage women to develop genuine spiritual maturity rather than treating their knowledge and abilities as inconveniences. God's order does not diminish the value of godly strength. **A man who needs a woman to be weak before he can feel strong has misunderstood the difference between biblical leadership and personal insecurity.**

Return once more to Proverbs 31:25: “Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.” There stands the biblical picture. Not a woman who trusts in her own power as though she has no need of God. Not a woman who rebels against every responsibility because the world has convinced her that obedience is humiliation. Not a woman who confuses fear with humility or weakness with holiness. But a woman whose strength is governed by honour, whose honour is rooted in the fear of the Lord, and whose confidence rests upon the God she serves. If you belong to Jesus Christ, your salvation rests upon His finished work, not upon your ability to meet every difficulty without faltering. Walk in the strength His grace supplies. Be diligent in your responsibilities, courageous in your convictions, gracious in your speech, and steadfast when obedience becomes difficult. **Deborah stood when Israel needed courage. Esther approached the throne when her people faced destruction. Ruth remained faithful when the future offered no guarantees. And the woman who fears the Lord today can stand just as firmly in the duties God has entrusted to her. The world may dress its heroines in pride, rebellion, and self-sufficiency, but God has provided something better: strength and honour. Wear them well.**

**3 of 10 — Biblical Womanhood — She Openeth Her Mouth with Wisdom: The Power of a Godly Woman's Words**

**Key Passage — Proverbs 31:26:** "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness."

There is a remarkable statement in Proverbs 31:26 that ought to silence a great deal of foolishness concerning the influence of a godly woman. "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness." Notice that the Holy Ghost does not say she never opens her mouth. He does not commend her for being incapable of expressing an opinion, incapable of recognizing error, or afraid to speak when something needs to be said. Quite the contrary. She opens her mouth, and when she does, wisdom comes out. That is a rather refreshing arrangement in a world where people have discovered how to broadcast their opinions across the earth without first discovering whether those opinions are worth broadcasting. The virtuous woman possesses something far more valuable than the ability to talk. She possesses discernment concerning what should be said, when it should be said, and how it should be said. **A wise woman does not have to dominate every conversation to become one of the most influential voices in the room.**

The passage becomes even more significant when examined in its immediate context. Proverbs 31 is the instruction associated with King Lemuel and the teaching he received from his mother. The chapter concludes with a portrait of the virtuous woman whose husband trusts her, whose hands perform diligent work, whose household benefits from her foresight, and whose conduct demonstrates the fear of the Lord. Verse 25 declares that strength and honour are her clothing. Verse 26 describes her speech. Verse 27 shows her diligence in watching over her household. There is an important relationship between those descriptions. Her words are not disconnected from her character. She does not exercise wisdom in public while spreading bitterness in private. She does not speak kindly on religious occasions while using her tongue to destroy the people nearest to her. Her speech belongs to the same consistent pattern of godliness governing her life. **The tongue is not an independent department operating outside the authority of the heart. Eventually, what governs the heart will find its way through the mouth.**

Now do not imagine that the Bible is presenting women as naturally righteous speakers while men are naturally foolish. James 3 exposes the dangers of the tongue among believers generally, and Proverbs contains enough warnings about foolish men to keep the entire male population occupied until the Lord returns. The issue is not which sex possesses the greatest natural talent for conversation. The issue is whether speech is governed by the wisdom of God. A woman can encourage a discouraged husband, strengthen a frightened child, correct a dangerous misunderstanding, comfort a grieving

widow, and prevent serious trouble through a few carefully chosen words. She can also spread gossip, provoke unnecessary conflict, manipulate circumstances, and injure relationships if she refuses biblical restraint. The same tongue can become an instrument of blessing or destruction. **God did not give a woman a voice merely to fill the silence. He gave her the responsibility to use that voice in a manner worthy of the Lord who created her.**

**1. The Law of Kindness — When Wisdom Governs the Mouth**

Begin with the expression itself: "in her tongue is the law of kindness." That is considerably stronger than saying the virtuous woman occasionally makes pleasant remarks. A law establishes a governing rule. Her speech is characterized by a settled principle of kindness, not a temporary mood that disappears whenever somebody irritates her. But kindness must be defined by Scripture rather than by the world's sentimental standards. Biblical kindness does not require a woman to agree with falsehood, approve wickedness, or flatter people who desperately need correction. Proverbs 27:6 declares, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Sometimes the kindest thing a person can do is tell the truth that somebody would rather not hear. The question is whether that truth is spoken faithfully, wisely, and without sinful motives. **Kindness without truth becomes flattery, while truth without charity can become an excuse for cruelty. The virtuous woman learns to speak with both.**

Proverbs 15:1 declares, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." There is a tremendous amount of practical wisdom packed into that one verse. Notice that a soft answer is still an answer. The Scripture does not command every person to retreat into silence whenever someone becomes angry. It teaches that the manner of answering can influence the direction of a confrontation. A woman who responds calmly to an unreasonable accusation may prevent a disagreement from becoming a household catastrophe. A mother who corrects her child without losing control of her own temper demonstrates authority far more effectively than one who attempts to substitute volume for judgment. And a wife who chooses her words carefully during a difficult conversation may accomplish more than twenty minutes of sharp accusations. **A raised voice does not automatically strengthen an argument. A kettle makes considerable noise when it gets hot, but nobody mistakes the noise for wisdom.**

Proverbs 25:11 adds another beautiful comparison: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." The value lies not merely in the words themselves, but in their fitness for the occasion. A truthful statement delivered at the wrong moment, in the wrong spirit, or before the wrong audience may accomplish unnecessary injury. A wise woman considers the circumstances before speaking. Is this the appropriate time? Is the

information accurate? Does the person need correction, instruction, comfort, or simply an opportunity to be heard? Is the matter private, or does it genuinely require wider attention? These questions are not signs of uncertainty about God's truth. They are evidence of wisdom in applying it. Ecclesiastes 3:7 recognizes that there is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” **The woman who understands both occasions possesses something far more useful than the ability to win every argument. She possesses judgment.**

**2. Abigail — The Woman Whose Words Stopped a Sword**

First Samuel 25 provides one of the finest demonstrations of a godly woman's wise speech anywhere in the Old Testament. David was not yet reigning as king over Israel. He and his men were living under difficult circumstances while Saul remained on the throne. In the wilderness of Paran, David sought provisions from Nabal, a wealthy man whose servants and property had benefited from the protection afforded by David's men. Nabal responded with contempt, dismissing David and refusing the request. Scripture describes Nabal as “churlish and evil in his doings” in verse 3, while his wife Abigail is described as “a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance.” There is the contrast. One possessed wealth without wisdom; the other possessed understanding in a household governed by a fool. And when David heard Nabal's insulting answer, he determined to respond with armed violence. **One fool had opened his mouth, and another man was preparing to answer with a sword. That is generally how trouble becomes considerably larger than the original offense.**

When a servant warned Abigail about the danger approaching her household, she acted immediately. First Samuel 25:18 records that she “made haste” and prepared substantial provisions for David and his men. She did not spend the afternoon debating whether Nabal's behavior had been acceptable. She already knew the answer. She also understood that merely explaining her husband's foolishness would not prevent the approaching disaster. Her response combined practical action with carefully chosen words. She met David, humbled herself, and appealed to him concerning the consequences of taking vengeance into his own hands. In verse 25 she plainly acknowledged Nabal's character, saying, “Nabal is his name, and folly is with him.” Abigail did not pretend that wicked conduct was righteous simply because the guilty man happened to be her husband. Neither did she make her husband's sins an excuse for joining David in his anger. **She recognized the fool in her own household and the danger developing outside it, and she had enough wisdom to avoid becoming either one.**

The decisive moment comes when Abigail directs David's attention away from personal revenge and toward the Lord's dealings with him. In First Samuel 25:26 she speaks of the Lord withholding him from shedding blood and avenging himself. She reminds David of the

future God had appointed for him and the burden that unnecessary bloodshed would place upon his conscience. David's response in verses 32–33 is extraordinary. He blesses the Lord for sending Abigail and declares, “And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood.” Here is a man destined for Israel's throne accepting correction from a woman who possessed more wisdom than he was exercising at that particular moment. Abigail did not command David's army or seize his future throne. She spoke truth with courage, discernment, and humility, and David had enough sense to receive it. **A woman does not need to possess authority over a man to possess wisdom that he desperately needs to hear.**

**3. The Wise Woman Buildeth Her House — One Word at a Time**

Proverbs 14:1 declares, “Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.” The house in this proverb represents considerably more than lumber, furniture, and a roof that keeps out the rain. It concerns the household and the life being established within it. A wise woman contributes to its stability through diligence, faithfulness, sound judgment, and godly conduct. A foolish woman undermines those very things through her own behavior. Although the proverb mentions hands, speech is among the most powerful instruments used either to build or destroy. Words can create an atmosphere of honesty, respect, instruction, and confidence. They can also produce suspicion, resentment, division, and bitterness. That does not mean a woman bears responsibility for every failure committed by other members of her household. Each person answers for his own conduct. But her influence is genuine. **A home is not built merely by putting bricks together. It is also built through the truth, correction, encouragement, and faithfulness practiced by the people living inside it.**

Consider the influence of a godly mother upon her children. Proverbs 1:8 declares, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.” Notice that the mother's instruction is not treated as an unnecessary addition to the father's responsibility. It is specifically named. In Second Timothy 1:5, Paul recalls the unfeigned faith that dwelt first in Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Later, Second Timothy 3:15 reminds Timothy that “from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” The passage does not describe every conversation Timothy heard growing up, but it demonstrates the lasting significance of scriptural instruction in his upbringing. A mother who consistently opens the Bible with her children may be accomplishing something more enduring than a thousand impressive public speeches. **A child may forget the furniture in the house where he grew up, but he may remember the Scripture his mother patiently taught long after that house is gone.**

The same principle applies beyond motherhood. A wife can strengthen her husband through truthful encouragement without becoming responsible for correcting every foolish decision he makes. An unmarried woman can exercise wisdom in friendships, employment, ministry, and family relationships. An elderly woman can offer counsel developed through decades of walking with the Lord. Titus 2:3–5 expressly instructs aged women to be teachers of good things and to teach younger women. That is a divinely recognized ministry of instruction, not some inferior occupation invented to keep women busy while men conduct the important work. The experienced woman who teaches a younger believer to love her family, maintain godly conduct, and understand biblical responsibilities is performing valuable service. But instruction requires an accurate knowledge of Scripture. Personal tradition is not automatically sound doctrine simply because it has been repeated for forty years. **A woman who wants to build others with her words must first allow the word of God to establish the foundation beneath her own feet.**

**4. The Courage to Speak — And the Wisdom to Remain Silent**

There is a strange misconception circulating in certain religious circles that a godly woman's most impressive spiritual achievement is remaining silent regardless of the circumstances. That notion does not survive an honest reading of Scripture. Ecclesiastes 3:7 plainly recognizes both “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” Those are two different responsibilities, and confusing them can produce serious harm. Abigail's intervention would have accomplished nothing if she had decided that silence was always more feminine than speaking. Esther would never have pleaded for her people if she had treated the danger of speaking as proof that she ought to remain quiet. In Esther 7:3, she petitioned the king for her life and the life of her people, eventually exposing Haman's wicked conspiracy. Her words were respectful, deliberate, and courageous. **There are occasions when silence demonstrates wisdom, and there are occasions when silence merely provides wickedness with a more comfortable working environment.**

Yet the opposite error is equally destructive. Some people imagine that possessing a truthful observation automatically gives them permission to express it immediately and repeatedly. Proverbs 10:19 declares, “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.” There is a warning worth considering before entering another argument, sending another angry message, or offering another unsolicited opinion. A woman may know that someone has made a mistake without needing to announce it before an audience. She may recognize a family disagreement without immediately inviting everybody in the neighborhood to participate. She may possess useful information that ought to be communicated privately rather than publicly. James 1:19 instructs believers to

be “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” Evidently, God placed listening before speaking for a reason. **The tongue has no shortage of opportunities to perform; wisdom knows when the performance should be cancelled.**

The difficult part is distinguishing genuine restraint from cowardice. A woman should not conceal serious wrongdoing merely because exposing it might disturb someone's reputation. She should not participate in deception, excuse abuse, or surrender the truth of Scripture to satisfy an unreasonable person. Neither should she turn every disagreement into a public investigation. Matthew 18:15 establishes a principle of addressing a brother's trespass privately in its proper context, while other circumstances may require appropriate witnesses, church accountability, or civil authorities. The facts and the nature of the wrong matter. In Acts 18:26, Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos unto them and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. They recognized that he needed further understanding and acted accordingly. **Wisdom does not ask merely whether something is true. It also asks who needs to hear it, how it should be communicated, and what obedience to God actually requires.**

**5. When the Tongue Becomes a Fire Instead of a Fountain**

James 3 offers a sobering examination of the destructive potential of human speech. The chapter begins by warning against carelessly assuming the position of a teacher, and then proceeds to discuss the dangers associated with the tongue. Verse 5 declares, “Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!” There is the Holy Ghost's illustration, and it requires very little improvement. A small flame can consume a tremendous amount of material when left uncontrolled. So can a few careless words. A woman may spend years building trust within a family, friendship, or congregation and then seriously damage that trust through one malicious accusation. The same warning applies to men, preachers, teachers, and anyone else possessing a mouth. **It takes years to build a reputation for truthful speech, but one deliberate lie can set fire to the work of those years.** James is not offering a lesson in pleasant conversation; he is warning believers about sin.

Gossip is among the more respectable sins in religious circles because people have become remarkably skilled at disguising it as concern. Proverbs 16:28 declares, “A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.” Notice the result. Separation. Relationships are injured, confidence is destroyed, and suspicion begins spreading among people who previously trusted one another. First Timothy 5:13 warns concerning certain younger widows who had become “tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.” The passage addresses particular conduct in its historical setting; it does not establish that all widows, or all women, possess that character. Titus 2:3 similarly warns older women against being false accusers. The principle is unmistakable. God

condemns malicious speech regardless of who practices it. **Attaching the words "pray for her" to an unnecessary disclosure does not automatically convert gossip into a ministry. Sometimes it simply gives a sinful conversation a religious introduction.**

Bitterness presents another danger. Ephesians 4:29 commands, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Paul continues by condemning bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice. These commands are addressed to believers, people who have been saved by grace and must now conduct themselves accordingly. A Christian woman cannot excuse a cruel tongue by announcing that she has always been outspoken. Neither can a Christian man excuse abusive speech by calling himself a strong leader. Sin does not become a virtue because somebody gives it a flattering personality label. The believer must put away corrupt communication and practice the forgiveness commanded in Ephesians 4:32. **A sharp tongue is not proof of a sharp mind, and cruelty does not become spiritual courage merely because the person committing it can quote a Bible verse.** The Lord requires better from His people.

**6. Wisdom from Above — Truth Without Manipulation or Compromise**

James 3:13 asks, "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?" The answer concerns conduct marked by meekness of wisdom. James then contrasts earthly wisdom, associated with bitter envying and strife, with the wisdom that comes from above. Verse 17 declares, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." Every word deserves attention. The order begins with purity. That means biblical peace cannot be purchased by approving sin or abandoning truth. But purity is followed by peaceableness, gentleness, and a willingness to receive entreaty. The wise woman is neither a stubborn dictator nor a timid compromiser. She loves righteousness and understands how to deal with people. **Heavenly wisdom does not sacrifice truth to obtain peace, and it does not manufacture unnecessary war merely to prove that it possesses truth.**

Manipulation is a counterfeit of wisdom because it uses words to control rather than instruct. A person may flatter, threaten, withhold information, exaggerate circumstances, or appeal to guilt to obtain a desired result. Some even introduce their demands with the solemn announcement that God has personally told them what everybody else must do. That is an awfully convenient arrangement when the other people are not permitted to examine the claim against Scripture. First Thessalonians 5:21 declares, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." The Christian woman must not become a manipulator, and she must not surrender her judgment to somebody else's manipulation. She is responsible

to know the word of God and exercise discernment. Proverbs 29:11 declares, “A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.” **The ability to influence people is not automatically evidence of wisdom. A deceiver influences people too. The question is whether that influence brings them nearer to truth or farther from it.**

The Christian woman's speech should also reflect the distinction between godly correction and personal domination. Titus 2 establishes the importance of mature women teaching younger women. Such instruction requires patience, sound doctrine, and a credible example. A woman who corrects someone else must remember that she remains accountable to the same Scriptures she is teaching. Second Timothy 2:24–25 describes the servant of the Lord as gentle, apt to teach, patient, and engaged in instructing those who oppose themselves with meekness. The immediate context concerns Timothy's responsibilities, but the virtues described offer valuable instruction concerning the manner in which biblical truth is communicated. Correction is not an opportunity to humiliate somebody who knows less. It is an opportunity to direct that person toward the truth. **The object of biblical teaching is not to prove that the teacher knows everything. It is to help the hearer understand what God has actually said.** That distinction separates genuine ministry from religious vanity.

**7. A Woman's Voice in the Service of Jesus Christ**

The greatest message any Christian woman can communicate is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 15:3–4 declares that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not by works. A woman does not need to occupy the pastoral office to explain those truths to an unbeliever. She does not need extraordinary public speaking abilities to testify concerning the Saviour who redeemed her. The New Testament's distinctions governing authority and church office must be respected, but they do not forbid women from witnessing, teaching children, discipling women, or explaining the gospel. An elderly woman can speak to a neighbor. A mother can teach her children. A young woman can answer a sincere question concerning salvation. **The gospel does not become less powerful because the person explaining it is a woman. Its power rests in the Lord Jesus Christ, not in the social standing of the messenger.**

Romans 16 provides substantial evidence that faithful women were active in the service of the early church. Paul commends Phebe, a servant of the church at Cenchrea, and acknowledges Priscilla and Aquila as his helpers in Christ Jesus. He remembers Mary, who bestowed much labor, and refers to Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis in connection with their work in the Lord. Philippians 4:3 also mentions women who labored with Paul in the gospel.

These passages do not abolish the qualifications for bishops established elsewhere in the New Testament. But they do make it impossible to maintain that women should contribute nothing substantial to the work of Christ. God used women in practical service, hospitality, assistance, instruction, and gospel labor. Their names were considered worthy of preservation in the inspired record. **If Paul could acknowledge women who labored in the gospel, the church today should be capable of appreciating their faithfulness without either erasing God's order or treating their service as insignificant.**

Consider Mary Magdalene in John 20. She came to the sepulchre and encountered the risen Lord Jesus Christ. When He spoke her name, she recognized Him. Then He instructed her to go to His brethren with the message concerning His ascension. John 20:18 declares, “Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.” That historical responsibility was specific, and it should not be twisted into an argument concerning offices Christ established elsewhere. Nevertheless, the Lord entrusted her with a truthful report, and she delivered it. There is an encouraging principle for every Christian woman who desires to be faithful with her words. She can speak what she knows from Scripture, testify concerning Christ, and communicate truth without claiming an authority God has not given her. **You do not need an impressive title to speak of an impressive Saviour. You need the truth of His word, a heart willing to obey it, and a tongue prepared to declare it faithfully.**

**Conclusion — The Woman Whose Words Leave a Lasting Testimony**

Every woman should eventually examine what her words are accomplishing. Are they strengthening the people God has placed within her reach, or are they making already difficult circumstances more difficult? Does her family hear encouragement as well as necessary correction? Do younger believers receive biblical instruction rather than merely personal opinions? Can others trust her to guard confidential matters, speak honestly, and refuse malicious gossip? Is her speech governed by Scripture when she is tired, disappointed, misunderstood, or provoked? These are not questions intended to create an impossible standard of perfection. James 3 makes it plain that controlling the tongue is a serious struggle. But the Christian life is not an invitation to excuse sin indefinitely. Romans 6:12 commands believers not to allow sin to reign in their mortal bodies. The Lord who saves by grace also commands His people to walk in obedience. **A godly tongue is not produced by pretending that careless words do no damage. It is developed through submission to the word of God and the deliberate refusal to excuse what Scripture condemns.**

There is also tremendous encouragement here for women who believe their influence is small because their circumstances are ordinary. Abigail did not command David's army, yet

her wise counsel prevented bloodshed. Lois and Eunice did not occupy a public platform in Timothy's ministry, yet their faith formed part of the testimony Paul remembered. Priscilla was not described as a bishop, yet Scripture records her participation in helping Apollos understand the way of God more perfectly. Mary Magdalene did not need to invent an impressive religious position to deliver the message Christ had given her. And the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 exercised remarkable influence through her conduct and speech within the responsibilities of her own life. Perhaps the Lord has entrusted you with a husband who needs encouragement, a child who needs instruction, a friend who needs correction, or a struggling believer who needs somebody willing to open the Scriptures. **Never despise the opportunity to speak one faithful word merely because the world would rather celebrate a thousand meaningless speeches.**

Return to Proverbs 31:26 and consider the entire declaration once more: “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” That is the goal. Not a woman who speaks constantly because silence makes her uncomfortable. Not a woman who never speaks because she fears the opinions of men. Not a woman who mistakes sarcasm for discernment, gossip for concern, flattery for kindness, or compromise for peace. But a woman who fears the Lord, knows His word, recognizes the value of truth, and understands the responsibility attached to her voice. Her words can strengthen the weary, instruct the ignorant, confront wrongdoing, protect the vulnerable, encourage the faithful, and direct sinners toward Jesus Christ. Such influence may never receive public recognition, but the Lord knows what His servants have spoken and why they spoke it. **A foolish woman can tear down with her tongue what years of labor have built, but a wise woman can strengthen generations with words governed by the fear of God. The world may remember who spoke the loudest, but heaven keeps a better record. When a godly woman opens her mouth with wisdom, even her quietest words can carry a testimony that outlives her.**

**4 of 10 — Biblical Womanhood — The Beauty the World Cannot Manufacture**

**Key Passage — 1 Peter 3:4:** “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.”

There is a beauty described in 1 Peter 3:4 that no cosmetics company has ever manufactured, no fashion designer has ever created, and no amount of money has ever purchased. The apostle Peter writes about “the hidden man of the heart” and identifies

“the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit” as something “which is in the sight of God of great price.” Notice those last words. God places a value upon something that cannot be photographed, displayed in a store window, or measured with a mirror. The world has spent centuries teaching women how to decorate the outside while paying precious little attention to what is happening on the inside. Scripture reverses the entire arrangement. Peter does not begin with the face, the figure, the hairstyle, or the wardrobe. He directs attention to the heart. **The beauty God calls precious is not something a woman puts on before leaving the house. It is something that ought to be present when nobody else is looking.**

We live in a generation that has turned female insecurity into a commercial enterprise of staggering proportions. The beauty industry manufactures another standard, advertises another defect, introduces another product, and assures women that happiness is waiting somewhere beyond the next purchase. Wrinkles must disappear, gray hair must be concealed, every feature must be adjusted, and every appearance must be compared with somebody whose photograph has probably been altered beyond recognition. Then, after convincing a woman that her natural appearance is unacceptable, the same industry congratulates itself for helping her become confident. What a magnificent business arrangement! First create the dissatisfaction, then sell the supposed cure. The trouble is that the standard changes every few years, ensuring that nobody ever reaches the finish line. **The world has learned how to make a fortune selling women temporary improvements while ignoring the one thing God says possesses incorruptible beauty.** A mirror can reveal something about the face, but it cannot tell the truth about the soul.

Now understand the distinction before somebody runs off and starts another unnecessary religious crusade. The Bible does not teach that physical beauty is sinful, that women must neglect their appearance, or that personal cleanliness and attractive clothing are evidence of vanity. God created physical beauty, and Scripture recognizes it without apology. Genesis 24:16 describes Rebekah as “very fair to look upon.” Esther 2:7 describes Esther as “fair and beautiful.” The problem is not that a woman possesses beauty or appreciates looking presentable. The problem begins when outward appearance becomes the ruling concern of life, the foundation of personal worth, or an excuse for neglecting godliness. There is nothing spiritual about deliberately looking disorderly, and there is nothing holy about condemning every woman who owns a mirror. **The Christian woman does not have to choose between taking reasonable care of her appearance and possessing genuine holiness. She must simply understand which one deserves first place.**

**1. The Hidden Man of the Heart — Where God Begins His Examination**

First Peter 3:3–4 must be examined in its context before turning the passage into a slogan. Peter is addressing wives, including those whose husbands do not obey the word. He instructs them concerning conduct that may bear testimony before their husbands and then contrasts outward adornment with the inward character God considers precious. The larger epistle addresses believers living as strangers and pilgrims in a hostile world, instructing them to maintain honorable conduct amid opposition. Peter is not writing a beauty manual, and he is certainly not establishing a competition to determine which Christian woman owns the plainest wardrobe. His concern is spiritual character demonstrated through daily behavior. When he writes about "the hidden man of the heart," he directs attention to the inward person rather than outward decoration. **The Lord is concerned with what a woman is when the ornaments are removed, the visitors have gone home, and the religious performance has ended.**

Notice that Peter describes this inward ornament as something "which is not corruptible." That expression should immediately catch our attention. Outward beauty belongs to a body subject to aging, weakness, sickness, and eventual death. The most carefully maintained appearance remains vulnerable to time. The inward qualities Peter commends belong to a different category. They are not measured by the passing condition of the flesh. The distinction resembles Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 4:16: "but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." Paul was discussing affliction and the believer's inward renewal, not providing cosmetic advice, but the contrast is remarkably instructive. The outward man is perishing. The inward man can be renewed. **A woman may lose the appearance she possessed at twenty while developing spiritual qualities at seventy that she never possessed in her youth.** That is not deterioration. In the things that matter eternally, it can be genuine growth.

First Samuel 16:7 establishes a principle that deserves consideration here. When Samuel was examining the sons of Jesse, the Lord warned him against judging according to outward appearance and physical stature. God declared, "for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." The immediate setting concerns God's selection of David, not a discussion of women's appearance. Nevertheless, the statement reveals the difference between human judgment and divine examination. Human beings are easily impressed by visible qualities. God examines what human eyes cannot see. A beautiful woman may possess a bitter, dishonest, or proud heart. A woman whose appearance attracts little worldly attention may possess extraordinary faith, kindness, wisdom, and godliness. Neither appearance establishes the condition of the soul. **The mirror tells a woman what time is doing to her face. The word of God tells her what sin or grace is doing in her heart. Only one of those examinations reaches the eternal question.**

**2. Favour Is Deceitful, and Beauty Is Vain**

Proverbs 31:30 declares, “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.” That verse is the Holy Ghost's answer to an entire civilization obsessed with appearance. The instruction associated with King Lemuel and his mother concludes by measuring a virtuous woman's excellence according to the fear of the Lord. Notice the two things Scripture warns about. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain. Favour concerns human approval, which can be gained for foolish reasons and withdrawn without warning. Beauty is described as vain because physical attractiveness is temporary and cannot establish enduring character. The passage does not claim that beautiful women are wicked or that attractive appearances are inherently shameful. It declares that these things cannot bear the weight of ultimate value. **A woman who builds her identity upon physical beauty has chosen a foundation that time has already scheduled for demolition.** The wise woman builds upon something stronger.

Consider the absurdity of making temporary attractiveness the supreme achievement of womanhood. A young woman may be praised for features she did nothing to earn, while an elderly woman possessing decades of faithfulness is ignored because those same features have changed. A stranger may attract admiration through appearance while a devoted wife receives little recognition for years of sacrifice. Somebody can become famous for presenting a pleasing image without demonstrating one substantial quality of godly character. The world calls this success. Scripture asks whether the person fears the Lord. Proverbs 11:22 supplies a particularly vivid comparison: “As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.” That is not exactly the sort of verse one expects to find printed across a cosmetics advertisement. But the meaning is unmistakable. **Physical attractiveness without moral discernment is like placing expensive jewelry upon something incapable of appreciating its value.** The ornament cannot correct the underlying problem.

Yet there is an opposite danger that deserves equal correction. Some women have been taught to despise their physical appearance, as though Christian humility requires constant criticism of the body God gave them. That is not biblical holiness. Psalm 139:14 records David praising God because he was fearfully and wonderfully made. The verse does not teach that every physical feature must satisfy human preferences, nor does it eliminate the reality of disease, injury, or aging in a fallen world. It does remind us that human life is not an accident without a Creator. A woman can care for her health, maintain cleanliness, dress attractively, and appreciate the appearance God has given her without worshipping it. First Timothy 4:8 recognizes that bodily exercise has some profit while emphasizing the greater value of godliness. **The body deserves responsible care, but it**

**was never intended to become the altar upon which a woman sacrifices her peace, her money, her conscience, and her entire life.**

**3. Modest Apparel — What Scripture Commands and What Men Invent**

First Timothy 2:9–10 brings us directly to the subject of modesty. Paul writes, “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.” Notice the governing concern. Women professing godliness ought to demonstrate conduct consistent with that profession. Modest apparel, shamefacedness, and sobriety stand in contrast to ostentatious display and costly decoration. Paul is addressing conduct within the Christian community, where outward presentation should not compete with godliness for attention. He does not provide a universal measurement for every garment, identify an approved collection of fabrics, or specify the price at which clothing becomes sinful. The instruction is plain, but the Bible leaves many practical questions to be governed by modesty, sobriety, wisdom, and conscience. **God commanded modesty. He did not appoint every opinionated religious man to become the official inspector of the women's clothing department.**

First Peter 3:3 must also be read honestly. Peter mentions plaiting the hair, wearing gold, and putting on apparel. His contrast with inward adornment is intended to establish what deserves primary attention. If every item in the outward list were absolutely prohibited, the mention of putting on apparel would create a rather interesting theological difficulty. Apparently, a few people become so enthusiastic about forbidding hairstyles and jewelry that they forget Peter included clothing in the sentence. The passage is not instructing women to abandon clothing. It is contrasting outward decoration with inward excellence. This does not make the outward appearance morally irrelevant. First Timothy 2 still commands modest apparel. But the two passages must be understood together rather than manipulated into an assortment of private regulations. **There is a difference between preaching what the Bible says and attaching God's authority to a collection of personal preferences. One is sound doctrine; the other is religious presumption wearing a necktie.**

Modesty includes more than the amount of skin covered or the expense of a garment. It involves a decent, sober, and honorable manner of presenting oneself, consistent with one's profession of godliness. Clothing can be selected to attract improper attention, display wealth arrogantly, or deliberately provoke others. Those motives deserve examination. But a woman must not be held responsible for every sinful thought that passes through another person's mind. Matthew 5:28 places responsibility upon the man who looks upon a woman to lust after her. The Lord did not excuse his sin by blaming her

existence. Christian women should exercise modesty, and Christian men should exercise purity and self-control. Both answer to God. Furthermore, women who differ in clothing preferences should not be condemned merely because they do not follow somebody's private standard where Scripture has given no specific command. **Holiness requires obedience to God's word, not membership in a religious fashion club. The important question is whether the heart and the appearance are governed by godliness rather than vanity, rebellion, or pride.**

**4. A Meek and Quiet Spirit Is Not a Muzzled Woman**

Now examine Peter's expression carefully: “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.” There are two qualities here, and both deserve biblical definition. Meekness is not cowardice, spiritual weakness, or the absence of conviction. Jesus Christ declared in Matthew 11:29, “for I am meek and lowly in heart.” Nobody familiar with the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ could reasonably conclude that meekness means an inability to confront wickedness. He rebuked hypocrisy, exposed religious corruption, and spoke the truth regardless of powerful opposition. His meekness did not cancel His authority or His courage. The same principle applies to a godly woman. She may possess a gentle disposition while remaining thoroughly committed to righteousness. She may speak firmly without becoming quarrelsome. **Meekness is not the surrender of conviction. It is the refusal to let pride, bitterness, or self-will govern the exercise of strength.**

A quiet spirit must likewise be distinguished from an enforced silence. Peter is describing inward character, not commanding women to surrender their intelligence or remain mute in the presence of wrongdoing. Proverbs 31:26 specifically commends the virtuous woman because “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” Evidently, a woman can possess a quiet spirit while having something worthwhile to say. Abigail demonstrated remarkable courage and wisdom in First Samuel 25 when she intervened to prevent David from shedding blood unnecessarily. Her words were respectful, but they were not meaningless. Esther spoke before the king when her people faced destruction. Priscilla participated with Aquila in explaining the way of God more perfectly to Apollos in Acts 18:26. **The woman who never speaks because she is afraid of men is not necessarily demonstrating the quiet spirit that Peter commends. She may simply be afraid, and fear is not a substitute for faithfulness.**

The immediate context of First Peter 3 also places responsibilities upon husbands. Verse 7 commands them to give honor unto their wives and identifies believing husbands and wives as “heirs together of the grace of life.” A man who demands meekness from his wife while treating her with contempt has missed the passage's instruction concerning his own behavior. Biblical headship never grants permission for cruelty, intimidation, violence, or

sinful domination. Neither does Christian meekness require a woman to call evil good, conceal serious wrongdoing, or surrender her responsibility to obey God. First Peter 3:6 speaks of doing well and not being afraid with any amazement. The passage points toward godly conduct under difficult circumstances, not the abandonment of moral judgment. **A meek spirit is not a frightened spirit held captive by another person's temper. It is a spirit governed by reverence for God rather than the uncontrolled passions of the flesh.**

**5. The Fruit of the Spirit — Beauty That Comes from Within**

Galatians 5:22–23 identifies the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Here is a description of spiritual beauty that deserves far more attention than it ordinarily receives. These qualities are not restricted to women, but they certainly belong in any biblical discussion of womanhood. The immediate context concerns the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit in the believer's life. Paul has already warned concerning the works of the flesh, including hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, envyings, and other sins. Then he sets the fruit of the Spirit in contrast. The distinction is doctrinally important. Spiritual character is not produced merely by adopting pleasant manners or cultivating a respectable public reputation. **A woman may learn to appear gracious before other people while remaining thoroughly governed by jealousy, bitterness, and pride when nobody is watching. The Holy Ghost is concerned with more than appearances.**

Consider what these qualities accomplish in ordinary life. Love serves others without demanding constant recognition. Joy rests upon the Lord rather than every changing circumstance. Peace refuses to manufacture needless conflict. Longsuffering endures provocation without immediately surrendering to anger. Gentleness treats people with consideration. Goodness seeks what is right. Faith rests upon the Lord's word. Meekness refuses the dictatorship of pride. Temperance exercises restraint over appetites and conduct. These are not decorative religious expressions to be admired and forgotten. They belong in a woman's dealings with her husband, children, parents, friends, coworkers, and fellow believers. A woman demonstrating these qualities can become a tremendous blessing to people who may never know the sacrifices required to practice them. **A beautiful face can brighten a photograph, but genuine godliness can brighten an entire household. One impresses the eye for a moment; the other leaves its influence upon people's lives.**

Galatians 5:16 supplies the governing instruction: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." Notice that Paul commands a walk. The believer is responsible for daily conduct, not merely for possessing religious feelings during a church service. Verse

17 explains the opposition between the flesh and the Spirit. Salvation does not remove every sinful inclination from the believer's present experience. A saved woman can still become envious, vain, angry, contentious, or self-centered. She is not instructed to excuse those sins because they feel natural. Romans 6:12 commands believers not to allow sin to reign in their mortal bodies. At the same time, growth in holiness must not be confused with earning eternal life. Salvation is by grace through faith, not by performing good works. **The fruit of the Spirit is evidence of the kind of life God commands His children to walk in; it is not a price they pay to persuade Him to save them.** Grace establishes the believer's standing and teaches the believer how to live.

**6. Growing Older Without Losing What Matters Most**

There comes a time when every woman discovers that the body does not intend to remain twenty-five forever. Hair changes color, skin changes, strength diminishes, and familiar features begin showing the unmistakable evidence of passing years. The world treats these developments as emergencies requiring immediate commercial intervention. Scripture treats aging as part of the present human condition and directs attention toward the spiritual responsibilities accompanying the passage of time. Proverbs 16:31 declares, “The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.” Notice the qualification. Old age itself does not automatically produce godliness. A person can spend seventy years becoming more stubborn without becoming any wiser. But age joined with righteousness can possess extraordinary dignity. **There is something terribly foolish about a society that worships youth while ignoring the wisdom, faithfulness, and endurance that only years of obedient living can develop.**

Titus 2:3–5 provides an important New Testament application. Paul instructs that aged women should demonstrate behavior becoming holiness and should be teachers of good things, including instruction for younger women concerning their responsibilities. The passage recognizes a valuable spiritual contribution that cannot be replaced by physical attractiveness. A mature Christian woman may possess decades of experience studying Scripture, enduring sorrow, maintaining faithfulness, and learning the consequences of obedience and disobedience. Such a woman has something worthwhile to communicate. The church should not treat her as though her usefulness expired when her appearance changed. Neither should older women surrender themselves to bitterness or spend their remaining years mourning the loss of youth. **The older woman who has walked faithfully with God possesses treasures that cannot be purchased at twenty, no matter how attractive the packaging may be.** Her responsibility is to use those treasures faithfully rather than bury them beneath regret.

Younger women need the same biblical understanding before the pressures of comparison become established habits. A girl who learns that her value depends upon admiration may spend much of her life pursuing approval from people whose opinions are continually changing. Parents should therefore teach daughters modesty, discernment, self-respect, and the fear of the Lord without making physical appearance the center of every conversation. A married woman must not assume that changing looks diminish her worth to God. An unmarried woman should not imagine that she must satisfy the world's beauty standards before becoming worthy of affection or respect. A woman enduring illness, disability, pregnancy, recovery, or other physical changes should not measure spiritual faithfulness by the condition of her body. **The passing condition of the flesh is a poor instrument for measuring the worth of a life devoted to Jesus Christ. A woman can become physically weaker while becoming spiritually stronger, and the Lord knows the difference.**

**7. Adorn the Doctrine — The Beauty of a Life That Serves Christ**

Return to First Timothy 2:10, where Paul identifies the adornment becoming women professing godliness: “with good works.” That statement brings the discussion to practical obedience. A woman may speak beautifully about holiness while demonstrating very little of it in her conduct. She may possess an impressive religious vocabulary, attend church regularly, and maintain a respectable appearance while treating her family and neighbors with selfishness or contempt. None of those outward activities excuses disobedience. Paul insists upon conduct consistent with the profession being made. Good works do not mean a woman must perform extraordinary public accomplishments to possess spiritual significance. They include truthfulness, compassion, diligence, generosity, faithful service, and obedience to the responsibilities established in Scripture. **A godly reputation is not something a woman manufactures by making impressive claims about herself. It is something her conduct ought to support.** The world advertises beauty through photographs; Scripture calls attention to goodness demonstrated through actions.

Consider Dorcas in Acts 9:36, described as a disciple “full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.” When she died, the widows stood weeping and showing the coats and garments she had made while she was with them. Those garments testified to a life invested in helping people. The account records Peter raising her from the dead, a remarkable event belonging to the apostolic ministry recorded in Acts, but her charitable character deserves attention in its own right. She was remembered for what she had done for others. There is something instructive about that scene. Nobody gathered to display her cosmetics, her fashionable possessions, or the evidence of how successfully she had maintained her appearance. They showed the garments through which her kindness had

become visible. **A woman can spend a lifetime collecting things that will eventually be discarded, or she can invest that lifetime in works of mercy whose influence continues after she is gone.** Dorcas demonstrated the latter.

But we must never turn good works into another counterfeit gospel. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Verse 10 then explains that believers are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The order is essential. Salvation comes through the finished work of Jesus Christ, received by faith, and good works belong to the life of obedience that follows. A woman does not become justified before God by dressing modestly, speaking gently, helping the poor, or developing an admirable reputation. Every woman, like every man, is a sinner in need of the Saviour. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. **The gospel does not offer eternal life as a reward for becoming a beautiful person inside. It offers salvation through Jesus Christ, who then calls the believer to walk in holiness.** Religious morality without the new birth can never substitute for redemption.

**Conclusion — The Beauty That Eternity Will Not Erase**

To the young woman who has spent too much time comparing herself with photographs, fashions, and impossible standards, the word of God offers a better measurement. To the wife whose appearance has changed through years of labor, childbirth, illness, or the ordinary passing of time, Scripture directs attention toward qualities that do not depend upon outward youth. To the unmarried woman who has wondered whether her appearance determines her value, the Lord's estimation provides a foundation far more reliable than human approval. To the elderly woman who feels unnoticed because the world has decided that youthful beauty deserves all the attention, remember what God calls precious. First Peter 3:4 speaks of inward character that is not corruptible. Proverbs 31:30 praises the woman who fears the Lord. **The Lord has never required a woman to remain young in order to remain useful, valuable, or capable of honoring Him.** What matters most can continue growing long after the mirror begins telling a different story.

There is also a responsibility for men, families, and churches to reconsider the standards by which women are commonly judged. A husband should appreciate his wife's character rather than measuring her worth by changing physical appearance. Fathers should teach their daughters to know the Scriptures instead of allowing the world's obsession with beauty to govern their understanding of womanhood. Young men should learn that physical attractiveness does not excuse foolishness, immodesty, or ungodliness, and that modest, godly character deserves genuine respect. Churches should encourage women to develop spiritual maturity, sound doctrine, charitable works, and faithful service without imposing

regulations that Scripture itself has not established. **A congregation that spends more time examining the length of a woman's clothing than the condition of its own doctrine has seriously misunderstood the priorities of the New Testament.** Modesty matters, but so do charity, wisdom, holiness, truthfulness, and the fear of the Lord.

So return once more to First Peter 3:4 and consider the expression that settles the entire matter: “which is in the sight of God of great price.” That is the final standard. Not the advertisement, not the mirror, not the passing compliment, not the fashionable opinion, and not the unnecessary rules invented by religious men. God's estimation is the one that matters. Let a Christian woman care for her appearance with modesty and good judgment, but never allow outward beauty to become the governing ambition of her life. Let her cultivate the meek and quiet spirit that Scripture commends, the fruit of the Spirit that grace produces, and the good works becoming one who professes godliness. Let her face the passing years without surrendering the joy of serving Christ. **The world can manufacture a thousand appearances of beauty, but it cannot manufacture the work of the Holy Ghost in a surrendered life. Cosmetics can change a face, clothing can improve an appearance, and human applause can brighten an afternoon. But a woman who fears the Lord possesses an ornament that age cannot steal, fashion cannot improve, and money cannot buy. A beautiful face may attract attention for a season. A beautiful spirit can leave a testimony that outlives the woman who possessed it.**

**5 of 10 — Biblical Womanhood — A Keeper at Home with a Kingdom in View**

**Key Passage — Titus 2:4–5:** “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.”

There is a little expression sitting in Titus 2:5 that has caused more unnecessary argument than it ever should have: “keepers at home.” Those three words have been praised, despised, twisted, exaggerated, and occasionally handled as though they were either the foundation of civilization or the greatest threat to female advancement since somebody invented the washing machine. Meanwhile, the actual passage has been sitting in the King James Bible waiting for somebody to read the whole thing. Paul instructs Titus that older women should teach younger women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, and obedient to their own husbands. Then he gives the reason: “that the word of God be not blasphemed.” That is considerably more serious than winning an argument about whether a woman should work

outside the home. The apostle is concerned with Christian conduct, household faithfulness, and the testimony of God's word. **A godly home is not merely a place where people live. It is a place where the truth they profess ought to become visible in the lives they actually lead.**

The modern world has developed a peculiar contempt for domestic faithfulness. A woman may oversee a business, supervise employees, manage substantial financial resources, and receive admiration for her organizational abilities. But let her manage a household, educate children, care for aging parents, organize family resources, and devote herself to the spiritual welfare of those under her roof, and suddenly somebody wants to know whether she has accomplished anything meaningful with her life. Apparently, managing a corporation is impressive, but managing the responsibilities of a household becomes insignificant the moment the work is performed without a corporate title. That is not biblical reasoning. It is worldly foolishness wearing expensive shoes. Yet certain religious people have managed to produce an opposite distortion, treating the words “keepers at home” as though God prohibited every woman from earning money, exercising business judgment, purchasing property, or doing anything beyond the kitchen doorway. **One crowd despises homemaking, and the other sometimes turns it into a prison. Neither crowd has improved upon Scripture.**

The Bible presents something better. Proverbs 31 describes a virtuous woman who cares diligently for her household while purchasing property, planting a vineyard, producing merchandise, and conducting business. Acts 16 introduces Lydia, a seller of purple who opens her home to the servants of Christ. Colossians 3:23 commands believers to perform their responsibilities heartily as unto the Lord. These passages must be examined in their proper settings, but together they demonstrate that domestic faithfulness, productive labor, sound stewardship, and service to Christ are not competing virtues. A Christian woman need not choose between honoring her responsibilities and exercising the abilities God has given her. Nor should every woman's circumstances be forced into one identical arrangement. **The question is not whether a woman possesses the world's preferred definition of success. The question is whether she is faithfully serving the Lord in the responsibilities He has actually entrusted to her.** And that brings us to the importance of a home kept with eternity in view.

**1. Keepers at Home — A Biblical Responsibility, Not a Religious Prison**

Begin with the context of Titus 2. Paul is instructing Titus concerning sound doctrine and the behavior appropriate to different groups within the Christian congregation. Aged men receive instruction. Aged women receive instruction. Young women and young men are addressed. Servants are also instructed concerning their conduct. The chapter opens with

the command, “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.” Therefore, the responsibilities given to young wives do not appear as an isolated collection of household preferences. They belong to the practical conduct becoming Christians who profess the truth. The aged women are to be “teachers of good things,” and younger women are to receive instruction concerning marriage, children, discretion, purity, and household faithfulness. The expression “keepers at home” belongs within that arrangement. It establishes the importance of attending to household responsibilities. **Paul is not writing a prohibition against female usefulness outside the house. He is condemning the neglect of responsibilities that genuinely belong inside it.**

Notice something else that deserves attention. The older women are commanded to teach. Evidently, Paul did not imagine Christian women were incapable of understanding doctrine, communicating truth, or exercising spiritual influence. These mature women were expected to possess a conduct becoming holiness and sufficient judgment to instruct younger women. They were not simply to repeat whatever customs happened to be fashionable in their neighborhood. They were to teach what was good according to apostolic instruction. A woman cannot properly teach another woman to be discreet if she has never learned discretion herself. She cannot faithfully encourage marital responsibility while continually spreading contempt for marriage. She cannot teach purity while privately entertaining corruption. **A Christian woman's influence is not strengthened by pretending to possess authority she has not been given, but neither is it strengthened by neglecting the instruction God has expressly commanded her to provide.** Biblical womanhood includes serious responsibility for spiritual maturity.

The command concerning household responsibility must also be read alongside the husband's obligations. Ephesians 5:25 declares, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” First Timothy 5:8 warns against failing to provide for one's own household. A husband cannot quote Titus 2:5 to excuse laziness, selfishness, or the refusal to participate in necessary family responsibilities. The fact that a wife is instructed to care for her household does not mean her husband is permitted to behave like a permanent houseguest who occasionally issues orders from the furniture. Christian marriage includes distinct responsibilities, but those responsibilities operate under the lordship of Jesus Christ. **Headship is not a license for a man to unload every unpleasant task upon his wife while congratulating himself for maintaining biblical order.** The husband must love sacrificially, the wife must conduct herself faithfully, and both must answer to the Lord for their behavior.

**2. She Looketh Well to the Ways of Her Household**

Proverbs 31:27 declares, “She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.” That is a remarkably practical description of domestic responsibility. The virtuous woman pays attention to what happens under her care. She is not indifferent to the needs of her household, careless concerning necessary work, or content to allow responsibilities to deteriorate through neglect. Earlier verses describe her preparing food, providing clothing, exercising diligence, and planning for changing circumstances. Yet the emphasis is not upon achieving an immaculate house that resembles a furniture showroom. The passage describes attentive stewardship. A home may contain expensive furnishings and still be filled with bitterness, dishonesty, and spiritual indifference. Another household may possess modest belongings while demonstrating hospitality, affection, sound instruction, and the fear of the Lord. **A spotless floor is pleasant, but it cannot compensate for a filthy conversation. Polished furniture is useful, but it cannot repair a family destroyed by pride.** God examines more than the decorations.

A home becomes a place of instruction through the conduct and teaching of those responsible for it. Deuteronomy 6:6–7 commanded Israel under the law to teach God's words diligently to their children, speaking of them during ordinary daily activities. That command belonged to Israel's covenant responsibilities, and we must not pretend that the Church has inherited every national promise attached to the Mosaic covenant. Nevertheless, the importance of teaching children divine truth is firmly established in the New Testament. Ephesians 6:4 instructs fathers to bring children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Second Timothy 1:5 remembers the unfeigned faith associated with Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice. **The home should not become a place where children learn every fashionable opinion from the world while remaining strangers to the Scriptures their parents claim to believe.** Biblical instruction must be intentional, consistent, and reinforced by example.

Of course, no household contains perfect people. Children disobey, parents become weary, marriages encounter difficulties, and unexpected circumstances disrupt carefully arranged plans. A woman who is trying to maintain a godly home should not imagine that every disagreement or untidy room proves spiritual failure. The Bible calls for faithfulness, not the impossible task of controlling every decision made by another human being. Proverbs 14:1 declares, “Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.” That proverb concerns the woman's own contribution to the household, not the claim that she is responsible for every sin committed within it. Building requires patience, diligence, truthfulness, correction, and forgiveness. **The Christian home is not a museum displaying the family's supposed perfection. It is a place where imperfect people ought to learn obedience to a perfect Lord.** And that work requires more than carefully arranged furniture and pleasant photographs.

**3. The Virtuous Woman Who Bought a Field**

One of the most remarkable passages in Proverbs 31 appears in verse 16: “She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.” Read that carefully. The woman considers a field. She evaluates an opportunity. She purchases property. She uses the fruit of her labor to establish something productive. Nothing in the passage suggests that her ability to conduct business diminishes her virtue. Quite the contrary. Her judgment and diligence are included among the qualities for which she is commended. Verse 18 declares that she perceives her merchandise is good, while verse 24 describes her making fine linen and selling it. Somebody had better inform the religious authorities who imagine that a woman loses her femininity the moment she understands a financial transaction. **The Holy Ghost included a woman conducting business in the Bible's portrait of virtue. We would be wise not to improve upon the illustration by condemning what God commended.**

Now this does not mean every woman must become a business owner, purchase real estate, or establish a commercial enterprise. Proverbs 31 is an inspired description of an excellent woman in particular circumstances, not a collection of business requirements imposed upon every Christian wife. Neither does it abolish the instruction concerning household responsibilities in Titus 2. The two passages are perfectly capable of standing together without contradiction. A woman can engage in productive work while remaining attentive to her home. The practical arrangements will differ according to her responsibilities, abilities, family needs, and circumstances. Some wives may devote their working hours almost entirely to domestic responsibilities. Others may earn income through employment, business activity, or work performed from home. **The Bible does not command every woman to possess the same occupation, earn the same income, or arrange every hour according to one universal domestic schedule.** It commands faithfulness, diligence, and proper attention to the responsibilities involved.

We must also avoid making employment the supreme measure of a woman's significance. The woman who receives a salary is not automatically more accomplished than the woman whose labor primarily benefits her family without financial compensation. Neither is the homemaker automatically more spiritual than the Christian woman who works to provide necessities. Both can be faithful, and both can become careless. One can neglect her household through selfish ambition; another can remain physically present while neglecting it through laziness and indifference. The question concerns the heart, the responsibilities, and the actual conduct. Colossians 3:23 commands work performed heartily unto the Lord. That principle reaches beyond the world's categories of impressive and unimpressive labor. **A woman does not become valuable when somebody prints**

**her name upon a paycheck, and she does not become less valuable when the work she performs produces no paycheck at all.** God's accounting is considerably more accurate than the world's employment statistics.

**4. Lydia — A Businesswoman Whose Home Served the Gospel**

Acts 16:14 introduces Lydia with words that deserve careful examination: “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us.” Paul and his companions were in Philippi, where they encountered women gathered by a riverside for prayer. Lydia was engaged in the trade of purple goods and was listening when Paul spoke. The passage then declares, “whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.” The spiritual sequence deserves attention. Lydia's commercial activity did not save her. Her respectable reputation did not save her. Her willingness to listen placed her before the preaching of the gospel, and the Lord opened her heart to attend to Paul's message. **A successful business cannot purchase salvation, and an impressive household cannot substitute for the new birth.** Whatever else Lydia accomplished, her greatest need was the truth concerning Jesus Christ.

Acts 16:15 then records Lydia's baptism and the baptism of her household. She appealed to Paul and his companions, saying, “If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there.” The passage concludes, “And she constrained us.” Notice that her home became a place of practical hospitality for the servants of Christ. Lydia did not merely express admiration for their ministry while leaving them to find their own accommodations. She offered something useful. Her occupation, household resources, and willingness to serve came together in an act of generosity. We are not told every detail concerning her domestic arrangements, and there is no need to invent them. Scripture does not identify her marital status or provide a complete inventory of her possessions. What it does record is sufficient. **She heard the gospel, responded to the Lord, and opened her home for the benefit of those laboring in His service.** That is a testimony worthy of attention.

Later in Acts 16:40, after Paul and Silas were released from prison, they entered Lydia's house, saw the brethren, comforted them, and departed. The account demonstrates the continuing importance of that household in the events at Philippi. Lydia's home had become a place where believers could gather and receive encouragement. There is a lesson here for Christian women who possess the opportunity to exercise hospitality. A home may provide a meal to a missionary, encouragement to a struggling family, assistance to an elderly saint, or a welcoming place for believers. Romans 12:13 instructs Christians to be “given to hospitality.” First Peter 4:9 adds, “Use hospitality one to another

without grudging." **Hospitality is not a competition to determine who owns the finest dishes or possesses the most impressive dining room. It is the willingness to use what God has supplied for the genuine good of others.** Lydia's testimony illustrates that beautifully.

**5. The Stewardship of Bread, Time, and Money**

The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 understood that household management required practical judgment. She considered food, clothing, employment, merchandise, property, and the needs of others. She was not operating under the delusion that bills disappear when ignored or that necessities arrive through the front door without somebody making reasonable preparations. Proverbs 31:15 records that she provided food for her household and a portion to her maidens. Verse 21 describes her preparation for the cold. Verse 27 says she did not eat the bread of idleness. These descriptions commend foresight and diligence. A Christian household should likewise practice reasonable financial responsibility, avoid needless waste, and distinguish between necessary expenses and foolish indulgences. **Prayer is essential, but prayer was never intended to become a religious excuse for refusing to balance the household accounts.** A family can trust God while exercising the common sense He has already commanded His people to use.

First Timothy 6:6 declares, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." Paul continues by reminding believers that they brought nothing into the world and can carry nothing out. The warning against the love of money applies just as forcefully inside the home as it does in the marketplace. A household can become enslaved to acquiring possessions, maintaining appearances, and competing with neighbors. Proverbs 22:7 warns that "the borrower is servant to the lender." That statement does not mean every loan is inherently sinful, but it does remind us that debt produces obligations. Financial wisdom includes understanding those obligations before making them. Nor should poverty automatically be interpreted as evidence of wickedness or poor management. Illness, loss of employment, widowhood, and other circumstances can place enormous strain upon faithful families. **Stewardship means managing what God has entrusted to us, not pretending that everybody has received the same resources or opportunities.** Contentment and responsibility belong together.

Time requires stewardship as surely as money does. A woman can spend her days pursuing activities that leave the most important responsibilities neglected. She can also become so consumed with necessary work that prayer, Scripture, worship, family relationships, and ordinary rest are continually sacrificed. Ecclesiastes 3:1 declares, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." That observation should remind us that responsibilities require wise attention to their proper occasions. Work has its place.

Family conversation has its place. Hospitality has its place. Necessary rest has its place. There is nothing spiritual about becoming so exhausted through self-imposed demands that every person in the household suffers from the resulting impatience. **A well-managed home is not the one where the woman never sits down. It is the one where responsibilities are handled with wisdom rather than allowing endless activity to become another form of bondage.** Diligence is a virtue; frantic self-importance is not.

**6. Different Households, Different Burdens, the Same Faithful Lord**

Not every Christian woman's life fits the same domestic description. Some are unmarried. Some are widows. Some have children, while others do not. Some care for elderly parents, disabled relatives, or family members facing serious illness. Some have been abandoned by husbands who refused their responsibilities. Others face circumstances requiring them to provide financially for their households. These differences must be acknowledged without weakening the commandments Scripture actually gives. Titus 2:4–5 specifically addresses younger wives and their responsibilities concerning husbands, children, and the home. Those instructions should be taught faithfully. But they must not be transformed into an accusation against every woman who does not possess a husband or children. First Corinthians 7 recognizes the opportunities available to unmarried believers for undistracted service to the Lord. **A woman does not become a second-class Christian because her household contains fewer people than somebody else's.** Her faithfulness must be examined according to the responsibilities actually belonging to her.

First Timothy 5 provides further instruction concerning widows and family obligations. Paul addresses the responsibility of relatives to care for those genuinely in need and warns against neglecting one's own household. Verse 8 declares, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” That is strong language, and it demonstrates that household care is not exclusively a woman's responsibility. Families must recognize their obligations toward dependent relatives. A daughter caring for an elderly parent may be performing labor that consumes tremendous time and strength. A mother raising children without reliable support may face responsibilities that another household distributes between two adults. These circumstances call for biblical wisdom and practical assistance, not careless criticism from people who have never carried the same burdens. **It is easy to pronounce judgment upon another person's household when you are not the one paying its expenses, tending its sick, or carrying its responsibilities.**

The Christian congregation should also understand its responsibility to assist those facing genuine difficulties. Galatians 6:2 instructs believers, “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” That command does not excuse irresponsibility, and verse 5

reminds every person to bear his own burden. Both truths belong together. Christians must fulfill their proper duties while showing compassion toward those whose circumstances require assistance. A church should encourage faithful mothers, recognize the needs of widows, support struggling families where possible, and value the service of unmarried women. It should not establish a single domestic arrangement and use it to condemn everyone whose circumstances differ. Neither should it abandon the biblical importance of marriage, parenting, or household responsibility in an effort to avoid offending the world. **The Bible is neither careless about God's order nor ignorant of life's difficulties. It provides instruction for obedience and commands compassion toward those carrying burdens.** Both are necessary for sound Christian conduct.

**7. Whatsoever Ye Do — A Home Kept Before the Lord**

Colossians 3:23–24 declares, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.” The immediate context concerns servants and their conduct toward earthly masters. Paul directs their attention beyond human approval to the Lord whom they ultimately serve. We should preserve that setting rather than pretending the verses were originally addressed specifically to homemakers. Nevertheless, the principle of performing legitimate responsibilities unto Christ has a clear application to Christian work generally. A wife caring for her household, a mother instructing her children, a woman conducting business, or a widow assisting those in need can perform those responsibilities with a sincere desire to honor the Lord. **The work does not become holy merely because it is performed inside a house, and it does not become worldly merely because it earns a salary. The governing question concerns obedience, motive, and faithfulness before Christ.**

That eternal perspective must also preserve the distinction between salvation and reward. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares that salvation is by grace through faith, “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Verse 10 then explains that believers are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The order cannot be reversed. A woman is not saved because she maintains a faithful household, raises respectable children, or serves her family through extraordinary sacrifice. Neither is she condemned because her home does not resemble the circumstances of another believer. Salvation rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. Good works belong to the believer's subsequent walk of obedience. Second Corinthians 5:10 reminds Christians of their future appearance before the judgment seat of Christ. **Heaven does not sell salvation in exchange for domestic labor. Christ saves freely by grace, and the**

**believer's faithful service will be examined by the Lord who knows every circumstance.**

Finally, a Christian home must never become an idol. There is a danger in becoming so devoted to the appearance, comfort, reputation, or prosperity of a household that the Lord Himself receives little attention. A family may possess attractive decorations containing Scripture while rarely opening the Bible from which those words were taken. Parents may pursue comfort so relentlessly that worship, evangelism, hospitality, and service to other believers become inconvenient interruptions. The home should serve God's purposes rather than replace them. The Church is the body of Christ, and Israel's promised national kingdom must not be confused with a modern family's domestic achievements. Yet believers can live with eternity in view, knowing that their conduct matters before the Lord. **A house filled with religious decorations is not necessarily a house governed by Jesus Christ. The difference is discovered in what the people believe, how they obey, and whether they serve the Saviour they profess.**

**Conclusion — When the Ordinary Becomes an Offering to God**

To the woman who has spent years caring for her household without receiving much recognition, the Scriptures offer substantial encouragement. Your responsibilities are not insignificant simply because they seldom attract public attention. Preparing food, managing resources, instructing children, caring for the sick, practicing hospitality, and maintaining family responsibilities can become meaningful expressions of faithfulness when performed according to God's word. Do not despise the ordinary work placed before you. Do not measure your life against somebody whose circumstances, resources, or opportunities differ from your own. And do not imagine that every difficult day represents failure. Proverbs 31 praises a diligent woman, not a woman who never becomes weary or encounters trouble. **The Lord does not require every household to possess the same advantages. He requires His people to walk faithfully with what He has entrusted to them.** The woman who honors Christ in the responsibilities of an ordinary day may be accomplishing more than the world is capable of recognizing.

To husbands, fathers, pastors, and churches, there is an equally important responsibility. Honor the women whose labor strengthens families and congregations. Do not reduce a wife to the services she performs, and do not use biblical order as an excuse to neglect the obligations God has placed upon men. Teach the importance of being a keeper at home without inventing prohibitions that Scripture does not contain. Recognize the diligence of the woman who cares for her household, the sacrifices of the mother who must work to provide necessities, the faithfulness of the widow who serves others, and the contributions of unmarried women whose lives are devoted to Christ. **The church should be capable of**

**honoring homemaking without despising employment, recognizing productive labor without belittling motherhood, and maintaining God's order without manufacturing additional commandments.** Sound doctrine does not become stronger through exaggeration. It becomes stronger when the whole counsel of Scripture is faithfully taught.

Return to Titus 2:5 and consider the purpose of the instruction: "that the word of God be not blasphemed." There is the great issue. The Christian home should demonstrate a testimony consistent with the Scriptures its members profess. It should be a place where truth is valued, sin is addressed, forgiveness is practiced, responsibilities are fulfilled, and Jesus Christ is honored. A beautiful house may impress visitors. A prosperous household may attract admiration. A successful career may provide financial advantages. But none of those things can replace genuine obedience to God. The woman of Proverbs 31 understood diligence. Lydia demonstrated hospitality. Paul instructed believers to perform their responsibilities heartily unto the Lord. **A keeper at home is not merely a woman concerned with maintaining a building. She is a woman who recognizes that the lives entrusted to her care matter more than the walls surrounding them. The world may measure success by the size of the house, the amount of the income, or the recognition attached to a career. God measures faithfulness according to His word. A home is not made holy by an impressive address or expensive furnishings, but by what the people living inside its walls are taught to love, believe, and practice. And when that home is kept with eternity in view, even its most ordinary labors can become acts of service rendered unto the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**6 of 10 — Biblical Womanhood — A Help Meet, Not a Helpless Woman: Marriage According to God's Order**

**Key Passage — Genesis 2:18:** "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."

The first thing God ever declared to be "not good" in the creation account was not a defect in the earth, a problem with the animals, or some unfortunate oversight in the arrangement of the garden. It was the condition of the man standing there without a suitable companion. Genesis 2:18 records, "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." There stands the divine explanation for the creation of woman. God did not create her because Adam needed somebody to polish his shoes, prepare his supper, and listen respectfully while he explained how intelligent he was. The Lord saw a genuine need in the man and supplied what was lacking. The woman was not an

afterthought, a decorative accessory, or an inferior specimen added to an otherwise completed arrangement. **She was God's deliberate provision for a need that the man, despite everything he possessed in Eden, could not satisfy by himself.**

Unfortunately, the subject of marriage has suffered considerably at the hands of people who are determined either to abolish God's order or to exaggerate it beyond recognition. The modern world frequently treats marriage as a temporary arrangement between two independent individuals who intend to remain independent until somebody becomes inconvenient. Certain religious circles have produced the opposite distortion, describing the husband as though he were a minor deity and the wife as though her principal spiritual responsibility were to surrender every independent thought upon receiving a wedding ring. Neither picture comes from the Bible. Ephesians 5 establishes the husband's headship and the wife's responsibility to submit, but it also commands the husband to love his wife as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. That last command has a remarkable way of disappearing whenever some fellow begins explaining how much authority he possesses. **A man who can quote the submission verses from memory but cannot locate the command to love his wife has not mastered biblical marriage. He has mastered selective reading.**

A proper understanding of marriage must begin with creation, proceed through the instructions given to Christian husbands and wives, and maintain the distinction between biblical authority and sinful domination. Genesis establishes the original union before the fall of man and before the Mosaic law. Ephesians 5 gives direct instruction to believers in the Church Age and reveals the spiritual mystery concerning Christ and His Church. First Peter 3 addresses the conduct of believing wives and husbands, including difficult circumstances involving an unbelieving or disobedient spouse. These passages must not be reduced to isolated slogans. A woman's submission is not an invitation to mistreatment. A husband's headship is not permission to become a tyrant. And the wife's designation as an help meet does not make her helpless, unintelligent, or spiritually insignificant. **God established responsibilities within marriage, not competing kingdoms in which two sinners fight over who gets to occupy the throne. Both husband and wife remain accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**1. An Help Meet for Him — God's Answer to the First Human Need**

Genesis 2:18 must be considered alongside the circumstances that preceded the creation of Eve. Adam had been formed from the dust of the ground, given life by the breath of God, and placed in the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it. He possessed work, provision, responsibility, and direct accountability to his Creator. Yet the Lord declared that it was not good for him to be alone. Genesis 2:20 explains that after Adam named the living creatures,

“for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.” The animals could not supply what was missing. Adam needed a companion corresponding to his own humanity, capable of sharing the relationship and responsibilities God intended. The Lord therefore created the woman. **The first woman was not introduced as a correction to some personal failure in Adam. She was God's provision for a relationship that belonged to His original design.** Marriage was established before sin entered the world.

The words “help meet” have sometimes been handled with extraordinary carelessness. People read “help” and immediately assume inferiority, as though assisting another person means possessing less intelligence, less dignity, or less spiritual value. Evidently, somebody forgot that Psalm 121:2 declares, “My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.” Psalm 46:1 likewise describes God as “a very present help in trouble.” Nobody with enough sense to come indoors during a thunderstorm would conclude that the Lord becomes inferior whenever He helps somebody. The expression in Genesis concerns the woman's suitability for the man, not her supposed worthlessness. She was created to be his companion and helper within the divine arrangement. That relationship involved meaningful responsibilities, not the cancellation of her character or judgment. **A wife who strengthens her husband through wisdom, faithfulness, labor, prayer, and sound counsel is not violating God's design. She is demonstrating why God declared the original arrangement incomplete without her.**

Genesis 2:21–23 describes the Lord taking one of Adam's ribs and making a woman, whom He brought unto the man. Adam responded, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.” Notice his recognition of their shared humanity and intimate relationship. He did not announce that the garden had received another animal requiring management. He recognized someone corresponding to himself in a way the other creatures did not. Genesis 1:27 had already established that God created mankind male and female in His image. Genesis 2 supplies the details of their relationship. The woman came from the man, and the two were designed for a union distinguished from every other earthly relationship. First Corinthians 11:11–12 later reminds believers that neither man nor woman is independent of the other in the Lord. **The husband has no biblical reason to despise the wife God provided, and the wife has no biblical reason to despise the order God established.** Both must begin where the Creator began.

**2. One Flesh — Marriage Is More Than Sharing an Address**

Genesis 2:24 establishes the foundation of marriage: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” That is not a casual arrangement between two people who happen to enjoy one another's company. The verse describes leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh. The man

establishes a new marital relationship that takes precedence over his former dependence upon his parents. He cleaves to his wife, identifying permanence and faithfulness as essential features of the union. The two become one flesh in a relationship God Himself designed. Jesus Christ appealed to this creation account in Matthew 19:4–6 when answering questions concerning divorce. He declared, “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” **Marriage is not merely a social experiment that remains valid until somebody discovers a more entertaining companion. It is a union established by God and deserving of serious faithfulness.**

That union includes responsibilities extending far beyond physical intimacy. First Corinthians 7:3 declares, “Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.” The following verses describe mutual responsibilities within the marriage relationship, including consideration for one another and agreement concerning temporary abstinence. The apostle does not present marriage as a one-sided arrangement in which the husband possesses every privilege while the wife receives every obligation. Both have responsibilities. Both must practice faithfulness. Both must consider the other rather than allowing selfishness to govern their conduct. The intimate relationship belongs within the marriage covenant and must never become an instrument of humiliation, coercion, or punishment. **The Scripture that commands marital faithfulness does not give either spouse permission to treat the other as property without feelings, judgment, or dignity.** One flesh is a sacred union, not an excuse for selfishness.

Malachi 2:14 refers to the wife as “thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.” The immediate setting concerns Israel under the law, where the Lord rebuked treachery and covenant unfaithfulness among His people. We must preserve that historical setting rather than transferring Israel's national covenant arrangements directly to the Church. Nevertheless, the description reinforces a truth established in Genesis: marriage involves companionship and faithfulness before God. The wife is not merely a person who performs domestic duties. She is a companion. That word ought to disturb the conscience of any husband who treats his wife like household machinery that is expected to operate continuously without conversation, appreciation, or consideration. **You cannot reasonably call a woman your companion while refusing to treat her as someone whose presence, thoughts, concerns, and fellowship matter.** The marriage relationship was established for a union of life, not the convenience of one individual.

**3. Headship With a Cross in Front of It**

Ephesians 5:22–23 declares, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church:

and he is the saviour of the body." There is the biblical establishment of headship within Christian marriage. The husband is identified as the head of the wife, and the wife is instructed concerning submission. There is no need to apologize for the passage, soften the language, or pretend Paul accidentally inserted an outdated cultural preference into an inspired epistle. The distinction is plainly stated. Yet the comparison with Christ and the Church must be handled carefully. Christ is the perfect Head and Saviour of His body. The husband is neither sinless nor the saviour of his wife. **God's appointment of marital headship does not turn a man into Christ, and the authority associated with his responsibility never exempts him from obedience to Christ.**

Continue reading into Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." There stands the standard for the husband's responsibility. Christ's love was demonstrated through sacrifice. He gave Himself. He did not demand that the Church suffer while He protected His own convenience. His love was purposeful, costly, and holy. Paul continues by speaking of Christ's sanctifying work toward the Church, showing the remarkable character of the relationship used as the comparison. A husband cannot perform Christ's redeeming work, but he is commanded to imitate the self-giving character of His love. **A husband who wants the authority associated with headship while refusing the sacrifice associated with love has selected the privilege and discarded the responsibility.** That is not biblical leadership. That is selfishness dressed in religious language.

Ephesians 5:28 declares, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself." Verse 29 adds that a man nourishes and cherishes his own flesh, drawing attention to the care a husband ought to demonstrate toward his wife. Nourishing and cherishing are not descriptions of intimidation, contempt, or neglect. They speak of genuine consideration and care. A husband who continually belittles his wife, dismisses her concerns, or treats her suffering as an inconvenience is not demonstrating the pattern Paul sets before him. Nor does headship make every preference of the husband a divine command. He may possess responsibility for leadership while remaining capable of foolish decisions. **A wedding ring does not confer omniscience, and a marriage certificate does not transform an ordinary sinner into the fourth person of the Godhead.** The wise husband knows his limitations, seeks sound counsel, and remembers that he must answer to God.

**4. Submission Is Not Servility, and Obedience Has a Higher Authority**

The command in Ephesians 5:22 concerns wives submitting to their "own husbands." That word deserves attention because it identifies the relationship in which the instruction operates. The passage does not appoint every man as the personal authority over every

woman. It does not require an unmarried woman to obey some unrelated fellow who happens to believe his sex makes his opinions infallible. Neither does it erase the spiritual equality of believers in Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:28 establishes that male and female believers are one in Christ concerning their standing through faith. That truth does not abolish the responsibilities assigned within marriage, but those responsibilities do not diminish a woman's spiritual inheritance. **A wife may submit to her husband's proper leadership without surrendering her standing as a child of God, her responsibility to know Scripture, or her obligation to exercise moral judgment.** Biblical submission concerns order, not personal worthlessness.

First Peter 3:1–6 provides further instruction concerning wives, particularly where husbands do not obey the word. Peter emphasizes chaste conduct, reverence toward God, inward character, and the influence of a godly example. He also refers to Sarah's relationship with Abraham, drawing from an Old Testament account belonging to the period before the Mosaic covenant. Peter uses her example to instruct believing wives, but the passage does not make a husband incapable of sin or place his conduct beyond examination. Nor does it guarantee that every unbelieving husband will be converted because his wife behaves faithfully. The wife is responsible for her conduct; she is not responsible for producing another person's salvation. **A woman may be the finest Christian in her household and still possess a husband who refuses the truth. His unbelief does not automatically prove her disobedience.** Every sinner must personally respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is also a boundary that must never be crossed. No human authority possesses the right to command disobedience to God. Acts 5:29 establishes the principle: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” The immediate setting concerns the apostles refusing an unlawful prohibition against preaching Christ, but the supremacy of divine authority is unmistakable. A husband cannot require his wife to participate in sin, conceal criminal wrongdoing, abandon Christ, or approve wickedness. Neither does biblical submission excuse physical violence, threats, intimidation, or sexual coercion. A woman facing genuine danger may seek safety and appropriate help, including lawful protection from civil authorities. Romans 13 recognizes the legitimate responsibility of civil government concerning wrongdoing. **God did not establish marriage so that a wicked man could turn his house into a private dictatorship and then use Scripture as the lock on the door.** That is a corruption of biblical order, not its fulfillment.

**5. Respect, Honour, and the Responsibility to Speak Truth**

Ephesians 5:33 concludes with two distinct instructions: “Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her

husband." Paul addresses the husband concerning love and the wife concerning reverence. These are not invitations for either spouse to neglect other Christian virtues. A husband should respect his wife, and a wife should love her husband. Titus 2:4 expressly instructs older women to teach younger women to love their husbands. But the commands in Ephesians emphasize responsibilities that are necessary for the marriage relationship to function according to God's design. A wife who continually humiliates her husband, publicly ridicules his failures, or treats his leadership with contempt is not demonstrating godly reverence. **Respect does not require pretending that every decision is brilliant, but it does forbid treating the man you married as though humiliation were an acceptable form of communication.**

Proverbs 31:11–12 describes the virtuous wife in these words: "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her," and "She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." Trust is a remarkable blessing within marriage. A husband ought to know that his wife is not deliberately undermining him, spreading private matters unnecessarily, or working against his legitimate interests. Likewise, the wife should be able to trust her husband to honor his promises, protect her welfare, and remain faithful. Proverbs 18:22 declares, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD." The woman is described as a blessing, not a burden to be endured. **A man who continually complains about the wife God has given him while refusing to appreciate her faithfulness may need to spend less time studying her faults and more time examining his own ingratitude.** Gratitude belongs in marriage.

Respect, however, must never be confused with dishonest flattery. A godly wife can disagree with her husband and still respect him. Proverbs 31:26 declares that the virtuous woman opens her mouth with wisdom and that kindness governs her tongue. Sometimes wisdom requires encouragement. Sometimes it requires correction. A woman who recognizes a serious financial mistake, an unwise decision concerning the children, or a dangerous course of conduct should not imagine that remaining silent is automatically more spiritual than speaking. The manner matters. Proverbs 15:1 teaches that a soft answer turns away wrath, while grievous words stir up anger. A wise wife chooses words that communicate truth without unnecessary humiliation. And a wise husband listens rather than treating disagreement as rebellion. **If a man's leadership cannot survive one respectful question from his wife, the problem may not be her attitude. It may be that his authority has become more precious to him than wisdom.**

**6. A Help Meet Who Contributes More Than an Echo**

The woman described in Proverbs 31 is an excellent illustration of meaningful contribution within marriage. She considers a field and purchases it. She manages resources, conducts

business, performs diligent work, cares for the needy, and watches over her household. Her husband trusts her. Her children recognize her excellence. The passage does not portray her as an incapable woman waiting for instructions concerning every ordinary responsibility. Nor does it portray her as rebelling against her marriage. Her competence is included among the qualities for which she is praised. **A wife does not become less suitable as an help meet because she possesses practical intelligence. A man ought to thank God when the woman beside him has enough sense to recognize a problem before it becomes a catastrophe.** The ability to contribute wise counsel is a blessing, not an assault upon headship.

First Samuel 25 supplies a striking historical example through Abigail, whose husband Nabal behaved foolishly toward David. When David prepared to retaliate violently, Abigail acted with remarkable discernment. She gathered provisions, approached David, and spoke words that directed his attention toward the Lord's purposes rather than personal vengeance. David recognized the wisdom of her intervention and declared in verse 33, “And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood.” Abigail did not correct wrongdoing by joining her husband in foolishness or encouraging David's anger. She exercised judgment that prevented further destruction. The account belongs to the history of Israel before David's reign, but its moral lesson is clear. **A woman can honor God's order without becoming a willing accomplice to somebody else's stupidity.** The Bible does not praise Abigail because she remained silent. It records the wisdom of what she said.

Within Christian marriage, that kind of partnership requires communication, prayer, faithfulness, and genuine consideration. A husband should recognize his wife's abilities and seek her counsel concerning matters affecting their household. A wife should support her husband's proper leadership without treating him as an opponent to be defeated. Both should examine their decisions according to Scripture rather than pride. James 1:5 directs believers lacking wisdom to ask of God, who gives liberally. Philippians 4:6 instructs Christians to bring their requests before the Lord through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. A couple facing financial difficulties, family responsibilities, illness, or uncertain circumstances has every reason to pray together and examine the word of God. **Marriage is not improved when two people spend their lives attempting to prove which one is superior. It is strengthened when both recognize that the Lord is superior to them and that His wisdom is necessary for the decisions before them.**

**7. Christ and the Church — The Great Mystery Behind the Marriage**

Ephesians 5:31 repeats the creation principle concerning a man leaving his parents and being joined unto his wife. Then verse 32 declares, “This is a great mystery: but I speak

concerning Christ and the church." There is the remarkable doctrinal connection. Christian marriage provides an illustration of the relationship between Christ and His Church. But that connection must be understood correctly. The Church is the body of Christ, composed of believers saved by grace through faith during this present dispensation. It must not be confused with national Israel or the covenant promises specifically given to that nation. The marriage relationship established in Genesis supplies an earthly picture through which Paul explains a heavenly truth. **The picture is important, but the picture is not the original. No earthly husband is the redeemer of his wife, and no earthly marriage possesses the perfection belonging to Christ and His Church.**

That distinction should produce humility in both husband and wife. Christ's love is perfect; a husband's love is not. The Church's relationship to Christ rests upon His finished work; an earthly marriage involves two sinners who must continually obey the Lord. Both spouses can speak carelessly, make foolish decisions, become selfish, or fail to demonstrate proper consideration. Ephesians 4:31–32 commands believers to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, and evil speaking, and to forgive one another as God for Christ's sake has forgiven them. Those instructions apply within marriage as surely as anywhere else. Yet forgiveness should not be confused with denying wrongdoing or allowing continuing harm without accountability. Repentance, truthfulness, and appropriate correction matter. **A marriage cannot be strengthened by pretending that sin is righteousness, and it cannot be healed by continually reopening every forgiven offense as though grace had never been extended.** Both truth and forgiveness belong in a Christian home.

Finally, the marriage relationship should direct both spouses toward greater faithfulness to Jesus Christ. A husband who understands Christ's love should become more sacrificial, not more arrogant. A wife who understands biblical submission should become more faithful, not less discerning. Both should cultivate prayer, sound doctrine, sexual faithfulness, honest communication, and service to others. Their household should not become an isolated kingdom devoted entirely to personal comfort. They belong to the Lord, and their lives ought to contribute to His work. Nor should either spouse confuse marital success with salvation. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes redemption by grace through faith, not domestic accomplishments. **A good marriage cannot save a lost sinner, and a difficult marriage cannot cancel the salvation of someone who belongs to Christ.** Marriage is a serious earthly responsibility, but the believer's eternal standing rests upon the finished work of the Saviour.

**Conclusion — A Woman Worthy of Honour and a Marriage Worthy of Faithfulness**

To the Christian woman who desires to honor the Lord in her marriage, do not allow the world to convince you that submission is automatically humiliation or that faithfulness

makes you insignificant. Neither should you allow religious exaggeration to persuade you that God expects you to become helpless, uninformed, or incapable of exercising sound judgment. Study the Scriptures. Cultivate wisdom. Speak truth with kindness. Support your husband's proper leadership, pray for him, encourage his obedience, and recognize the importance of your contribution to the household. If he is struggling, remember that encouragement can strengthen a weary man. If he is mistaken, remember that truthful counsel can prevent further trouble. If he is disobedient, remain faithful to Christ without assuming responsibility for his choices. **God did not create a wife to become her husband's shadow. He created a companion whose faithfulness, wisdom, and strength could contribute to the life they were intended to share.**

To the husband, the commandment is just as serious. Love your wife as Christ loved the Church. Give her honor. Listen to her concerns. Appreciate her labor. Protect her welfare. Remain faithful to your promises. Do not demand respect while deliberately behaving in ways that destroy trust. Do not quote Scripture merely when it gives you an advantage in an argument. And never mistake a harsh temperament for strong leadership. First Peter 3:7 warns husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge and to give them honor, "that your prayers be not hindered." That is a remarkable warning for a man who imagines his conduct toward his wife is somebody else's problem. **A husband cannot spend the week treating his wife with contempt and then expect the Lord to be impressed by his command of religious vocabulary on Sunday morning.** God examines the man as surely as He examines the woman.

Return once more to Genesis 2:18: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." There stands the divine beginning. God recognized the man's need, created the woman, and established a union designed for companionship, faithfulness, and responsibility. Ephesians 5 then places that relationship before the magnificent example of Christ and His Church. The husband is commanded to love sacrificially. The wife is instructed to submit to her own husband. Both must practice fidelity, forgiveness, honesty, and obedience to God. Neither possesses permission to become proud, cruel, selfish, or rebellious. **The strongest Christian marriage is not the one where the husband has finally silenced his wife, nor the one where the wife has successfully conquered her husband. It is the one where two redeemed sinners have learned that God's word stands above them both. A help meet is not a helpless woman, and a biblical husband is not a household dictator. God's order never required a woman to become insignificant. It requires both husband and wife to become faithful. And when Christ is honored above personal pride, marriage becomes what it was always intended to be: not a contest for earthly supremacy, but a covenant of companionship lived beneath the authority of Almighty God.**

**7 of 10 — Biblical Womanhood — The Faith That Goes from Mother to Child**

**Key Passage — 2 Timothy 1:5:** "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also."

There is something remarkable about the way the apostle Paul remembered Timothy. When Paul wrote his final epistle to that young preacher, he did not begin by congratulating him upon his education, admiring his ministerial accomplishments, or reviewing his qualifications for public recognition. Instead, he reached backward through Timothy's life and identified two women whose names deserve to be remembered wherever the word of God is preached. Second Timothy 1:5 declares, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." There they stand: Lois and Eunice. Neither woman is credited with founding a famous institution, commanding an army, or occupying a prominent religious office. Yet the Holy Ghost preserved their names in connection with a man whose ministry would strengthen New Testament churches. **Long before Timothy became useful in the ministry, there were women in his family whose faith was worth remembering.**

Our generation has developed some remarkable ways of measuring a woman's accomplishments, and most of them have precious little to do with eternity. A successful woman is supposed to accumulate recognition, acquire an impressive title, produce measurable financial results, and demonstrate that she can compete with everybody else in whatever occupation society happens to admire. But let a woman spend years teaching children the Scriptures, correcting foolishness, praying over difficult circumstances, and preparing young lives to recognize the difference between truth and error, and suddenly somebody wants to know whether she has done anything important. Apparently, raising a generation that knows how to operate expensive machinery is impressive, but helping raise a generation that knows the word of God is an insignificant domestic hobby. That is worldly reasoning, not biblical judgment. **A woman may never stand behind a pulpit and still influence the convictions of someone who will. She may never publish a book and still help place the Scriptures permanently within the memory of a child.**

There is also a danger in approaching motherhood with unrealistic promises and religious exaggerations. A faithful mother cannot regenerate her child's spirit, personally guarantee his salvation, or force him to obey God after he has chosen rebellion. Every person must answer to the Lord for his own decisions. Salvation is not inherited through a godly bloodline, and the grace of God is not transmitted automatically through childbirth. Nevertheless, the Scriptures place tremendous importance upon parental instruction,

consistent example, godly correction, and the influence of sincere faith. Mothers and grandmothers can contribute something of extraordinary value to the spiritual preparation of children. The same is true of women who care for children through adoption, guardianship, and other legitimate family responsibilities. **A mother cannot believe the gospel for her child, but she can make certain he does not grow up ignorant of the gospel while living beneath her roof.** That distinction is essential to understanding this remarkable responsibility.

**1. Lois and Eunice — The Faith Behind the Faithful Minister**

Begin with Paul's unusual expression in Second Timothy 1:5: “the unfeigned faith that is in thee.” The word “unfeigned” deserves attention. Paul was not praising a religious performance, an inherited family reputation, or the ability to repeat impressive expressions learned from older relatives. He was remembering sincere faith, something genuine rather than counterfeit. Then he identifies where that faith had previously dwelt: “first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice.” Notice the order. The apostle looks backward through three generations and recognizes a testimony of faith extending from grandmother to mother to son. This does not mean salvation passed automatically from one generation to another. The text says that genuine faith was present in these individuals, not that one person possessed the power to save another. **A godly family history is a wonderful inheritance, but every member of that family must personally believe what the previous generation professed.** The faith must become his own.

Acts 16:1 supplies additional information concerning Timothy's background. Luke records that Timothy was “the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek.” That is an important detail. Timothy's mother was a believing Jewish woman, while his father was Greek. The passage does not tell us everything about the father's religious convictions, so there is no reason to manufacture a biography that Scripture never supplied. What we do know is that Timothy's maternal family possessed a testimony of sincere faith, and that Timothy himself became a disciple of Jesus Christ. His upbringing involved both Jewish and Greek family connections, yet Paul specifically remembered the faith associated with his mother and grandmother. **The Lord did not need a perfectly arranged family history before He could prepare Timothy for useful service.** He used the truth that had reached him and the faithfulness of those who had believed it.

There is a lesson here for mothers who worry that their circumstances are too difficult for meaningful spiritual instruction. A woman may be raising children in a household where not every family member shares her convictions. She may face limited resources, an exhausting schedule, or opposition to her faith. None of those circumstances should be minimized, and none guarantees an easy outcome. But neither do they automatically

cancel her opportunity to teach what she knows from Scripture. Lois and Eunice are remembered for genuine faith, not impressive circumstances. Timothy's later ministry also required his own obedience. Paul instructed him in Second Timothy 1:6 to stir up the gift of God, demonstrating that personal responsibility continued beyond his upbringing. **A mother can help place the Scriptures before a child, but the child must eventually decide whether he will stand upon them.** That does not diminish her work; it establishes its proper purpose.

**2. From a Child Thou Hast Known the Holy Scriptures**

Second Timothy 3:14–15 provides the second great foundation for understanding Timothy's spiritual preparation. Paul writes, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Notice the command, “continue thou.” Timothy was not being urged to abandon the truth he had learned in favor of whatever new religious philosophy happened to attract public attention. He was instructed to remain in the Scriptures. Paul connected Timothy's present responsibilities with what he had known from childhood. **The Bible was not something Timothy encountered only after reaching adulthood and discovering that life had become complicated. Its words were already familiar to him from his earliest years.** That is a tremendous advantage for any young person.

Consider what Scripture Timothy would have known during his childhood. The New Testament writings were not yet available as a completed collection when he was an infant. His early instruction would have involved the Old Testament Scriptures, the sacred writings entrusted to Israel. Yet Paul declares that those Scriptures were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. There is no contradiction. The Old Testament reveals man's sin, God's holiness, the necessity of sacrifice, and the prophetic testimony concerning the coming Redeemer. The completed revelation of the gospel explains that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures, as recorded in First Corinthians 15:3–4. **The Old Testament is not discarded because the Church is living under grace, but neither should Israel's national covenant instructions be confused with the doctrine governing the body of Christ.** A mother teaching Scripture must learn to make those distinctions.

Paul continues in Second Timothy 3:16–17 by declaring that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. That establishes the proper substance of Christian instruction. Children need more than religious entertainment, sentimental stories, and cheerful assurances that

everything will turn out beautifully. They need doctrine explaining what God has said, reproof identifying what is wrong, correction showing what must change, and instruction establishing how righteousness ought to be practiced. A mother who teaches the Scriptures is not merely preparing her child to behave politely in church. She is furnishing his mind with divine truth that can expose false teaching long after he leaves her direct supervision. **The world is already preparing to teach your children its philosophy. It would be a remarkable tragedy if the world arrived with a complete curriculum while the Christian home offered nothing but religious decorations and occasional Bible slogans.**

**3. Forsake Not the Law of Thy Mother**

Proverbs 1:8 declares, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.” There is a direct recognition of parental instruction from both father and mother. The mother's teaching is not presented as an unnecessary supplement to the father's responsibility. It is specifically identified as something the child must not forsake. In its original setting, Proverbs belongs to the wisdom literature of Israel, and the instruction concerns the development of godly understanding under the fear of the Lord. But the principle concerning parental teaching is reinforced throughout Scripture. Children need instruction, and parents are responsible for providing it. A mother should not imagine that spiritual instruction belongs exclusively to pastors, Sunday school teachers, or the child's father. Those individuals may contribute meaningfully, but they do not replace her opportunity to speak truth within the household. **If a mother can teach her child to recognize danger in the street, she can certainly teach him to recognize danger in false doctrine.**

Proverbs 6:20–23 returns to the same subject and supplies another important picture. The son is instructed to keep his father's commandment and not forsake the law of his mother. He is told to bind those instructions upon his heart, and the passage declares, “When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.” That is a remarkable description of instruction remembered beyond the immediate presence of the teacher. The mother cannot accompany her child into every conversation, temptation, classroom, workplace, or future household. But the truth faithfully taught may remain in his memory when she is no longer standing beside him. **The objective is not to produce a child who can obey only while his mother is watching. It is to prepare someone who knows what God said when nobody from home is present to remind him.** That requires more than occasional lectures.

Instruction must also be supported by example. A mother who teaches honesty while routinely practicing deception undermines her own teaching. A parent who demands

respectful speech while continually humiliating others demonstrates a contradiction the children will eventually recognize. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to bring children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, while Colossians 3:21 warns fathers against provoking their children to anger lest they become discouraged. Those passages directly address fathers, and their responsibility must not be transferred entirely onto mothers. Nevertheless, both parents should recognize the danger of hypocrisy and unreasonable conduct. Children need to see repentance when a parent has sinned, forgiveness when wrongdoing has been addressed, and consistency between public profession and private behavior. **A child may forget a long lecture, but he is remarkably capable of remembering whether the person delivering it lived according to the truth being taught.** A faithful example gives weight to faithful instruction.

**4. King Lemuel — A Mother's Counsel to a Future Ruler**

Proverbs 31 begins with a statement that is easily overlooked because readers are often anxious to reach the description of the virtuous woman. Verse 1 declares, “The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.” There is the remarkable introduction. Before the chapter presents the famous description of the virtuous woman, it preserves the instruction of a mother to her son. And that son was a king. His mother was not merely discussing ordinary household preferences. She was addressing matters concerning moral purity, self-control, judgment, and the responsibilities of government. Her counsel was considered worthy of preservation in the inspired Scriptures. **A mother may teach a child sitting at an ordinary kitchen table without knowing whether that child will one day make decisions affecting thousands of people.** The importance of instruction cannot be measured by the apparent significance of the child receiving it.

Consider the seriousness of her warning. Proverbs 31:3 declares, “Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.” The mother was not teaching her son to despise women. She was warning him against surrendering his strength to immoral relationships and conduct capable of destroying rulers. She then warned him concerning intoxicating drink and its influence upon judgment. Verse 5 explains the danger: “Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.” Here is a mother teaching her son that personal appetites can become public disasters when someone possesses authority. Apparently, she had enough wisdom to understand that a crown does not cure stupidity, and political importance does not make a man immune to temptation. **The higher a person's responsibilities become, the more dangerous uncontrolled appetites can be.** That is a lesson worth teaching long before children encounter positions of influence.

Then comes the positive instruction in Proverbs 31:8–9. Lemuel's mother tells him to open his mouth for those unable to speak for themselves and commands him to judge righteously and plead the cause of the poor and needy. Notice what kind of man she wanted her son to become. Not merely powerful, wealthy, or admired. She wanted him to exercise sound judgment and defend those vulnerable to injustice. That is a striking picture of maternal influence. This mother was helping shape the moral understanding of someone entrusted with public responsibility. The chapter does not tell us every detail concerning their relationship, and there is no need to invent them. The recorded instruction is sufficient. **A godly mother should desire more for her son than a successful career, impressive income, and public recognition. She should desire that he become a man who fears God, refuses corruption, and possesses enough righteousness to do what is right when doing wrong would be easier.**

**5. Mothers Who Prayed, Protected, and Prepared Their Children**

Exodus 2 introduces another mother whose actions carried extraordinary significance. During Israel's bondage in Egypt, Pharaoh had ordered the destruction of Hebrew male infants. Yet the mother of Moses hid her child, and when she could no longer conceal him, she prepared an ark of bulrushes and placed him near the riverbank. Hebrews 11:23 identifies the faith of Moses' parents and declares that they were not afraid of the king's commandment. This was not ordinary domestic inconvenience. It was a life-threatening situation involving a wicked ruler and a helpless child. The mother of Moses acted to preserve his life despite the danger surrounding her family. Eventually, through remarkable providence, Pharaoh's daughter arranged for the child's own mother to nurse him. **The king of Egypt intended to destroy a generation, but he could not prevent God from preserving the very child who would later confront his kingdom.** Human power looks considerably smaller when measured against divine providence.

First Samuel 1 presents a different kind of maternal struggle. Hannah was deeply distressed because she had no children, and she poured out her grief before the Lord. When Samuel was born, she recognized him as the answer to her petition. First Samuel 1:27 records her words: “For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him.” She then fulfilled her vow concerning Samuel's service to the Lord. First Samuel 2:19 records that she made him a little coat and brought it to him from year to year when she came with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. There is a touching picture of continuing maternal concern within a remarkable historical arrangement. Hannah's circumstances are not a universal command requiring mothers to separate from their children, nor does her answered prayer guarantee that every barren woman will

conceive. **Her testimony teaches that motherhood may involve deep sorrow, earnest prayer, costly obedience, and the willingness to entrust a beloved child to the Lord.**

Mary, the mother of Jesus, provides another illustration of the seriousness of responsibility concerning a child. Luke 2:19 declares, “But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.” Later, Luke 2:51 again records that she kept these sayings in her heart. Her circumstances were entirely unique because the child entrusted to her care was the promised Christ, conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of a virgin. That distinction must never be erased. Mary was not the source of His deity or the mediator of salvation. Nevertheless, her careful attention to the remarkable events surrounding His childhood deserves recognition. Together, these accounts demonstrate that maternal faithfulness takes different forms according to God's purposes. **Not every mother will shelter a future deliverer, dedicate a future prophet, or experience the unique responsibility given to Mary. But every mother can recognize that the child entrusted to her care is a person whose life deserves serious attention before God.**

**6. When a Mother's Faithfulness Meets a Child's Rebellion**

One of the cruelest things religious people can do to a struggling parent is promise an outcome that Scripture has not unconditionally guaranteed. Proverbs 22:6 declares, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” This is a serious statement of wisdom concerning the importance and lasting influence of proper training. But the book of Proverbs contains general principles of wisdom, not a mechanical formula that eliminates the individual will of every child. The Bible does not teach that faithful parents possess the power to guarantee another person's salvation or obedience. Consider Samuel, who faithfully served the Lord yet had sons who did not follow his ways. First Samuel 8:3 declares that they turned aside after lucre, took bribes, and perverted judgment. **A godly upbringing is a tremendous blessing, but it does not remove the responsibility of the person who receives it.** Every child must eventually answer for his own choices.

This truth becomes especially important when children reach adulthood and begin making decisions that their parents cannot control. A mother may have taught Scripture, encouraged church attendance, corrected wrongdoing, and demonstrated sincere faith for many years. Yet a son or daughter may reject that instruction, pursue sin, or abandon fellowship with the Lord's people. Such circumstances bring genuine sorrow. They should also provoke honest examination where parental failures have occurred. But it is wrong to assume that every rebellious adult proves his mother was spiritually negligent. Romans 14:12 declares, “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” Personal accountability cannot be transferred indefinitely to one's parents. **A mother is responsible**

**to teach the truth; she is not given the authority to make every future decision for the child who has heard it.** There comes a time when instruction must stand before the conscience of the person who received it.

Luke 15 supplies a helpful illustration through the parable of the prodigal son. The father did not approve his younger son's foolishness, nor could he prevent the consequences of the son's chosen departure. The son wasted his substance, experienced severe hardship, and eventually came to himself. When he returned, the father received him with compassion. The parable belongs to Jesus' teaching in response to the complaints of Pharisees and scribes concerning His reception of sinners, and its original purpose should not be reduced to a universal parenting guarantee. Nevertheless, it illustrates the difference between condemning sin and refusing mercy to someone who turns from it. Parents should never pretend that rebellion is righteousness merely to preserve a superficial relationship. Neither should they imagine that bitterness, constant accusation, or humiliation will produce repentance. **A parent can leave the door open to genuine repentance without pretending that the pigpen is a respectable place to establish a permanent residence.** Truth and compassion must remain together.

**7. The Influence of Women Who Mother Beyond Childbirth**

The importance of maternal influence should never be reduced to the physical act of giving birth. Scripture contains women whose care, instruction, and faithfulness reached beyond their immediate biological relationships. Lois, Timothy's grandmother, is an obvious example. Her name appears in the record because her faith was connected with the spiritual background of her grandson. Ruth also demonstrated extraordinary devotion to Naomi, her mother-in-law, in circumstances marked by bereavement and uncertainty. Their relationship was not identical to a mother raising a young child, but it demonstrates the importance of faithful relationships extending beyond the narrowest definition of family. Women who care for adopted children, raise grandchildren, provide guardianship, or assist relatives facing difficult circumstances can exercise profound influence through their conduct and instruction. **The opportunity to nurture another life is not always delivered through a maternity ward. Sometimes it arrives through grief, necessity, sacrifice, and a responsibility nobody originally expected to carry.**

Titus 2:3–5 establishes another important form of spiritual responsibility. Paul instructs aged women to be teachers of good things and to teach younger women concerning their conduct and obligations. This is not an optional activity invented to occupy older members of a congregation. It is part of apostolic instruction concerning sound doctrine and godly behavior. A mature Christian woman may possess decades of biblical understanding, practical wisdom, and experience in the Lord's service. She can strengthen younger women

who are facing marriage difficulties, parenting responsibilities, personal temptation, or confusion concerning Scripture. Yet the teaching must remain grounded in God's word rather than the mere repetition of personal traditions. **Gray hair does not automatically produce sound doctrine, and a long history of church attendance does not transform personal opinions into commandments from God.** The older woman must first understand the truth she is responsible to communicate.

Unmarried women, widows, and women without children also possess valuable opportunities for Christian service. First Corinthians 7 recognizes that unmarried believers may have particular freedom to attend upon the things of the Lord without the same domestic obligations carried by married people. Their spiritual worth is not diminished by the absence of children or a wedding ring. Some women are especially able to teach younger believers, assist struggling families, practice hospitality, encourage children, and provide consistent examples of Christian character. Others face limitations that restrict the forms of service available to them. God has not given every woman identical circumstances. **A woman does not need to manufacture a family relationship in order to be useful to Christ, and a woman who has never raised a child may still influence young lives through faithful instruction and genuine kindness.** The body of Christ needs women who understand their responsibilities and willingly serve within them.

**Conclusion — The Scriptures a Mother Leaves Behind**

To the mother who has spent years repeating Bible verses, answering questions, correcting wrong behavior, and praying for children whose future she cannot see, do not despise the work God has placed before you. Some days will be exhausting. Some conversations will seem to accomplish very little. Some lessons will need to be repeated so often that you may wonder whether the child possesses ears or merely keeps them attached for decoration. Yet the responsibility remains worthwhile. Teach the Scriptures accurately. Explain the gospel plainly. Correct sin without cruelty. Admit your own failures when necessary. Encourage obedience without pretending that children are incapable of making foolish decisions. And remember that your responsibility concerns faithfulness to the Lord, not the production of a flawless family history. **The mother who teaches a child to recognize the voice of Scripture has given him something more valuable than the ability to recognize every fashionable voice in the world.** That truth may serve him long after her immediate instruction has ended.

To fathers, pastors, and congregations, there is a responsibility here as well. Do not place the entire burden of spiritual instruction upon mothers while excusing fathers from the commandments addressed directly to them. Ephesians 6:4 instructs fathers to bring children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Both parents should contribute

faithfully according to their responsibilities. Churches should strengthen families through sound doctrine rather than replacing parental instruction with shallow religious amusement. Older believers should encourage younger parents without making unrealistic promises concerning every child's future. And when mothers are grieving over children who have rejected the truth, they should receive biblical compassion rather than careless accusations. **The church ought to be a place where godly mothers are strengthened in their responsibility, not a courtroom where every struggling parent is automatically convicted of spiritual negligence.** Sound doctrine requires both personal accountability and genuine charity.

Return once more to Paul's words in Second Timothy 1:5. He remembered “the unfeigned faith” that dwelt first in Lois, then Eunice, and also in Timothy. That is the testimony preserved by inspiration. Two women whose public accomplishments are scarcely described became permanently associated with a minister whose faith and service mattered greatly to the apostle Paul. They remind us that the influence of a godly woman cannot always be measured while she is living. A child may not appreciate the instruction until years have passed. A mother may never know which Scripture will return to her son's memory during temptation or which lesson will strengthen her daughter during suffering. She may not witness every consequence of the prayers she offered and the example she lived. **A mother cannot give her child salvation, but she can give him the Scriptures that make him wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. She cannot promise that he will always walk in truth, but she can faithfully show him where that truth is found. The world may forget the woman who spent her years teaching children about God, but the Lord does not overlook faithfulness merely because it happened inside an ordinary home. Lois and Eunice left behind more than a family memory. They left a testimony of faith. And a mother who fills her children's lives with the word of God may be planting truths whose full harvest she will not see until she stands before the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**8 of 10 — Biblical Womanhood — Complete in Christ, Even Without a Wedding Ring**

**Key Passage — Colossians 2:10:** “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:”

There is a statement in Colossians 2:10 that ought to settle a considerable amount of religious foolishness concerning the worth of an unmarried Christian woman. The apostle Paul declares, “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”

Notice the expression. Complete in Him. Not complete when married. Not complete when motherhood begins. Not complete when somebody finally recognizes her usefulness, admires her appearance, or decides that her life satisfies the expectations of respectable society. Complete in Jesus Christ. Paul did not write those words to establish a new philosophy of female independence. He wrote them in the context of warning believers against philosophy, vain deceit, human tradition, and anything that would draw them away from the sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 9 declares that in Christ dwells "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Then comes the conclusion: believers are complete in Him. **If the Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient to make a sinner complete before God, it is rather difficult to argue that a wedding ring must finish the job.**

Somewhere along the way, certain people developed the idea that a woman's life remains an unfinished project until somebody walks her down a church aisle. A young woman reaches adulthood, and immediately the questions begin. Is she seeing anybody? Has she found a husband? When is she getting married? And if she happens to marry, the interrogation simply changes departments. Now the questions concern children, grandchildren, and whatever other achievements the religious inspection committee has decided must come next. Marriage is honorable, motherhood is a tremendous responsibility, and a godly family is worthy of sincere appreciation. But the Bible never established matrimony as the entrance examination for spiritual adulthood. The same apostle who instructed wives concerning submission also explained that unmarried believers possess particular opportunities for serving the Lord. Evidently, Paul had not received the announcement that an unmarried Christian was only half a person. **A woman does not become spiritually mature by acquiring a husband any more than a man becomes spiritually mature by acquiring a wife. Marriage joins two people together; it does not manufacture holiness.**

This subject deserves careful treatment because the circumstances involved are not all alike. Some women have never married and are content with that condition. Others desire marriage and have experienced disappointment through the passing years. Some are widows who remember decades of companionship and now face the silence left behind by death. Others have endured divorce, abandonment, betrayal, or circumstances they never imagined would become part of their lives. Some have children; others do not. It would be foolish to pretend that these women carry identical burdens simply because they do not presently possess husbands. Nevertheless, one doctrinal truth applies to every believing woman among them. Her standing before God rests upon Jesus Christ, not her domestic circumstances. **A woman's sorrow may be genuine, her loneliness may be difficult, and her unanswered questions may be numerous, but none of those things can diminish**

**the sufficiency of the Saviour who redeemed her.** The question is not whether marriage is good. The question is whether Christ is enough.

**1. Complete in Him — Not Waiting for Somebody Else to Finish Christ's Work**

Begin with the actual context of Colossians 2. Paul warns believers in verse 8, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” There is the danger. Human systems were threatening to draw believers away from the sufficiency of Christ and into religious ideas that added unnecessary requirements to their spiritual standing. Paul answers by declaring the fullness of the Godhead in Christ and the completeness of believers in Him. That completeness concerns their position through union with the Lord Jesus Christ. It does not mean every Christian has already reached perfect maturity in practical conduct. Believers must still grow in grace, study Scripture, and put away sin. But their acceptance before God does not require something to be supplied by another human being. **The believer is complete in Christ because Christ is sufficient, not because the believer has managed to assemble an impressive earthly life.**

Consider what this means for a Christian woman. Ephesians 1:6 declares that believers are “accepted in the beloved.” Ephesians 1:13 teaches that those who believed the gospel were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Romans 8:17 identifies the children of God as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. These spiritual blessings do not carry separate qualifications requiring women to marry before receiving them. A believing widow does not lose her inheritance because her husband has died. An unmarried woman does not receive a smaller portion of the Holy Spirit. A divorced woman who genuinely belongs to Christ has not been removed from His body merely because her marriage ended. None of this excuses sinful conduct or abolishes biblical marriage instructions. It establishes the location of the believer's spiritual security. **A woman's relationship to Christ is not an extension of her relationship to a man. Her salvation rests upon the blood of Jesus Christ and the promises of God.**

Now do not confuse completeness in Christ with the ridiculous notion that a Christian ought never to need anybody. God created human beings for relationships, and the body of Christ depends upon members caring for one another. First Corinthians 12:21 declares that the eye cannot say unto the hand, “I have no need of thee.” Completeness in Christ does not make friendship, companionship, counsel, or marriage unnecessary in every circumstance. Nor does it make the desire for a husband sinful. A woman may earnestly desire marriage while remaining entirely secure in her standing before God. The distinction concerns spiritual position and earthly experience. **Christ completes the believer's standing before God; marriage provides a particular earthly relationship with its own**

**blessings and responsibilities.** Those are two different matters. A husband may become a wonderful companion, but he was never appointed to become a woman's substitute saviour.

**2. The Unmarried Woman and the Undistracted Life**

First Corinthians 7:32–35 provides some of the clearest New Testament instruction concerning the opportunities available to unmarried believers. Paul writes, “But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord.” He then explains the different responsibilities ordinarily connected with marriage and the unmarried condition. Verse 34 declares that the unmarried woman cares for the things of the Lord, “that she may be holy both in body and in spirit,” while the married woman is concerned with how she may please her husband. Paul is not insulting marriage or accusing married women of spiritual inferiority. He is recognizing a practical difference in responsibilities. Marriage creates obligations that an unmarried believer does not possess in precisely the same way. **The unmarried woman may have opportunities for service that would be considerably more difficult if she were responsible for a husband and children.** Scripture recognizes that freedom as useful rather than shameful.

The context matters enormously. Earlier in the chapter, Paul discusses marriage, singleness, self-control, and various circumstances confronting believers. In verse 26, he refers to “the present distress,” and his counsel must be understood in relation to those circumstances. He does not establish a universal command that every Christian must remain unmarried. First Corinthians 7:7 recognizes different gifts and circumstances, while verse 28 plainly states that marrying is not sin. Then verse 35 explains his purpose: “not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.” Notice that Paul expressly denies any intention of placing a trap upon believers. That is a rather inconvenient statement for religious people determined to turn his counsel into another collection of compulsory regulations. **The apostle presents genuine advantages of singleness without transforming marriage into wickedness or unmarried believers into a superior spiritual caste.** Both conditions carry opportunities and obligations.

What might these opportunities involve? An unmarried woman may possess greater flexibility to assist in church ministries, travel for legitimate service, care for relatives, study Scripture, practice hospitality, or help believers facing practical difficulties. Another unmarried woman may have extensive obligations involving employment, elderly parents, dependent relatives, or financial responsibilities, leaving her with relatively little discretionary time. Singleness does not automatically produce a carefree life. Neither does

it guarantee spiritual devotion. A person can remain unmarried and still waste enormous amounts of time pursuing vanity and selfish ambition. Paul identifies an opportunity, not an automatic accomplishment. **Freedom from marital obligations becomes spiritually valuable when that freedom is used wisely. A calendar filled with personal entertainment is not evidence of devotion merely because no husband appears on the schedule.** The unmarried believer must deliberately decide how to serve Christ with the circumstances entrusted to her.

**3. Anna — A Widow Who Did Not Retire from Serving God**

Luke 2:36 introduces an elderly woman named Anna, described as a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser. Scripture records that she had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity and was a widow of about fourscore and four years. The text emphasizes her advanced age and her long experience of widowhood. Her circumstances belonged to Israel under the law, during the period surrounding the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. She is not presented as a New Testament church member holding an office in the body of Christ. That distinction matters. Nevertheless, the Holy Ghost deliberately preserved her testimony, and the account reveals something extraordinary about her character. **Anna had experienced marriage, endured the loss of her husband, and continued serving the Lord rather than allowing widowhood to become the end of her spiritual usefulness.** Her life had changed, but her responsibility toward God had not disappeared.

Luke 2:37 declares that Anna “departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.” There is a remarkable description of devotion. Anna's husband was gone, but the Lord remained worthy of her worship. Her domestic circumstances had changed, but her faithfulness continued. She did not possess a public ministry comparable to an apostle, nor does the passage describe her as establishing an independent religious institution. She served God within the circumstances and dispensational setting of her life. Nobody should take her temple service and manufacture a command requiring Christian widows to spend every waking hour inside a church building. The Temple belonged to Israel's worship under the law. But the principle of continued devotion deserves serious attention. **A woman may lose the companion who shared much of her earthly life without losing the Lord who gives that life its eternal significance.** Widowhood changes responsibilities; it does not abolish the possibility of faithfulness.

Then comes the extraordinary moment in Luke 2:38. Anna entered while the infant Jesus was present, gave thanks unto the Lord, and “spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” Consider that testimony. An elderly widow became one of the people who publicly recognized the significance of the promised Christ's arrival. She had

been waiting for the consolation and redemption associated with Israel's hope, and the Lord permitted her to witness a remarkable event. The passage does not promise every Christian widow a comparable experience, nor should Israel's prophetic expectations be confused with the Church's heavenly calling. But the account demonstrates that the Lord had not forgotten Anna because her husband was dead or her strength had diminished. **The world might have considered her useful years finished. God placed her in the inspired record standing near the beginning of the earthly life of the promised Messiah.** That is a considerably better assessment of an elderly woman's worth.

**4. Dorcas — The Woman Whose Good Works Spoke After Her Death**

Acts 9:36 introduces another remarkable woman: “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.” Notice how Scripture identifies her. She was a disciple, and her life was characterized by good works and charitable deeds. The passage does not tell us whether Dorcas was married, unmarried, or widowed. We have no authority to invent a marital history simply because her ministry involved widows. What the Bible does tell us is more than sufficient. This woman was known for helping others. Her character was demonstrated through actual service rather than religious advertisement. **Dorcas did not need somebody to publish a flattering description of her spirituality. The evidence was hanging in the wardrobes of people she had helped.** That is a testimony considerably more substantial than announcing how generous one intends to become.

When Dorcas died, the believers sent for Peter. Acts 9:39 records that the widows stood beside him weeping and showing “the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.” That is one of the most moving pictures of practical Christian service in the book of Acts. These women were not gathering to admire Dorcas's social position, fashionable appearance, or impressive accomplishments. They were holding the physical evidence of her kindness. The clothing she had made testified to a life spent meeting genuine needs. Peter then raised Dorcas from the dead through the extraordinary power of God manifested during the apostolic ministry. That miracle belongs to the historical account in Acts and must not be converted into a universal promise that every deceased believer will be restored to earthly life through another Christian's intervention. **The miracle was extraordinary, but the charity preceding it was something ordinary believers could understand and imitate.** Dorcas had served faithfully before Peter ever arrived.

There is a lesson here for women who wonder whether their abilities are sufficiently impressive to become useful to Christ. Not everybody can teach large classes, travel

extensively, manage substantial financial resources, or perform highly visible ministries. But many can prepare meals, make clothing, visit the lonely, encourage the sick, assist struggling families, and meet practical needs. Others possess different abilities and opportunities. The Lord does not distribute identical gifts or circumstances to every member of His body. First Corinthians 12 teaches that the body contains many members performing different functions. A woman should not despise her usefulness because it does not resemble somebody else's ministry. Neither should she imagine that an ordinary ability becomes worthless when performed without applause. **A needle in the hand of Dorcas accomplished more genuine Christian service than a thousand impressive religious speeches that never lifted a finger to help anybody.** Faithful service is measured by obedience, not publicity.

**5. Widows, Divorced Women, and the Burdens Nobody Sees**

First Timothy 5:3 commands, “Honour widows that are widows indeed.” That instruction ought to be read carefully by any congregation that claims to respect biblical womanhood. Paul does not treat widows as unnecessary people whose usefulness disappeared at their husbands' funerals. He establishes responsibilities concerning their care, identifies family obligations, and distinguishes those genuinely dependent upon assistance from situations where relatives should provide support. Verse 4 instructs children and other descendants to demonstrate proper care toward their own families. Verse 5 describes the widow indeed as one who trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers. These instructions concern real women facing real material needs, not merely an opportunity for churches to deliver sentimental speeches about compassion. **It is possible to praise the faithfulness of widows from the pulpit while completely ignoring the widows sitting in the congregation. Scripture does not commend that arrangement.** Honour requires more than polite words.

The death of a husband may leave responsibilities that previously belonged to two people resting upon one woman's shoulders. Financial decisions, household repairs, family obligations, loneliness, and grief may arrive together without the slightest concern for whether she feels prepared. Some widows have years of experience managing these affairs; others must learn unfamiliar responsibilities during a season of sorrow. Christian friends and relatives ought to offer practical assistance without treating a widow like an incapable child. Nor should anyone assume that remarriage is required for her to regain a meaningful life. First Corinthians 7:39 recognizes a widow's liberty to marry again, “only in the Lord,” while verse 40 also acknowledges the possibility of remaining unmarried. Both conditions are addressed without requiring the woman to satisfy everybody else's expectations. **A widow may honor the memory of her husband without making grief her**

**permanent identity, and she may continue faithfully serving Christ whether or not another marriage ever occurs.** The Lord remains her God through every change.

Divorced women may carry different burdens, including broken trust, financial difficulties, painful memories, and complicated family responsibilities. Scripture addresses marriage, separation, divorce, and remarriage in passages requiring careful doctrinal treatment, including First Corinthians 7. Those questions should never be settled through careless generalizations or by pretending that every circumstance is identical. Sin must be called sin where Scripture identifies it, and wrongdoing must not be excused merely because somebody has suffered. Yet neither should a woman be permanently defined by the destruction of her marriage, especially when another person's misconduct contributed to that destruction. A divorced Christian woman remains responsible for her conduct before God, but her standing in Christ is not determined by whether another human being fulfilled his marriage vows. **A broken marriage is a serious earthly matter, but it does not possess greater authority than the finished work of Jesus Christ.** The Church must teach marriage faithfully while dealing with wounded people truthfully and compassionately.

**6. Contentment Without Pretending Loneliness Does Not Hurt**

Philippians 4:11 records Paul's declaration, “for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” Notice that expression: “I have learned.” Contentment was not presented as a magical feeling that arrived automatically the moment circumstances became unpleasant. Paul had experienced both abundance and need, and he had learned to depend upon the Lord through changing conditions. Verse 13 declares, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” The immediate context concerns endurance through material circumstances, not a promise that believers can accomplish every ambition they happen to imagine. An unmarried woman can learn contentment without pretending she has never desired companionship. A widow can remain faithful while acknowledging the sorrow of her loss. **Contentment is not the denial of legitimate desire. It is the refusal to allow an unfulfilled desire to become the ruler of one's life.** That distinction protects both honesty and godliness.

Loneliness is a genuine burden, and Scripture never requires Christians to pretend otherwise. In Genesis 2:18, before sin entered the world, God declared that it was not good for the man to be alone. That statement concerns the establishment of marriage, but it demonstrates that human companionship belongs to God's wise creation. The New Testament likewise emphasizes fellowship, mutual care, hospitality, and the responsibilities believers owe one another. Romans 12:10 commands Christians to be “kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.”

First Corinthians 12:26 teaches that when one member suffers, the members suffer together. These instructions are not decorations to be admired while lonely believers remain unnoticed. **Telling an isolated woman that Jesus is all she needs while refusing to offer Christian friendship may sound spiritual, but it is a rather poor demonstration of the brotherly love the New Testament commands.** The Church should practice the fellowship it preaches.

At the same time, loneliness must never become permission to abandon biblical discernment. A woman who desires marriage should not conclude that any man is preferable to remaining unmarried. Second Corinthians 6:14 warns believers against being unequally yoked together with unbelievers, and First Corinthians 7:39 specifically requires marriage “only in the Lord” in its instruction concerning widows. An ungodly relationship will not become righteous merely because it provides temporary companionship. Nor should a woman surrender her conscience, neglect warning signs, or tolerate sinful treatment because she fears being alone. Christian friendship, wise counsel, meaningful service, prayer, and legitimate family relationships can provide valuable companionship without requiring marriage. **Desperation is a poor matchmaker, and loneliness is a dangerous counselor when it begins overruling the Scriptures.** A woman should seek what is right before God rather than allowing the fear of an empty house to push her into a relationship that dishonors Christ.

**7. A Life Worth Living and a Saviour Worth Serving**

The New Testament provides substantial evidence that women's usefulness in the Church was never limited to their marital status. Romans 16 records Paul's commendation of Phebe, his helpers Priscilla and Aquila, Mary who bestowed much labor, and other women associated with service to the Lord. The passage does not supply the marital histories of every woman mentioned, and we must not invent details that Scripture leaves unstated. Nevertheless, their service is publicly recognized. Titus 2 instructs older women to teach younger women. Acts 18:26 records Priscilla participating with Aquila in explaining the way of God more perfectly to Apollos. These accounts do not overturn New Testament qualifications concerning the pastoral office or abolish God's order within the congregation. **They do demonstrate that a woman does not need to become a wife, a mother, or a pastor before she can be useful in the work of Jesus Christ.** Faithful service has many legitimate forms.

There is also an important distinction between earthly achievement and eternal reward. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares that believers must appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive according to the things done in the body, whether good or bad. The judgment seat concerns the examination of believers' service, not a second trial

determining whether Christ's finished work was sufficient to save them. Ephesians 2:8–10 establishes the proper order: salvation by grace through faith, followed by good works for which believers have been created in Christ Jesus. A Christian woman should therefore use her abilities faithfully without attempting to earn salvation through activity. Her service may involve public responsibility or almost entirely unnoticed labor. The Lord knows the circumstances, opportunities, motives, and conduct of His servants. **Heaven will not need to consult a woman's marriage certificate before examining whether she faithfully served the Saviour who redeemed her.** Christ is interested in obedience, not the social ranking assigned by human observers.

Finally, remember that every earthly relationship belongs to a temporary order that will not continue unchanged into eternity. In Matthew 22:30, the Lord Jesus Christ explained that in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. He was answering the Sadducees concerning the resurrection, and the passage must not be used to despise marriage in the present life. Marriage is honorable, and the relationships God establishes deserve faithfulness. But marriage is not the ultimate purpose of human existence. The Christian's eternal hope rests upon Jesus Christ and the redemption He has provided. Philippians 3:20–21 directs believers toward the heavenly Saviour who will change their vile body to be fashioned like unto His glorious body. **The wedding ring is an earthly blessing for those who possess it. The redemption purchased by Jesus Christ is an eternal inheritance for everyone who belongs to Him.** Only one of those relationships determines the believer's eternal standing before God.

**Conclusion — A Whole Life in a Complete Saviour**

To the woman who has never married, there is no reason to apologize for your existence. To the widow whose house became painfully quiet after years of companionship, the Lord has not forgotten you. To the woman whose marriage ended amid circumstances you would never have chosen, your life is not beyond faithful service. To the woman who desired children but never had them, your absence of motherhood does not make you a spiritual failure. And to the woman who has chosen to remain unmarried in order to devote herself more freely to the things of the Lord, the New Testament expressly recognizes the usefulness of that opportunity. None of these circumstances makes obedience unnecessary, and none guarantees an easy life. But none can alter the truth declared in Colossians 2:10. **A believing woman does not need to manufacture a different life before she can begin living faithfully in the one God has entrusted to her.** Her responsibilities are real, her opportunities matter, and her Saviour is sufficient.

The Church also needs to reconsider how it treats women in different seasons of life. Marriage and motherhood should be honored without becoming measures of spiritual

superiority. Widows should receive practical consideration rather than occasional sentimental attention. Unmarried women should be included in genuine Christian fellowship instead of treated as unfinished family projects. Divorced women should receive sound biblical instruction without being reduced to a permanent label. Older women should be encouraged to exercise the ministries Scripture permits, and younger women should be taught to pursue godliness rather than merely earthly recognition. **A congregation that knows how to celebrate weddings but does not know how to care for widows has understood only part of its responsibility. A church that praises family life while neglecting unmarried believers has confused one blessing of God with the entire purpose of Christian fellowship.** The body of Christ contains many members, and every member matters to the Head.

Return once more to the declaration with which we began: “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” There stands the final verdict. Not incomplete because no husband is present. Not spiritually defective because no children have been born. Not forgotten because a marriage ended, a husband died, or the years passed without the companionship once desired. Complete in Jesus Christ. That does not eliminate earthly sorrow, remove every responsibility, or excuse the believer from growing in holiness. It establishes the foundation beneath everything else. The same Saviour who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures is sufficient to save the unmarried woman, the wife, the mother, the widow, and every other sinner who comes to Him by faith. **Marriage may be a wonderful blessing, but it is a miserable substitute for a Saviour. A husband may share a woman's earthly journey, but he cannot purchase her redemption, secure her inheritance, or guarantee her eternal life. Jesus Christ has accomplished what no earthly relationship could ever accomplish. The woman who belongs to Him is not an unfinished life waiting for somebody to make her whole. She is complete in Christ, and the Lord who saved her has given her every reason to live faithfully until she sees Him face to face.**

**9 of 10 — Biblical Womanhood — The Women Who Labour in the Gospel: Gifted, Needed, and Faithful to God’s Order**

**Key Passage — Romans 16:1–2:** “I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.”

There is something remarkable about the sixteenth chapter of Romans that ought to embarrass a considerable number of people who have confused biblical womanhood with spiritual uselessness. The apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, closes one of the greatest doctrinal books in the New Testament by acknowledging individuals who had contributed to the work of Jesus Christ. And right there among the names are women. Not women whom Paul considered embarrassing exceptions to the divine arrangement. Not women whose usefulness he attempted to conceal. Not women whose service required an apology before their names could appear in Scripture. He commended them. Romans 16:1 begins, “I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea.” Apparently, the apostle who wrote First Timothy 2 also understood that faithful women had meaningful work to perform for the Lord. **The same Holy Ghost who established order in the Church also preserved the names of women who laboured faithfully within it.**

Our generation has managed to manufacture two opposite errors concerning women in Christian ministry, and both errors are capable of doing considerable damage. On one side stands the crowd determined to erase every distinction God established concerning authority, teaching, and the pastoral office. They approach the Scriptures with a pair of scissors, carefully removing whatever interferes with their preferred arrangement. On the other side stands a collection of religious authorities who behave as though the New Testament instructed women to sit quietly, remain uninformed, and occasionally provide refreshments while the men accomplish everything important. Evidently, those fellows can locate First Timothy 2 without difficulty but require a search party to find Romans 16. One group abolishes God's order; the other reduces women's usefulness beyond what God commanded. **The Bible does not need correcting from either direction. God's instructions concerning authority are just as inspired as His commendations of faithful women, and both belong in the same doctrine.**

The Christian woman who desires to serve Jesus Christ should not be required to surrender her femininity, imitate a man, violate Scripture, or occupy an office God has not authorized her to hold. Neither should she imagine that her usefulness begins and ends with providing assistance to somebody whose work appears more impressive. The New Testament recognizes women engaged in instruction, charitable service, hospitality, gospel labour, encouragement, and practical assistance to churches and ministers. Some possessed financial resources. Others possessed knowledge of Scripture. Some opened their homes. Others devoted themselves to difficult work that received little public recognition. The circumstances differed, but their faithfulness mattered. **The Lord did not distribute identical responsibilities to every member of His body, and He certainly did not declare half the congregation unnecessary simply because He established**

**distinctions in its government.** The church needs women who understand sound doctrine, exercise spiritual discernment, honor biblical authority, and willingly labor for the Saviour who redeemed them.

**1. Phebe — A Servant Whose Faithfulness Paul Publicly Commended**

Begin where Romans 16 begins. Paul introduces Phebe as "our sister," identifying her fellowship with believers in Jesus Christ. Then he calls her "a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea." Notice the plain wording. She was connected with a particular congregation, and her service was sufficiently recognized that Paul commended her to the believers at Rome. That is not a small statement. The apostle was not casually mentioning somebody who happened to attend a religious gathering. He was identifying a woman whose faithfulness had become important to the work. The passage does not tell us every responsibility she performed, and we have no authority to invent a detailed account of her ministry. But we know she served. We know Paul approved her service. We know the Roman believers were instructed to receive her properly. **A woman does not need an impressive religious title when her faithfulness has already earned the commendation of an apostle writing under inspiration.**

Romans 16:2 becomes even more interesting. Paul instructs the believers to receive Phebe "as becometh saints" and assist her in whatever business she might need from them. Then he explains why: "for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." There is an expression worth examining. Phebe had helped many people, including Paul himself. Whatever the precise circumstances of her assistance, the apostle recognized her as somebody who had provided meaningful support. Evidently, Paul did not consider receiving help from a godly woman a threat to his masculinity or apostolic authority. He was sufficiently grateful to record the matter publicly. **A man who thinks accepting useful assistance from a Christian woman diminishes his authority may possess considerably more pride than biblical understanding.** Paul knew the difference between receiving help and surrendering the responsibilities Christ had assigned to him.

Now we must avoid an opposite exaggeration. Some have attempted to turn Phebe's description as a servant into proof that the restrictions concerning church office have been abolished. But the text itself does not establish that conclusion. Paul calls her a servant and a succourer, and those descriptions ought to be allowed to stand without attaching an entire ecclesiastical system to them. First Timothy 3 establishes qualifications for bishops and deacons, and its instructions must be considered according to their own wording and context. Phebe's service should neither be diminished nor inflated beyond what Scripture reveals. That is what rightly dividing the word of truth requires. **A woman's service does not become more honorable because somebody gives it a title God never assigned,**

**and it does not become less honorable because somebody refuses to acknowledge what Scripture plainly records.** Phebe was useful, respected, and commended. That is sufficient reason to appreciate her testimony.

**2. Priscilla — A Woman Who Knew Her Bible and Helped Others Understand It**

Acts 18 introduces Aquila and Priscilla, a married couple whose lives became closely connected with Paul's ministry. They had come from Italy after Claudius commanded Jews to depart from Rome, and Paul encountered them at Corinth. Acts 18:3 explains that they shared the same craft, being tentmakers. Here were a husband and wife who understood practical labor and who became valuable companions in the work of the gospel. Later, Acts 18:24 introduces Apollos, a Jew born at Alexandria, described as an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures. He was fervent in spirit and taught diligently the things of the Lord, although his understanding was limited to the baptism of John. The man possessed genuine knowledge, but his instruction required further development. **Being eloquent is not the same thing as possessing complete understanding, and a powerful delivery cannot supply doctrine that the speaker has not yet learned.** Apollos needed additional instruction, regardless of how impressive his speaking ability appeared.

Acts 18:26 records what happened when Aquila and Priscilla heard Apollos speaking boldly in the synagogue. Scripture declares, “they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.” Notice the arrangement. The husband and wife acted together, and the text credits both with participating in the explanation. They did not establish Priscilla as the bishop over Apollos, nor does the passage describe her taking command of a congregation. They took him unto them and explained the way of God more perfectly. There is a difference between helping someone understand Scripture and assuming an office of authority forbidden elsewhere in the New Testament. **The woman who knows sound doctrine is not committing rebellion merely because she can explain the Bible accurately to someone who needs instruction.** But neither does that example erase Paul's explicit instructions concerning authoritative teaching and church government.

Romans 16:3–5 supplies further information about this remarkable couple. Paul calls Priscilla and Aquila “my helpers in Christ Jesus” and declares that they had laid down their own necks for his life. Their service involved more than casual religious enthusiasm. They had exposed themselves to genuine danger in connection with the apostle's work. Paul also refers to the church meeting in their house, demonstrating the practical contribution of their household to Christian fellowship. Priscilla was not presented as a rebellious woman competing against her husband. Neither was she portrayed as an ignorant ornament attached to his ministry. They were helpers together. **A godly marriage can**

**become a tremendous instrument in the Lord's work when the husband and wife stop treating their abilities as competing claims to importance and begin using them for the glory of Christ.** Priscilla's testimony remains an outstanding example of a knowledgeable, capable, faithful Christian woman.

**3. Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis — The Women Who Actually Laboured**

Romans 16:6 contains a short statement that speaks volumes: "Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us." That is all the biographical information supplied in the verse, but the description is significant. Mary laboured. Not merely attended, admired, applauded, or offered occasional compliments concerning the ministry. She bestowed much labour. The apostle regarded her contribution as worthy of public acknowledgment in an inspired letter. We do not know the precise nature of every task she performed. She may have assisted believers through practical service, hospitality, or other forms of work, but Scripture does not authorize us to invent the particulars. What we know is enough. **The Holy Ghost did not preserve Mary's name because she possessed an impressive position on a religious committee. Her name was connected with labor that actually benefited others.** There is an important difference between being associated with a ministry and contributing meaningfully to its work.

Then read Romans 16:12: "Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord." Notice the repeated emphasis upon labor. Tryphena and Tryphosa are described as women who labor in the Lord, while Persis is recognized as one who labored much. The Holy Ghost did not provide extensive biographies, but He preserved their names and the character of their service. That ought to encourage every Christian woman whose responsibilities seldom receive public attention. The Lord sees the hours spent encouraging the discouraged, assisting struggling believers, preparing necessary materials, and meeting practical needs. **The world measures ministry by the size of the platform. God is capable of measuring faithfulness when nobody has built a platform at all.** A woman does not need to turn her service into a public performance before the Lord recognizes the work she has accomplished.

Philippians 4:2–3 adds another valuable lesson. Paul addresses Euodias and Syntyche, urging them to be of the same mind in the Lord, and then asks his true yokefellow to help "those women which laboured with me in the gospel." These women had served alongside Paul, yet they also required correction concerning their relationship with one another. There is a remarkable balance. Their past labor did not exempt them from present responsibility, and their present disagreement did not cause Paul to erase the usefulness of their former service. Evidently, mature Christian judgment can recognize faithful work while addressing conduct that needs correction. **The Lord's work is not strengthened by**

**pretending faithful servants are incapable of sin, and it is not strengthened by treating every disagreement as proof that their entire testimony was worthless.** Godly women must practice humility, charity, and unity while continuing to labor in the gospel.

**4. Teachers of Good Things — The Ministry God Specifically Assigned to Women**

Titus 2:3–5 establishes a responsibility that nobody has the authority to dismiss. Paul instructs aged women to be "in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things." Then he explains that they are to teach younger women concerning sobriety, love for husbands and children, discretion, chastity, household responsibility, goodness, and obedience within marriage. The passage belongs to Paul's instructions to Titus concerning sound doctrine and proper conduct within the congregation. It is not a collection of optional suggestions for women who happen to enjoy teaching. The aged women are given a definite responsibility to instruct younger women. **The same apostle who established restrictions concerning women teaching with authority over men also expressly commanded mature women to teach in the sphere God assigned to them.** Apparently, Paul was capable of understanding both instructions without requiring somebody to correct his theology.

But notice the qualifications preceding that instruction. The aged women must demonstrate conduct becoming holiness. They must not be false accusers or enslaved to excess. Their teaching must concern good things, not malicious gossip, personal bitterness, or religious traditions invented to control younger women. A woman who has spent forty years attending church does not automatically become qualified to instruct others merely because her birthday candles have become a fire hazard. She must possess sound judgment, godly character, and knowledge of Scripture. The younger woman also bears responsibility to receive biblical instruction rather than dismissing older believers simply because their experiences belong to another generation. **The older woman must not confuse experience with infallibility, and the younger woman must not confuse youth with wisdom.** Both need the word of God governing their conduct, and the result should be instruction that strengthens families and honors Christ.

Consider the opportunity for women to teach children. Second Timothy 1:5 remembers the unfeigned faith associated with Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Second Timothy 3:15 declares that Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures from childhood, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The passage does not describe every conversation that occurred in his family, but the influence of godly instruction is unmistakable. A woman teaching children the Scriptures may be laying foundations that will influence lives far beyond her own household. Yet the teaching must be accurate. Children need more than entertaining Bible stories and religious expressions

that never explain the gospel. They need to understand sin, judgment, grace, faith, the death and resurrection of Christ, and the importance of rightly dividing Scripture. **A woman who teaches a child to distinguish truth from error is doing considerably more than occupying an hour of his attention. She is helping furnish his mind with something the world will spend years attempting to overthrow.**

**5. Open Doors, Willing Hands, and the Gospel That Must Be Heard**

Acts 16 introduces Lydia, a seller of purple from Thyatira, who heard Paul speak during his ministry at Philippi. Verse 14 declares that the Lord opened her heart to attend unto the things spoken by Paul. Her business activity did not save her, and her material resources did not purchase the grace of God. She heard the truth and responded to the Lord's work in her heart. After her baptism, she opened her household to Paul and his companions, urging them to abide there. Later, Acts 16:40 records Paul and Silas entering her house, where they saw the brethren and comforted them before departing. The account reveals the practical importance of hospitality in the spread of the gospel. **Lydia did not have to become the preacher in order to help the preachers. She used the resources and opportunities available to her in a manner that served the Lord's work.** That is meaningful ministry.

Acts 9:36 describes Dorcas as a disciple “full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.” When she died, the widows stood before Peter showing the garments she had made while she was with them. Her life had produced visible evidence of charity. The passage records Peter raising her from the dead, an extraordinary miracle belonging to the apostolic ministry, but her charitable work deserves attention independently of that event. Dorcas had helped people through the abilities she possessed. There is something instructive about a woman whose testimony could be demonstrated without producing a lengthy description of her religious accomplishments. **Her good works had become garments on the backs of people who needed them. That is a sermon with sleeves attached.** Not every ministry requires a microphone, and not every act of service must be transformed into a public announcement. The Lord knows what His servants accomplish in secret.

Then there is the responsibility of witnessing to the lost. First Corinthians 15:3–4 establishes the gospel: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Salvation is by grace through faith, not by works, as Ephesians 2:8–9 plainly declares. A Christian woman does not require ordination to explain that gospel to an unbelieving neighbor, teach it to her children, or answer a sincere question about salvation. The qualifications for pastoral authority do not constitute a prohibition against ordinary Christian witness. Women may assist missionaries, provide hospitality, distribute sound biblical instruction, support evangelistic

work, and speak truth concerning the Saviour who redeemed them. **The gospel does not become less true because a woman explains it, and the blood of Christ does not become less powerful because the witness is somebody's mother, grandmother, or sister.** The message derives its authority from God, not the earthly importance of its messenger.

**6. God's Order — The Boundary That Does Not Cancel the Work**

Now we must address the passages that modern religious movements frequently attempt to explain away. First Timothy 2:11–12 declares, “Let the woman 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.” The passage concerns instruction and authority within the order of the Church. Paul continues by referring to Adam and Eve, grounding his argument in the creation account rather than presenting it as a temporary arrangement created by fashionable customs. The restriction cannot honestly be dismissed merely because modern society considers biblical distinctions inconvenient. The apostle's instruction must be received as Scripture. **God did not ask the twenty-first century to vote upon whether His order should remain in force. A congregation has no authority to overturn an apostolic command simply because the surrounding culture has adopted a different arrangement.** Sound doctrine begins with submission to the word of God.

First Timothy 3:1–7 then establishes the qualifications of a bishop, including the requirement that he be “the husband of one wife” and that he rule his own house well. These qualifications identify the pastoral office and its responsibilities. The issue is not whether women are less intelligent, less spiritual, or less capable of understanding Scripture. Spiritual gifts and natural abilities do not authorize believers to disregard the qualifications God established for a particular office. Yet neither does this restriction abolish the legitimate ministry of women. Paul recognized Phebe's service, commended Priscilla's assistance, praised women who labored in the Lord, and commanded older women to teach younger women. **The Bible is perfectly consistent when it restricts one office while commending many forms of service. The contradiction exists only in the mind of somebody who imagines that usefulness requires occupying the highest position available.** The body of Christ contains different members with different responsibilities.

First Corinthians 14:34–35 also addresses women keeping silence in the churches, within a chapter concerned with order in the assembled congregation, spiritual gifts, and the prevention of confusion. Verse 40 concludes, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” The passage must be honored without stretching its application beyond the instruction actually given. It is not a command forbidding a woman from singing congregational

hymns, speaking the gospel to an unbeliever, teaching younger women, or exercising hospitality. First Corinthians 11:5 also refers to women praying or prophesying, a passage requiring its own historical and doctrinal examination rather than being ignored. The existence of such passages demands careful distinctions concerning circumstances and authority. **The Christian woman should not seek an office God has withheld, and the Christian man should not invent additional prohibitions God never commanded. Both errors substitute human preference for divine revelation.** God's order must be preserved precisely because His word is authoritative.

**7. Many Members, One Body, and a Lord Who Will Examine the Work**

First Corinthians 12 establishes an important principle concerning the body of Christ. Verse 12 declares that the body is one while possessing many members, and verse 13 explains that believers are baptized by one Spirit into one body. The chapter goes on to describe different members fulfilling different functions. Verse 18 declares, “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” There stands a necessary correction to the competitive spirit that sometimes invades Christian service. Not every believer occupies the same position, possesses identical abilities, or performs the same responsibilities. Yet the diversity of functions does not mean certain members are unnecessary. Verse 21 declares that the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of thee.” **A congregation that treats faithful women as unnecessary has forgotten that the body of Christ does not consist exclusively of the members who stand behind the pulpit.** Every believer has responsibilities toward the Lord.

Romans 12:4–8 likewise explains that believers possess differing gifts and should use them according to the grace given. The passage includes ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, and showing mercy, each exercised within the order established by Scripture. A Christian woman should therefore examine the opportunities legitimately available to her and seek to serve faithfully rather than comparing her responsibilities with somebody else's. She may teach children, disciple younger women, assist families in need, encourage believers, exercise hospitality, contribute resources, or participate in evangelistic efforts. Another woman may face illness, disability, age, or family responsibilities limiting the work she can perform. None of those circumstances justifies despising sincere faithfulness. **The Lord does not require every Christian woman to accomplish the same work. He requires every Christian to obey the truth according to the responsibilities actually entrusted to that life.** Faithfulness matters more than visibility.

Finally, every discussion of Christian ministry must preserve the difference between salvation and service. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares that believers are saved by grace through faith, “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Verse 10 then explains that believers are

created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The order is unmistakable. No woman earns eternal life through teaching, hospitality, charitable activity, evangelism, or tireless church service. Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. The sinner receives salvation through faith in Him, and faithful service follows as part of the Christian life. Second Corinthians 5:10 reminds believers that they must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. **The Lord will not examine His servants according to which one possessed the most impressive title on earth. He knows their opportunities, their obedience, their motives, and their faithfulness.** A woman who labored quietly for Christ has no reason to believe her work escaped His attention.

**Conclusion — Women Who Understand Their Place and Refuse to Waste It**

To the Christian woman who desires to serve the Lord, do not allow the world's rebellion to convince you that usefulness requires abandoning God's order. Neither should you permit religious exaggeration to persuade you that your service is insignificant because you do not occupy the pastoral office. Study the King James Bible. Learn sound doctrine. Develop discernment. Cultivate the gifts and abilities God has entrusted to you. Teach where Scripture authorizes you to teach. Witness to the lost. Encourage believers. Assist the needy. Practice hospitality. Support faithful gospel work. And never mistake the absence of public recognition for the absence of spiritual value. **The Lord who remembered Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, and Phebe has not suddenly become incapable of recognizing the faithful labor of Christian women today.** Their testimonies were preserved because their work mattered, and the same Lord continues to examine the faithfulness of His servants.

To pastors, husbands, fathers, and Christian men generally, the responsibility is equally serious. Teach the biblical distinctions concerning church authority without using them as an excuse to belittle women. Encourage mature women to fulfill the teaching responsibilities established in Titus 2. Recognize the assistance of women who strengthen ministries through service, sacrifice, and practical labor. Do not take their faithfulness for granted while reserving every expression of appreciation for those whose work happens to be publicly visible. Nor should you surrender clear biblical doctrine merely to satisfy modern expectations. **A church that abandons God's order has no authority to call its rebellion progress, and a church that despises faithful women has no authority to call its contempt biblical manhood.** Both errors dishonor the Scriptures. Paul maintained the boundaries and commended the workers. The modern church should possess enough biblical sense to do likewise.

Return once more to Romans 16 and read the names. Phebe. Priscilla. Mary. Tryphena. Tryphosa. Persis. These women lived in different circumstances and performed different

kinds of service, but the apostle recognized their contributions to the work of Jesus Christ. Their names stand in the inspired Scriptures, not because they overturned God's order, but because they served within the responsibilities and opportunities entrusted to them. The Church does not need women attempting to become men, nor does it need women convinced that their spiritual usefulness begins and ends with sitting quietly while everybody else labors. It needs women who know the Scriptures, fear the Lord, understand sound doctrine, exercise discernment, and possess willing hearts for Christian service. **The question is not whether a woman can obtain a title impressive enough to satisfy the world. The question is whether she will faithfully serve the Saviour who redeemed her. God never confused the pastoral office with the entire work of the ministry, and neither should we. A faithful woman may never preach behind a pulpit, but she can strengthen those who do, teach those who need instruction, encourage those who are weary, help those who are suffering, and witness to sinners who need the gospel. The world may recognize the person holding the microphone. God recognizes the hands that helped carry the work. And when the judgment seat of Christ reveals what was truly accomplished for His glory, more than a few faithful women may discover that their quiet labor was never overlooked by the Lord of the harvest.**

**10 of 10 — Biblical Womanhood — She Shall Rejoice in Time to Come: The Legacy of a Godly Woman**

**Key Passage — Proverbs 31:25:** "Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come."

There is a remarkable declaration near the conclusion of Proverbs 31 that deserves considerably more attention than it ordinarily receives. "Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come." Notice those last six words. She shall rejoice in time to come. The woman described in this chapter is not merely concerned with what she possesses today, how she appears before others, or whether everybody appreciates the work she has performed. Her life is being lived with consequences extending beyond the immediate moment. She has invested her strength in things worth accomplishing, governed her conduct according to honorable principles, and demonstrated a character that will not become worthless merely because another generation arrives. Proverbs 31:31 concludes, "Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates." There is something profoundly significant about that statement. **The finest testimony a godly woman can leave behind is not the collection**

**of things she accumulated, but the evidence of a life faithfully lived before the Lord.** Her works speak after the work itself is finished.

The world has developed some very peculiar methods of determining whether a woman's life has been successful. It can celebrate somebody for attracting attention, accumulating possessions, maintaining youthful beauty, or acquiring enough public recognition to convince strangers that her existence was important. Meanwhile, a woman may spend fifty years faithfully serving Christ, teaching children the Scriptures, caring for a suffering husband, encouraging discouraged believers, and helping people who cannot repay her, only to leave this world without a newspaper mentioning her departure. Apparently, the world has become quite skilled at recognizing everything except the things God considers valuable. The woman who spent her life drawing attention to herself may receive a spectacular funeral, while the woman who spent her life directing attention to Jesus Christ may receive a modest one. **But heaven is not impressed by the size of the funeral procession, the expense of the flowers, or the number of people who remembered to attend. God knows what a life was actually worth in the light of eternity.**

This final consideration of biblical womanhood brings us to a question that every Christian woman should eventually face. What kind of testimony will remain when her earthly responsibilities have ended? Not whether she became famous. Not whether she satisfied everybody's expectations. Not whether she married, raised children, possessed wealth, or accomplished the particular ambitions that society considered impressive. Those circumstances differ from woman to woman. The deeper question concerns faithfulness to Jesus Christ. Scripture provides remarkable examples. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 is praised for her conduct. Mary of Bethany is remembered for an act of costly devotion. Lois and Eunice are associated with the sincere faith of Timothy. Dorcas is remembered through the charitable works she performed. And the apostle Paul reminds believers that their service will ultimately be examined at the judgment seat of Christ. **The world wants to know how much attention a woman received while she was living. Scripture directs our attention toward what she did with the life God entrusted to her.** Those are two very different measurements.

**1. She Shall Rejoice in Time to Come — Strength That Outlives the Season**

Proverbs 31:25 connects the woman's future confidence with two qualities characterizing her present life: strength and honour. The verse does not describe strength without character or honour without responsibility. Both belong together. Strength enables her to meet difficult obligations, while honour governs the manner in which she meets them. The surrounding chapter describes a woman exercising diligence, judgment, compassion, and foresight. She prepares clothing, manages resources, conducts business, cares for the

poor, and watches over her household. These are not disconnected activities performed merely to demonstrate how busy she can become. They reveal a settled pattern of responsibility. Her future rejoicing is connected with a life governed by wisdom rather than negligence. **A woman cannot control everything tomorrow will bring, but she can determine whether she will spend today practicing the faithfulness God has commanded.** Preparation does not eliminate every hardship, but it prevents unnecessary foolishness from becoming an additional burden.

Notice what the passage does not promise. It does not guarantee that a virtuous woman will never become sick, experience bereavement, suffer financial loss, or watch someone she loves make terrible decisions. The book of Proverbs contains wisdom for righteous living, not an arrangement whereby human virtue purchases immunity from every difficulty in a fallen world. Job was upright and still suffered terribly. Paul served Christ faithfully and endured extraordinary affliction. A Christian woman may walk obediently before God and still encounter circumstances that bring tears, uncertainty, and exhaustion. Her rejoicing cannot therefore depend upon the assumption that life will always become easier. Second Corinthians 4:16 declares, “but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” **A woman may lose physical strength while gaining spiritual maturity, and she may discover that the things which once impressed her have become remarkably insignificant.** The Lord can strengthen inwardly when the outward circumstances remain difficult.

Proverbs 31:28 declares, “Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.” Here is a beautiful picture of recognition within the household, but it must not be turned into a weapon against women whose circumstances differ. Not every godly woman has children. Not every faithful wife possesses a husband who appreciates her. Some children become rebellious despite years of instruction, and some husbands fail miserably in their responsibility to show honor. Their failures do not automatically erase her faithfulness. The passage describes an excellent example of domestic virtue receiving appropriate praise. It does not establish the applause of relatives as the final measure of a woman's standing before God. **Human gratitude is a wonderful blessing when it comes, but faithfulness must be rooted in something stronger than the hope that everybody will eventually say thank you.** A woman who serves Christ needs an anchor deeper than public appreciation.

**2. Favour Is Deceitful — When the World's Applause Becomes Worthless**

Proverbs 31:30 provides the controlling principle of the entire description: “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.” There is the great distinction. Human favor is unreliable, physical beauty passes away, but

the fear of the Lord produces character worthy of recognition. The woman who fears God possesses an understanding that governs her decisions when nobody is watching. She knows that righteousness matters more than popularity, truth more than flattery, and obedience more than appearances. That does not mean she despises reasonable attention to her physical appearance or refuses every legitimate compliment. It means she understands the difference between what is pleasant and what is permanent. **A woman who builds her entire identity upon beauty has chosen a foundation that time intends to dismantle, whether she approves of the arrangement or not.** But godly character can continue developing through the passing years.

The expression “let her own works praise her in the gates” belongs to the ancient setting in which the city gate served as a place of public business and judgment. The verse pictures honorable conduct receiving appropriate recognition within the community. There is nothing wrong with recognizing faithful service. Scripture itself commends deserving individuals, including the women named in Romans 16. But the works receive attention because they demonstrate character, not because the woman has devoted her life to advertising herself. There is an enormous difference between receiving praise for genuine faithfulness and manufacturing a reputation through constant self-promotion. **Some people spend more energy informing the public how much good they are doing than they spend actually doing it. Evidently, the announcement department has become more important than the work department.** Proverbs presents a better arrangement: live honorably, serve faithfully, and allow the testimony of the work to speak truthfully.

There is also a necessary warning concerning reputation. A woman can possess a respected name while harboring secret bitterness, dishonesty, or pride. Conversely, a faithful woman may suffer false accusations, misunderstanding, or neglect. Human reputation is therefore not identical to divine approval. First Corinthians 4:5 warns believers against premature judgment and points toward the Lord, who will bring hidden things to light and make manifest the counsels of the hearts. That is a sobering thought for anybody more interested in appearing spiritual than actually obeying Christ. The Lord knows what others cannot see. He understands why a woman gave, why she served, why she remained silent, and why she spoke. **A spotless public reputation cannot conceal a corrupt heart from God, and an unjustly damaged reputation cannot prevent Him from recognizing genuine faithfulness.** The final account belongs to the One whose judgment cannot be purchased, manipulated, or deceived.

**3. She Hath Done What She Could — Mary's Memorial Before the Lord**

Mark 14:3 brings us into Bethany shortly before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The Lord was in the house of Simon the leper when a woman approached Him carrying an alabaster box

containing ointment of spikenard, very precious. She broke the box and poured the ointment upon His head. John 12 records the corresponding anointing at Bethany and identifies Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, as the woman expressing costly devotion to Christ. The setting is important. The Lord was approaching His suffering and death, and the act was associated with His burial. This was not an ordinary religious ceremony designed to impress spectators. Mary possessed something valuable, and she used it in an extraordinary expression of love toward the Saviour. **She was not trying to make herself famous. She was honoring Someone whose worth surpassed anything she could carry in that alabaster box.** The fragrance filled the occasion, but the devotion behind it was what mattered.

The reaction was revealing. Mark 14:4 records that some became indignant and asked, “Why was this waste of the ointment made?” Verse 5 mentions that it could have been sold for more than three hundred pence and given to the poor. There is a remarkable illustration of how easily people can misunderstand genuine devotion while congratulating themselves for possessing superior judgment. They counted the financial value of the ointment and concluded that Mary had wasted it. Jesus Christ saw the act differently. He declared, “Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.” His answer did not diminish the importance of helping the poor. He specifically acknowledged that opportunities to do them good would remain. The issue concerned the unique occasion of His approaching death. **The critics knew the price of the ointment, but they had failed to recognize the significance of the One upon whom it was poured.** That is a dangerous kind of religious blindness.

Then comes one of the most beautiful commendations in the Gospel record. Mark 14:8 declares, “She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.” Notice the words: “She hath done what she could.” The Lord recognized her action according to the opportunity and purpose involved. He then declared in verse 9 that wherever the gospel would be preached throughout the whole world, what she had done would be spoken of for a memorial of her. This memorial did not make Mary's devotion the basis of salvation. The gospel concerns the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But the Lord deliberately preserved her act as a testimony connected with the proclamation of His coming sacrifice. **The critics called it waste. Jesus called it a good work. The critics wanted to calculate the expense. Jesus announced a memorial. And two thousand years later, the world is still reading about the woman they thought had made a terrible financial decision.**

**4. Lois and Eunice — The Scriptures That Outlived the Teacher**

Second Timothy 1:5 introduces another kind of legacy. Paul remembered the unfeigned faith dwelling in Timothy and connected that sincere faith with his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Those women were not described as occupying famous religious positions, commanding large congregations, or possessing extraordinary public influence. Their testimony was associated with genuine faith within their family. Acts 16:1 identifies Timothy's mother as a believing Jewish woman and his father as Greek. These details reveal something of his background without giving us permission to invent everything that happened during his childhood. Yet Paul's remembrance is unmistakable. **A grandmother and a mother whose names might otherwise have disappeared into history were preserved in the inspired Scriptures because their faith mattered.** The world might consider that a small accomplishment. The Holy Ghost evidently considered it worth recording.

Second Timothy 3:14–15 develops the matter further. Paul reminds Timothy that he had known the Holy Scriptures from childhood, which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. His early instruction would have involved the Old Testament Scriptures, before the completed New Testament had been given. Those Scriptures revealed God's holiness, man's sin, the necessity of redemption, and the prophetic testimony concerning the coming Messiah. The gospel is now plainly declared in First Corinthians 15:3–4: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. **A mother cannot transfer salvation to her child through family inheritance, but she can teach the Scriptures through which that child may learn the truth concerning salvation.** The distinction matters. Faith must become personal, but biblical instruction can furnish the understanding through which faith is directed toward Christ.

There is encouragement here for mothers and grandmothers who have spent years teaching truth without knowing what the future will bring. Some children receive instruction gladly. Others resist correction, become distracted, or eventually reject what they were taught. A faithful upbringing does not give a mother the power to guarantee another person's salvation or obedience. Every individual remains accountable before God. Nevertheless, the work of teaching Scripture is not meaningless because the results remain uncertain. A child may remember a Bible verse during temptation years after the lesson was given. A grown son may recall the example of a praying mother when facing hardship. A granddaughter may carry forward instruction she received from someone who has already gone to be with the Lord. **The mother cannot control every harvest, but she can faithfully plant the seed God has placed in her hands.** Her responsibility is obedience, not omnipotence.

**5. Quiet Servants — The Women Whose Work Heaven Has Not Forgotten**

Luke 2:36–38 introduces Anna, an elderly widow who served God with fastings and prayers night and day. Her circumstances belong to Israel during the period surrounding the birth of Christ, before the establishment of the New Testament Church. She was a prophetess, and her service was connected with the Temple and Israel's expectation of redemption. That setting must be preserved. Nevertheless, her testimony illustrates the enduring usefulness of a woman who continues serving God despite advanced age and personal loss. Anna had experienced marriage and widowhood, yet her life had not become spiritually insignificant when her husband died. When the infant Jesus was brought to the Temple, she gave thanks and spoke of Him to those looking for redemption in Jerusalem. **The world might have considered her important years finished, but God placed her near the beginning of the earthly ministry of the promised Messiah.** That is a remarkable testimony.

Acts 9:36–39 provides another picture through Dorcas, a disciple described as full of good works and charitable deeds. When she died, the widows gathered and showed Peter the coats and garments she had made while she was with them. Those garments were visible evidence of her generosity. Peter raised Dorcas from the dead through an extraordinary miracle belonging to the apostolic ministry, but her ordinary acts of charity were already noteworthy before that miracle occurred. **Dorcas did not leave behind an impressive monument proclaiming how generous she had been. She left clothing in the hands of people who had benefited from her kindness.** There is a lesson worth remembering. Faithful Christian service does not always require remarkable public abilities. Sometimes it requires willing hands, genuine compassion, and enough concern for others to do something useful about their needs.

Romans 16 provides additional testimony through Phebe, Priscilla, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis. Paul publicly acknowledged women who served, assisted, and labored in the Lord. Their names were preserved, although Scripture does not provide complete biographies of their personal circumstances. Some believers possess considerable opportunities for public service, while others spend their lives performing work that receives little recognition. A woman may be caring for an elderly parent, encouraging a struggling Christian, helping missionaries, teaching children, practicing hospitality, or assisting a congregation through practical labor. God has established distinctions concerning authority and church office, but He has not declared these legitimate forms of service worthless. **The Lord does not recognize only the person standing behind the pulpit. He knows who helped keep the work moving when the preacher finished speaking and everybody else went home.** Faithfulness does not require publicity, and obscurity does not prevent divine recognition.

**6. The Judgment Seat of Christ — When Every Work Meets Its True Value**

Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” There is the future examination awaiting believers. The judgment seat of Christ must not be confused with the Great White Throne judgment described in Revelation 20. Nor should it be presented as a second opportunity for saved people to discover whether Christ's blood was sufficient to redeem them. The believer's salvation rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, received by grace through faith. The judgment seat concerns the examination of Christian service and conduct. **The Lord who saved the believer freely will also examine how that believer lived after receiving salvation.** That examination ought to produce sobriety without destroying the assurance Scripture provides concerning eternal life in Christ.

First Corinthians 3:11–15 supplies further instruction concerning the examination of Christian work. Paul establishes that no other foundation can be laid than Jesus Christ, and then describes differing materials built upon that foundation. The work is tested by fire, revealing its character. Some works endure and receive reward, while others are burned. Verse 15 declares concerning the one who suffers loss, “but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” The immediate context concerns labor associated with God's building, but the passage establishes the essential distinction between salvation and reward. A Christian woman should therefore be concerned not merely with performing religious activity, but with whether that activity is faithful to Christ. **God is not impressed by the amount of religious machinery someone operates if the work itself cannot withstand His examination. A crowded calendar is not the same thing as a fruitful Christian life.** The quality of the work matters.

First Corinthians 4:5 adds another sobering consideration. Paul points toward the Lord who will bring hidden things to light and reveal the counsels of the hearts. That means human beings cannot perfectly determine another believer's motives or final reward. A woman may give generously without anybody knowing. Another may perform an impressive public act primarily to receive admiration. The Lord understands the difference. Yet no amount of faithful service can purchase redemption. Ephesians 2:8–10 makes the order unmistakable: salvation is by grace through faith, not by works, and believers are afterward created in Christ Jesus unto good works. **The judgment seat is not a heavenly auction where women purchase eternal life by offering enough years of service. Salvation has already been purchased by Jesus Christ.** The question concerns what those who belong to Him have done with the opportunities entrusted to them.

**7. Finish the Course — A Woman Faithful Until the End**

Second Timothy 4:7 records Paul's declaration near the conclusion of his earthly ministry: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” Those words belong to the apostle's own testimony, but they present a principle worth applying to every believer. Faithfulness is not merely beginning well. It involves continuing in the truth through changing circumstances, opposition, weakness, and the passage of time. A woman may begin her Christian life with tremendous enthusiasm, only to discover that decades of obedience require considerably more endurance than she originally imagined. Marriage brings responsibilities, children grow older, parents become dependent, health changes, and familiar relationships may be interrupted by death. **The Christian life is not a short parade in which everyone applauds the beginning. It is a course that must be run faithfully when the spectators have gone home and the road becomes difficult.** Endurance matters.

Aging provides its own opportunities for faithfulness. Titus 2:3–5 instructs aged women to demonstrate conduct becoming holiness and to teach younger women good things. Here is a responsibility that does not disappear merely because physical strength has diminished. An older woman may no longer possess the energy to perform certain kinds of practical work, but she may possess decades of knowledge concerning the Scriptures, the consequences of foolish decisions, and the importance of obedience. She can encourage younger believers, offer wise counsel, pray faithfully, and demonstrate contentment in difficult circumstances. Yet spiritual maturity is not guaranteed by the passing years. **A woman can become seventy years old without becoming seventy years wise. Gray hair may arrive automatically, but godliness requires continued obedience.** The older Christian woman ought to use her years to strengthen others rather than allowing bitterness to become the inheritance she leaves behind.

And what of the woman whose strength is failing, whose responsibilities seem overwhelming, or whose opportunities appear insignificant? Second Corinthians 12:9 records the Lord's answer to Paul: “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” That promise was given in connection with Paul's particular affliction, and it should not be turned into a guarantee that every physical burden will disappear. But it reveals the sufficiency of divine grace when human strength proves inadequate. A woman facing illness, grief, disability, exhaustion, or difficult family responsibilities should not imagine that faithfulness requires pretending her weakness does not exist. She must obey God according to her actual circumstances, not somebody else's imagined standard of constant accomplishment. **The Lord does not command a woman with failing strength to pretend she possesses the abilities of her youth. He calls her to faithfulness with the strength, opportunities, and responsibilities remaining before her.** His grace is sufficient for that obedience.

**Conclusion — The Legacy That Eternity Will Reveal**

To the young woman just beginning to understand her responsibilities before God, there is no reason to waste your life pursuing the applause of a world whose standards change every season. To the wife who has faithfully served through years of ordinary responsibilities, your work is not automatically insignificant because it receives little recognition. To the mother who has taught Scripture and prayed for children whose future remains uncertain, continue in the truth without pretending you possess the power to control another person's decisions. To the widow who has lost the companion of many years, your usefulness to Christ has not necessarily ended with his earthly life. To the unmarried woman who desires to serve the Lord, your spiritual standing does not depend upon possessing a husband or children. **Every season brings different responsibilities, but every believing woman possesses the same Saviour. The question is not whether your life resembles somebody else's. The question is whether you are faithfully walking with Jesus Christ in the life entrusted to you.**

To husbands, fathers, pastors, and Christian men, there is a responsibility here that must not be neglected. Appreciate the faithful women God has placed within your families and congregations. Recognize the sacrifices of wives, the labors of mothers, the service of widows, and the contributions of women who faithfully assist the work of the gospel. Do not use biblical distinctions concerning authority as an excuse for contempt, and do not abandon those distinctions merely to satisfy worldly opinion. Teach the whole counsel of Scripture. Honor genuine faithfulness. Encourage women to develop sound doctrine, exercise wisdom, practice charity, and use their abilities in obedience to God. **A man who continually demands that women recognize his authority while refusing to recognize their faithfulness has seriously misunderstood what biblical leadership requires.** Christ does not overlook the servants who labor quietly, and His people should not make a habit of overlooking them either.

Return once more to the words of Proverbs 31:25: “Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.” There is the final picture of biblical womanhood. Not a woman who spent her life manufacturing an appearance of perfection. Not a woman who measured her significance by the possessions she acquired, the compliments she received, or the recognition the world offered. But a woman who feared the Lord, believed His word, accepted her responsibilities, practiced righteousness, served others, and remained faithful to Jesus Christ. Mary of Bethany heard the Saviour declare, “She hath done what she could,” and the Lord Himself preserved the memory of her devotion. Lois and Eunice left a testimony of sincere faith. Dorcas left evidence of practical charity. And countless Christian women have labored in circumstances known fully only to God. **The**

**greatest compliment a woman can receive is not that the world admired her, but that her life honored the Saviour who redeemed her. Beauty will fade, possessions will pass away, earthly recognition will be forgotten, and the applause of men will eventually fall silent. But the Lord Jesus Christ will not forget what was faithfully done for His glory. Let the world remember its celebrities, celebrate its fashions, and erect monuments to accomplishments that eternity will not preserve. The Christian woman's ambition ought to be greater than all of that. Let her finish her course, keep the faith, and stand before her Saviour with a life that testifies she did what she could for Him. For when the world has spoken its final word about her, the judgment that matters most will still belong to Jesus Christ. And that is why a godly woman can look toward the future with confidence: strength and honour are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come.**

**Conclusion — Biblical Womanhood: Strength, Wisdom, and God's Order**

After ten studies examining biblical womanhood, we arrive at a truth that ought to have been settled long before this generation began arguing about what a woman is supposed to be. God created woman with dignity, established her responsibilities with wisdom, provided her with opportunities for meaningful service, and gave her a place in His written record that no amount of modern foolishness can erase. Proverbs 31:30 declares, “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.” There stands the final measurement. Not popularity. Not physical appearance. Not financial success. Not marriage, motherhood, public recognition, or the approval of whatever cultural authority happens to be fashionable this week. The fear of the Lord. We have examined women who displayed courage, exercised wisdom, strengthened their households, instructed children, helped the apostles, served suffering people, and remained faithful through circumstances that would have discouraged weaker convictions. Their lives were not identical, and their responsibilities were not interchangeable, but the governing principle remained the same. **Biblical womanhood is not a woman's attempt to become whatever the world currently admires. It is her willingness to become what God has called her to be, regardless of whether the world admires it at all.**

One of the great tragedies of our generation is that women have been encouraged to measure their worth by almost everything except the things God considers valuable. The world has turned beauty into merchandise, popularity into currency, independence into a religion, and personal ambition into the highest possible expression of human

achievement. A woman can spend her entire life attempting to satisfy those standards and discover, somewhere along the way, that the standards have changed while she was trying to meet them. Meanwhile, certain religious people have contributed their own confusion by discussing women primarily in terms of restrictions, as though the most important thing anyone could say about a Christian woman is what she is not permitted to do. Both approaches miss the richness of Scripture. Proverbs 31:10 asks, “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.” God did not describe a virtuous woman as a disposable accessory to somebody else's importance. He declared her character exceedingly precious. **A woman does not need the world's permission to possess dignity, and she does not need a man's applause to establish what God has already declared. Her worth begins with her Creator, not with the opinions of His creatures.**

We began with Genesis because every sound understanding of womanhood must begin where God began. Genesis 1:27 declares that God created mankind in His image, male and female. Genesis 2:18 records the Lord's declaration that it was not good for Adam to be alone and His intention to make an help meet for him. There was order in creation, but there was also dignity, companionship, and purpose. The woman was neither a rival deity nor an inferior animal. She was part of God's deliberate design. When sin entered the world, that design became subject to the consequences of the fall, but the original distinction between male and female was not an unfortunate mistake requiring correction by future generations. Galatians 3:28 later establishes the spiritual standing of believers as one in Jesus Christ, while other New Testament passages preserve distinctions concerning marriage and church government. There is no contradiction. **Equal standing in salvation does not require identical responsibilities in every earthly relationship, and different responsibilities do not establish unequal worth before God.** The Lord who created man and woman understands His own creation considerably better than a civilization that cannot recognize an obvious distinction without organizing a committee to reconsider it.

We have also seen that biblical femininity is not a religious disguise for weakness. Proverbs 31:25 declares, “Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.” Deborah exercised judgment in Israel during a period of national oppression. Esther risked her life when her people faced destruction. Ruth demonstrated extraordinary loyalty when her circumstances offered little earthly security. Abigail possessed enough discernment to prevent David from committing an act of unnecessary bloodshed. These women lived under different historical circumstances, and their particular experiences must not be carelessly transferred into the government of the New Testament Church. But their courage remains unmistakable. They were not praised because they became rebellious, arrogant, or determined to overturn every authority. They were recognized because their conduct demonstrated faithfulness, wisdom, and courage when those

qualities were desperately needed. **The strongest woman is not necessarily the one who speaks the loudest, commands the most attention, or refuses every form of authority. Sometimes she is the one who stands upon the word of God when everybody around her has decided that obedience is too expensive.** There is more courage in faithful obedience than in a thousand declarations of independence.

And what of beauty? The world has made a magnificent business out of convincing women that their most important qualities are the ones that eventually disappear. First Peter 3:4 speaks of "the hidden man of the heart" and describes a meek and quiet spirit as being "in the sight of God of great price." The outward appearance deserves reasonable care, and Scripture never commanded women to become unattractive in order to demonstrate holiness. But neither does it permit vanity, immodesty, or the worship of physical appearance. A woman can maintain a pleasing appearance without making a mirror the final authority over her life. She can dress modestly without surrendering to man-made regulations that go beyond Scripture. And she can grow older without imagining that her usefulness to God is declining at precisely the same rate as her physical strength. Galatians 5:22–23 identifies the fruit of the Spirit, including love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. **Those qualities cannot be purchased from a cosmetics counter, manufactured in a laboratory, or preserved through an expensive procedure. They belong to a life governed by the Holy Ghost. The world knows how to decorate a face. Only God can produce genuine spiritual fruit in a heart.**

We considered the tremendous power of a godly woman's words because the Scriptures do not teach that her greatest virtue consists of never opening her mouth. Proverbs 31:26 declares, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness." That is a remarkable combination. Wisdom and kindness. Truth and charity. Discernment and restraint. Abigail demonstrated these qualities when she approached David and persuaded him not to avenge himself through bloodshed. Her words did not become less valuable because they came from a woman. David recognized the wisdom of her counsel and thanked God for it. Yet Scripture also warns against gossip, false accusations, bitterness, manipulation, and the careless destruction caused by an uncontrolled tongue. James 3 compares the tongue to a fire, and anybody who has watched a family disagreement become a full-scale catastrophe through unnecessary words knows how accurate that comparison is. **A wise woman does not have to win every argument to exercise influence. She understands that some words should be spoken, some should be restrained, and some should never have been allowed to leave the mouth in the first place.** The law of kindness does not forbid speaking truth. It requires speaking truth without making cruelty a substitute for courage.

We have defended the importance of the home because Scripture treats domestic faithfulness as a serious responsibility. Titus 2 instructs younger wives concerning love for their husbands and children, discretion, chastity, goodness, and being keepers at home. Those instructions are not embarrassing remnants of an unenlightened age. They are part of sound doctrine. But Proverbs 31 also depicts a virtuous woman purchasing property, planting a vineyard, producing merchandise, and managing resources. Acts 16 introduces Lydia, a seller of purple whose home became useful in the work of the gospel. These passages demonstrate that domestic responsibility and productive labor are not necessarily enemies. A woman may serve faithfully through homemaking, legitimate employment, business activity, or a combination of responsibilities appropriate to her circumstances. **A household does not become godly because the woman possesses no income, and it does not become ungodly merely because she earns one. The question concerns obedience to Scripture, proper priorities, and faithful stewardship.** Furthermore, husbands cannot quote a wife's responsibilities as an excuse for abandoning their own. A man who believes biblical headship entitles him to a lifetime of sitting comfortably while his wife performs every unpleasant task has apparently confused leadership with retirement.

Marriage received careful examination because God's order must never be surrendered to either worldly rebellion or religious tyranny. Ephesians 5 commands wives to submit themselves unto their own husbands, as unto the Lord. It also commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. Those responsibilities belong together. A wife should respect her husband's proper leadership, exercise wisdom, remain faithful, and contribute to the marriage through her abilities and character. A husband should love sacrificially, protect his wife's welfare, appreciate her counsel, and recognize that headship is a responsibility before God rather than an opportunity to satisfy personal pride. First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to give honor unto their wives and warns that their prayers may be hindered through disobedience. That ought to disturb the conscience of any man who treats his wife with contempt while expecting God to admire his command of biblical terminology. **A husband cannot demonstrate Christlike leadership through cruelty, intimidation, selfishness, or abuse. The Lord never appointed a man to become a household tyrant, and He never commanded a wife to participate in wickedness merely to preserve the appearance of submission.** God's order honors righteousness, not domination.

Motherhood has likewise received the recognition it deserves, not because every woman must become a mother to be useful, but because raising children in the knowledge of Scripture is an extraordinarily important responsibility. Paul remembered the unfeigned faith of Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Second Timothy 3:15 declares

that Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures from childhood. Think of the significance. Before Timothy became known as a faithful minister, there were women whose testimony and instruction formed part of his spiritual background. A mother may spend years teaching the same Bible passages, correcting the same foolish conduct, answering the same questions, and wondering whether her children have remembered anything she said. But truth faithfully taught may remain in a child's memory long after the lesson has ended. Still, we must not manufacture promises that Scripture never made. A mother cannot guarantee her child's salvation or eliminate his responsibility for his own decisions. **A mother is responsible to teach her children the truth, not to possess the power of God over their wills. Her faithfulness should be honored without turning the future decisions of her children into an automatic verdict upon her character.** The Lord understands the difference between parental instruction and personal accountability.

There are also women whose lives have not included marriage or motherhood, and nothing in Scripture permits us to treat them as unfinished Christians. Colossians 2:10 declares, “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” First Corinthians 7 recognizes that unmarried believers may possess particular opportunities for service without certain responsibilities connected with marriage. Anna continued serving God faithfully after becoming a widow. Dorcas became known for charitable deeds that blessed others. Their circumstances differed, but their usefulness was unmistakable. A woman may be single, widowed, divorced, childless, or living with responsibilities that other people scarcely understand. Some have known loneliness. Others have suffered betrayal, financial hardship, or the sorrow of losing a companion. The Church must never use biblical marriage teaching as an excuse to belittle women whose circumstances differ. **A wedding ring is not a certificate of spiritual completeness, and its absence is not evidence of spiritual failure. A woman who belongs to Jesus Christ possesses a relationship that no earthly marriage can provide and no earthly disappointment can take away.** Her standing in Christ does not depend upon her marital status.

And we must not overlook the women who labor faithfully in the gospel. Open Romans 16 and read the names Paul commended. Phebe. Priscilla. Mary. Tryphena. Tryphosa. Persis. These were not imaginary women invented to settle a modern argument. They were genuine servants of Jesus Christ whose work was recognized by the apostle. Phebe assisted many believers, including Paul himself. Priscilla and Aquila were helpers in Christ Jesus. Mary bestowed much labor. Other women were recognized for their service in the Lord. Titus 2 explicitly commands older women to teach younger women, while Acts 18 records Priscilla participating with her husband in explaining the way of God more perfectly to Apollos. These passages do not abolish the New Testament qualifications concerning the pastoral office, and First Timothy 2 must not be discarded to satisfy modern opinion.

But the restrictions governing a particular office do not eliminate the numerous opportunities Scripture provides for women to serve. **The Church does not need women who imitate men, and it does not need men who despise women. It needs faithful believers who understand their responsibilities and labor together beneath the authority of Jesus Christ.** There is plenty of work to accomplish without inventing new offices or condemning legitimate service.

Now, after examining these matters, we must remember something essential. Biblical womanhood is not a contest to determine which woman can present the most impressive appearance of perfection. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 is an example of excellent character, not a religious obstacle course that every woman must complete before God permits her to be useful. Some women have little money. Some are physically weak. Some live with serious illness. Some care for children with extraordinary needs. Others labor under circumstances that leave very little opportunity for the activities another woman may perform with ease. Scripture requires obedience, diligence, and faithfulness, but it does not command a woman to possess abilities or resources she has never been given. Neither should weakness become an excuse for deliberate sin. The Christian life requires honest examination, correction, repentance, and growth. **God never commanded a woman to accomplish everything, but He certainly commanded His children to obey what He has actually said.** There is a world of difference between failing because human strength is limited and refusing because the flesh does not want to submit.

That brings us to the deeper spiritual battle involved in all of this. The Christian woman still possesses a flesh that must not be permitted to govern her conduct. Galatians 5:17 declares, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other.” Marriage does not eliminate that conflict. Motherhood does not eliminate it. Remaining unmarried does not eliminate it. Years of church attendance do not eliminate it. A woman can become proud of her virtue, bitter over her circumstances, envious of another woman's blessings, resentful toward her responsibilities, or careless concerning the commandments of Scripture. The answer is not to excuse sin through a fashionable explanation or to disguise rebellion beneath religious language. Galatians 5:16 commands, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” **A godly woman is not a woman who has discovered how to make her flesh respectable. She is a woman who has learned that the flesh must not be permitted to rule her life.** Holiness is not the decoration of the old nature. It is obedience to the Lord through the power and instruction He supplies.

Yet the Christian woman must never confuse spiritual growth with earning eternal life. Romans 3:23 declares that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. That

includes every virtuous woman, every faithful mother, every devoted wife, every widow, and every unmarried woman. None possesses righteousness sufficient to purchase salvation. The gospel is established in First Corinthians 15:3–4: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” There is the foundation beneath everything we have taught. **A woman is not saved because she is virtuous, and she is not excluded from salvation because her past is stained by sin. Jesus Christ saves sinners who believe on Him, and His finished work is sufficient.** Once saved, the believer is called to walk in obedience, but that obedience is not the price of redemption. Salvation belongs to the grace of God, not the accomplishments of man.

There will also come a day when the earthly labor of every Christian woman reaches its conclusion. Second Corinthians 5:10 reminds believers that they must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. That future examination concerns Christian service and must not be confused with the Great White Throne judgment or presented as though the believer's salvation remains uncertain. First Corinthians 3 explains that works will be tested and that some will endure while others will be burned. The Lord knows the difference between faithful service and religious activity performed merely for human recognition. He knows the mother who taught Scripture when nobody applauded, the widow who gave generously despite limited resources, the woman who encouraged a struggling believer, and the elderly saint whose prayers were offered without an audience. He also knows the motives behind every public accomplishment. **The judgment seat of Christ will not require a list of social achievements to determine whether a woman's service was worthwhile. The Lord already possesses the complete record.** Earthly recognition may be pleasant, but it is a poor substitute for divine approval.

Consider once more Mary of Bethany in Mark 14. She brought costly ointment and anointed the Lord Jesus Christ shortly before His death. Some complained that her offering was wasteful. They calculated the financial value and concluded that she had made a poor decision. Jesus answered, “Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.” Then He declared, “She hath done what she could.” Those words ought to remain with every Christian woman who desires to serve the Lord. She hath done what she could. Not what somebody else could have done. Not what would have impressed the largest audience. Not what would have produced the greatest earthly reputation. She acted faithfully within the opportunity before her. And Christ declared that her act would be remembered wherever the gospel was preached. **The critics remembered the price of the ointment. Jesus remembered the devotion of the woman. The critics saw waste. Jesus saw a good work. The critics complained for a moment, but the Lord established a**

**memorial that has endured for centuries.** That is the difference between human criticism and divine judgment.

So to every woman who has worked faithfully through years of exhausting responsibilities, do not measure your life by the things you were never able to accomplish. To the wife who has stood beside her husband through hardship, remain faithful to the Lord who sees your labor. To the mother who has taught the Scriptures and prayed for children whose decisions now bring sorrow, continue trusting God without assuming responsibility for choices that belong to another person. To the widow who has lost the companionship of many years, remember that your usefulness to Christ did not end at the graveside. To the unmarried woman who has sometimes felt overlooked, remember that your spiritual standing is complete in Jesus Christ. To the woman whose body is growing weaker, whose opportunities have become limited, or whose accomplishments remain unknown to the world, do not despise the responsibilities still before you. **God does not require every woman to leave behind the same kind of testimony. He requires faithfulness according to His word. Some women will influence thousands, while others will influence a handful. The size of the audience does not determine the worth of obedience.** The Lord knows what He has entrusted to each life.

And to the men who have followed these studies, remember that biblical manhood and biblical womanhood were never intended to become competing armies fighting over which one deserves the greater recognition. God created man and woman with purpose, dignity, and responsibilities. Husbands ought to love their wives sacrificially. Fathers ought to recognize the importance of their daughters' spiritual instruction. Pastors ought to teach women sound doctrine and encourage their legitimate service without surrendering the order established in Scripture. Christian men should appreciate the faithful women who strengthen their families, churches, and ministries. The fact that a woman does not occupy the pastoral office does not make her labor meaningless, and the fact that a wife is instructed to submit to her own husband does not give him permission to behave like an unaccountable dictator. **A man who must continually diminish women in order to feel important has not demonstrated biblical strength. He has demonstrated that his understanding of authority is considerably larger than his understanding of responsibility.** The Lord commands men to obey His word just as surely as He commands women.

As we bring this series to its conclusion, the final appeal is not for women to become more fashionable, more admired, more financially successful, or more impressive in the eyes of strangers. It is for women to become more faithful to Jesus Christ. Study the Scriptures. Know what you believe. Refuse false doctrine. Cultivate wisdom. Exercise modesty without

surrendering to man-made bondage. Speak truth without becoming cruel. Demonstrate strength without embracing rebellion. Honor your legitimate responsibilities without despising the work God has given somebody else. Serve the Lord with the abilities and opportunities entrusted to you. And when you fail, do not excuse your sin or abandon the truth. Confess what is wrong, receive the correction of Scripture, and continue walking with the Lord. **The Christian life is not improved by replacing the commandments of God with the commandments of the culture, nor by replacing the grace of God with the impossible demand for human perfection. Biblical womanhood requires truth, obedience, humility, courage, and dependence upon the Saviour who redeemed us.**

Return one final time to Proverbs 31:25: “Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.” Those words provide a fitting conclusion to everything we have examined. Strength governed by righteousness. Honour demonstrated through conduct. Wisdom expressed in speech. Faithfulness practiced in ordinary responsibilities. Love shown through sacrifice. Courage maintained when obedience becomes difficult. And above all, the fear of the Lord directing the life of a woman who belongs to Jesus Christ. The world may continue arguing about womanhood, manufacturing new standards, celebrating rebellion, and despising the very virtues Scripture commends. Let it argue. The word of God has not changed. **A godly woman does not need to borrow her identity from the world, surrender her dignity to religious foolishness, or apologize for the order established by her Creator. She belongs to the Lord, and His word is sufficient.** The question is not whether she will receive the praise of every generation. The question is whether her life will bear testimony to the Saviour who purchased her redemption.

And when the years have passed, when the children have grown, when earthly responsibilities have ended, when physical beauty has faded and human applause has fallen silent, one thing will matter above everything else: whether that woman belonged to Jesus Christ and faithfully served Him. The world may remember the beautiful, the wealthy, the famous, and the powerful, but heaven keeps a different account. Mary of Bethany heard the Lord declare, “She hath done what she could.” Lois and Eunice left behind a testimony of sincere faith. Dorcas left the evidence of charitable works. Anna continued serving God when her younger years were long behind her. These women remind us that the Lord's estimation cannot be measured by the standards of a passing civilization. **The greatest accomplishment of a godly woman is not that she managed to impress the world during her brief appearance upon its stage. It is that she honored the Lord Jesus Christ with the life He entrusted to her. Let the world celebrate its own heroines. Let it build its monuments, distribute its awards, and congratulate itself upon achievements that eternity will not preserve. The Christian woman has something better to live for. Let her fear the Lord, believe His word, walk in His truth, and serve**

**her Saviour with a faithful heart. And when her earthly course is finished, may the testimony of her life be that she did what she could for Jesus Christ. For a woman clothed with strength and honour has every reason to look toward that coming day with confidence. Her beauty may fade, her strength may diminish, and the world may forget her name, but the Lord who redeemed her will never lose the record of a life faithfully lived for His glory.**

**That is biblical womanhood. Strength, wisdom, and God's order. And that is a testimony worth leaving behind.**

