

*Thoughts
for
Young Women*

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*“Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time because the days are evil.”
(Ephesians 5:15-16)*

“The days are evil” in which we live and will only continue to accelerate toward more evil.

Young, teenage mother Mary was told by Simeon regarding her eight day old son, Jesus; *“An arrow will pierce your own soul.”* Why? Because her son would be the Savior of sinners and draw a sharp line in the moral sand!

People would have to choose between following Jesus Christ or following themselves in pursuit of the world! And Mary’s son would be THE person in history who would force that decision. Many would reject him...and her heart would be broken.

Everything was at stake! Souls were at stake!

So here Jesus is only 8 days old, and Mary has to think way out into the future about things that matter far more than the joy of a newborn!

She’s being told that her own heart is going to feel the pain of what matters most in life!

She’s being reminded that life isn’t about the enjoyment of the present! Those things are okay, but they’re not what really matters!

As Mary stared at her newborn son, she needed to be reminded that in order for sin to be fully dealt with...she'd have to watch her son face off with the world's corruption and sin's consequences!

It was in the spirit of that reminder to Mary that I sat down one night years ago, in the early morning hours, to pen a letter to my daughters.

I knew that life ahead of them was filled with so much promise and potential! I knew that as they learned to love and serve their own families in the grace of Christ, that they would also need encouragement to think long term!

They would need to get beyond the here and now, and begin to prepare for the challenges ahead!

They would need to redeem the time, *"because the days are evil."*

I wanted them to know that nothing would ever be more important than preparing right now, for what God has for them in the future. I wanted them to know that nothing is more important than the gospel and the souls God places into their home!

I knew they needed to learn how to walk wisely, being watchful for the snares which easily entangle. (Hebrews 12:1)

YOUNG WOMEN

- ✚ *The world will always be enticing you with vanity fair*
- ✚ *Satan will not cease to set cunning traps to exploit your vulnerabilities*
- ✚ *Your flesh is already beset with the daily appetites of the "old man," and they "wage war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11)*
- ✚ *Be aware, there are Christian friendships that aren't always a source of spiritual strength, but are sometimes excess baggage (Hebrews 12:1), lulling us into spiritual laziness*

Each of you must begin now to set patterns in your life that will promote godliness and put you in the place of God's maximum blessing (1 Timothy 4:7).

Our culture never encourages a long-term perspective of anything, but the Word of God says differently! We understand that **all of life** is to be lived for the glory of God alone. It is true that in His grace we enjoy so many of life's wonders and passions, **but such blessings are not an end in themselves.**

- **Discipleship questions:**
 - *How well do you approach each day with a “long term perspective” in mind (Eph 5:15)?*
 - *What in your life now hinders you having a long term perspective (1 Peter 4:2-3)?*
 - *What are you currently doing to battle these wrong perspectives, false gods (2 Cor 10:3-5)?*

Jesus told us to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). Christians are warned to “*keep seeking the things that are above and not the things that are on the earth*” (Colossians 3:1-4). Your friendships, a spouse, and children are not entitlements nor can they be earned. Life is a privilege which belongs, not to you but to Christ (1 Corinthians 6:20). Companionship is a gift (the “grace of life” – 1 Peter 3:7), and children are “a heritage from the Lord” (Psalm 127:3). None of these things should be treated as though they are your inalienable right, nor should they be thought about casually simply because that’s not your stage of life YET!

As a young woman, you must begin preparing your life now, so that you don’t squander the grace gifts and the potential spiritual influence God wants you to enjoy!

You can’t wait to begin thinking about being a virtuous woman, until you are older, and expect to face temptation with any strength or discernment TODAY! That would be like hoping to pass your hardest exam after totally ignoring all the material and squandering weeks of prep time because you chose your favorite pastime in lieu of studying. You won’t have strong biblical convictions about marriage if you start cramming on your honeymoon! Nor will your precious children wait around while you decide to finally “get up to speed” on how to nurture their tiny little hearts in what is right!

Discipleship questions:

1. *What are you doing now to become the wife and mother God may be calling you to be (1 Peter 1:13)?*
2. *What in your life currently hinders your perspective on what God may be calling you to be (Heb 12:1-2)?*
3. *What character issues are you not dealing with now that will threaten your ability to be an excellent wife and faithful mother (1 Peter 2:11)?*
4. *Have you made a plan for how you want to grow in these areas (Eph 4:22-24)?*

The reason I urgently gave these principles to my girls was precisely because life doesn’t wait! And I didn’t want them to hit a wall of ignorance and self-deception they had built by their own neglect – a wall that didn’t have to be there!

*To live the life God has designed for you,
You will need to acquire understanding*

***“The beginning of wisdom is:
Acquire wisdom;
and with all your acquiring,
get understanding.”
Proverbs 4:7***

Girls, there are *THREE VITAL PRINCIPLES* through which I would like to encourage you:

WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD

PREPARE NOW FOR A GODLY HOME & FAMILY

BE ALERT TO A WOMAN’S PARTICULAR VULNERABILITIES

- **Discipleship questions:**
 1. **Before you go any further:**
 2. **Why do you think these *THREE VITAL PRINCIPLES* are so crucial (Prov 1:7, Titus 2:4-5, 1 Peter 3:1-6)?**
 3. **Prior to this study, how thoroughly have you thought through these *THREE VITAL PRINCIPLES*?**
 4. **In which of these *THREE VITAL PRINCIPLES* do you think the Lord most wants to renovate and refine your perspective (Rom 12:1-2)? Why?**

Once the Spirit of God opens our eyes to truth, and we, in faith believe the gospel, He gives us new life. We become a new creation – one who is created in Christ Jesus for good works which God has already prepared for each of us. (Ephesians 2:10)

The first of the “*Three Vital Principles*” you need to consider is to:

“Walk Humbly With Your God”

In order to develop a lifestyle of humility, you will need to begin cultivating **Four Spiritual Habits:**

1. *Hide God’s Word in your heart* – (Psalm 119:11) This is of course, the most critical dynamic of our Christian life! Here’s the reality:

Your love for the Lord
The Strength of your marriage
And the Wisdom you bring to your children

DEPEND ON YOUR STEADY WORK IN THIS AREA

So often we are duped into imagining that we can gain the best God has to offer while spending a scant amount of time actually hearing what He offers! Our hearts are so very foolish. Through the years, the Scriptures – especially certain passages and chapters – must become our place of refuge, our anchor in the storm, our lifeline when everything else is spinning out of control.

“Hiding” God’s Word in our hearts implies:

-  Repetitious use
-  Deep meditation
-  Sincere faith

Know this girls; if the Word of God is where we first turn for our soul’s satisfaction, it will truly prove itself to be “living and abiding” (Hebrews 4:12, I Peter 1:23).

- **Discipleship questions**

1. **How much are you currently able to hide the Word in your heart each week (Ps 119:9-11)? (this includes good books, sermons, discipleships, Bible)?**
2. **What books are you currently reading that would aid your pursuit of equipping your thinking with truth (Prov 2:1-4)?**
3. **What non-essential distraction(s) in your week take you away from time you could be filling your mind with truth (Heb 12:1, 1 Cor 9:24-27)?**
4. **How are you going to carve out more time in your week to fill your life with truth?**
5. **Challenge: Spend more time in the Word than in social media for the next month. Watch what the Lord does!**
6. **When you are learning the Word, what areas are you struggling most to believe, and yield to in faith (Heb 4:2-3)?**

2. Cast your cares on the Lord in Prayer – (Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Peter 5:7) – During those all-too-common weary hours of life (especially resolving conflict with a spouse or as a young mom caring for children), when it feels like you’re all alone in the struggle, the knowledge that God is close to those whose hearts are breaking is the sweetest privilege of all (Psalm 34:18). (Even in your single years, you must learn this type of dependent prayer. You must learn to commune with your God in this way!) Turn to Him, pour out your heart, and know that He hears your cries and He knows how to meet your precise needs in the moment (Hebrews 2:17-18, 4:14-16). That is His promise to you personally, and He never lies (Titus 1:2)!

When speaking to young women, I encourage them to pray like they are in a dogfight! Because it is true, we are in a spiritual battle and the enemy does not want us taking our cares to the Lord.

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).

- **Discipleship questions:**

1. **What does your prayer life currently look like (1 Thess 5:16-18)?**
 2. **What parts of your week would you be more useful to the Lord if you bathed them in prayer (Eph 1:15-23)?**
 3. **What did Jesus model by way of example/instruction regarding prayer? When? How often? What language? What does He instruct? (Mark 1:35, Matt 6:9-13;14:23; Luke 6:12; Luke 22:32,23:34; John 11:41-42; John 17)**
 4. **Where would you like to see growth in your prayer life?**
 5. **What practical steps do you plan to take to implement change?**
- Challenge: Spend more time praying than on social media for the next month and watch what the Lord does in your heart.**

3. Confess and forsake sin daily – (James 5:16, 1 John 1:9) – The danger here is that we so quickly develop the worst habits. From the very first sin, human beings have been hiding guilt, blame-shifting, deflecting, lying, and excusing our sinful conduct. We are all pathetically bent in this direction. But neglecting to humbly admit our weaknesses before the Lord accomplishes nothing good. Nothing is hidden from Him, but everything is “open and laid bare in the presence of Him to whom we are accountable” (Hebrews 4:13). Confess the things God shows you that you need to forsake. Stop minimizing sin by calling it a weakness. If you are being taught the things that Christ commanded, (Matthew 28:20), then keep a clear conscience in these things so that your spiritual nerve endings remain acutely sensitive to the slightest pangs of guilt (Acts 23:1, 24:16, Romans 2:15, 2 Corinthians 1:12, 1 Timothy 1:5-6, 19, 4:2, Titus 1:15).

- **Discipleship questions:**

1. **Do you understand what confession and forsaking looks like (Prov 28:13)?**
2. **Do you understand the biblical doctrine of repentance (Ps 32,51,73; 2 Cor 7:9-1; Lam 3)?**
3. **What does your daily pattern of repentance look like?**
4. **What are some besetting sins that you need to cultivate and more fully confess, forsake and repent toward?**
5. **Do you know what the fruit of repentance looks like (see passages in question #2)?**

4. Be thankful in the Lord and Rejoice – (Philippians 4:4, Colossians 3:17, I Thessalonians 5:16) – Not much to elaborate on here, except to say that if everything we have and enjoy is an undeserved privilege given by God to sinners who are worthy only of judgment, then He is worthy of our constant gratitude. Be thankful in the things He is teaching you.

In the wake of losing, in a single day, absolutely everything he ever cherished on earth, Job challenged his irreverent wife with these words, “Shall we indeed accept only good from God and not adversity?” (Job 2:10) Great question!

- **Discipleship questions:**
 1. **What areas of your life are you most thankful for?**
 2. **What areas of your life do you find it the hardest to be thankful for?**
 3. **Why do we struggle being grateful (Heb 11:6)?**
 4. **What promises from the Word could you study to cultivate gratitude in areas you are not thankful for (Heb 12, Psalms)?**

Rejoicing in the Lord with gratitude is the gauge of our humility.

Always remember that whatever the Lord gives is unmerited, so that if/when He takes it back to Himself it is always for our best and for His glory! (Romans 8:28).

The second of the *Three Vital Principles* you must apply to your life is to:

“Prepare now for a Godly home and family.”

If you want this principle to become an integral part of your life you will need to cultivate

Five Spiritual Habits:

1. Serve the Church of Jesus Christ – (Ephesians 6:1).

- *Don't treat the ministry as a lifeless routine.* (Hebrews 10:24-25) We are called to “stimulate one another to love and good deeds”. Church attendance is not an “optional” event. It is quite impossible to serve others when you have no idea of what another’s needs might be. Service in the Church should be the *center* of life. Be aware, the culture of the world can easily capture the hearts and minds of your children when the Church is not their culture. Through your service to others in the church, your children will learn how to serve.

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1. Discipleship questions

- ***Have you ever asked yourself how you obey the command for all believers to “not forsake the gathering (church)” (Heb 10:24-25)?***
 - ***Answer: Whatever it takes to be around enough to “stimulate others to love and good deeds”. Which means: You need to know where they don't have the good deeds they***

need to have. Where they can grow in their love. What their burdens are! To Stimulate: Is to encourage to such a level to “stir someone into a frenzy”. Which means: you need to be around to come along side, encourage, share ministry with, pray for, be close range, and follow up with those you are stirring up.

- *So...How much should you be around to obey that command?*
 - *Is the church, and God’s people, at that level of importance in your life as it is to Christ (Eph 3:10;Acts 20:28)?*
 - *What is currently distracting you from having the church where it should be in your life?*
 - *What changes could you make?, sins you need to repent of? And which life disciplines do you need to change? So you can serve the church at the level Christ calls (Heb 3:12-13; Phil 2:3-4;Rom 12:3-18)?*

- *Don’t defy the authority of the church leaders. (Hebrews 13:7, 17) As you serve in the Church, you will be under the authority of the Elders. Allow them to lead without grieving them through your disobedience or grumbling. Rather, encourage them by submitting to their leadership. Again, your children will be watching how you submit to authority. They will learn how to submit to the authorities in the Church by watching you.*

- **Discipleship questions:**
 1. **Do the leaders of the church know you well enough to say that it is “their joy” to shepherd you (Heb 13:17)?**
 2. **Would the leaders that know you say that shepherding you is more of a joy, or a grief (Heb 13:17)?**
 - **If you are a grief, what areas in your character need to grow?**
 - **What does the Scripture say about those areas?**
 - **Do you need to seek forgiveness of your leaders for being a stubborn sheep (Eph 4:32, Matt 5:23)?**
 3. **Are you at close enough range to Elders and leaders on a regular basis that you can “Imitate their faith” (Heb 13:7)?**

- *Don’t neglect discipleship. (Matthew 28:19-20) When Jesus called His disciples to go and “make disciples of all the nations” He also encouraged them to teach the things that He had taught them. As God teaches our hearts how to obey His commandments, we are called to teach those things to others. Discipleship is not an option, it is a mandate (Titus 2; 2 Tim 2:2, Matt 28:18-20). Paul told Timothy, “Let no one look down on your youthfulness...” Timothy had learned the scriptures as a child and had been taught by Paul from the time he was a teenager. By the time he was in his 30’s he was qualified to lead a church. If you have not grown up in this*

manner, then you should be the one being taught by a more mature Christian. And then shepherd others as God gives you opportunity.

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- **Discipleship questions:**
 1. **Are you in a discipleship relationship with someone more mature than you?**
 2. **Are you transparent when you meet with them? How can you grow in this?**
 3. **To be a disciple is to be “a learner” “a pupil” a “question asker”. Do you come to those that disciple you as one looking for opportunities to grow. If not, how can you grow in that?**
- *Don't neglect your spiritual grace-gift.* (Ephesians 4:12-16) These gifts have been given to you by God specifically to be used, “For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.” As you are being taught by the men who have been called to shepherd your heart, learn from them what God is calling you to do. Each one of you must be willing to participate in what God has prepared for you to do. It is a great privilege to be able to participate in God's work. We should each do that work with joy for the Lord's sake.
- 1. ***Discipleship questions:***
 - ***Do you use your gifts to serve the church (1 Cor 12, Rom 12, 1 Peter 4:10-11)?***
 - ***In what ways could you find to maximize your gifts more (1 Peter 1:22)?***
 - ***What areas of your life could you be wasting on self, where you could be spending yourself for others (2 Cor 5:15)?***

2. *Fill your home with echoes of Scripture/Truth* Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Proverbs 2-9, Ephesians 6:4)

Ladies, (you likely have not thought about this as you don't have kids yet), but in the first ten years (the most formative) your children will spend most of their time inside your home with you. This will be your opportunity to lay a foundation that cannot be moved. Timothy's mother and grandmother poured Bible truth into his little mind and heart from his earliest days. The promise of God is that His Word, taught from childhood, is able to “give the wisdom that leads to salvation” (II Timothy 3:15).

Here is the problem: with each subsequent generation of believers complacency sets in. Young mothers who are first generation believers vigorously teach Scripture to their kids, knowing how clever Satan's schemes are and how easily deceived the human heart is.

The next generation of mothers “grew up” hearing the Word, it's already a comfortable part of their home furnishings. And as the burdens of life increase and exhausting days pass with greater frequency, biblically-grounded moms can be lulled into taking short-cuts. The

“urgency” their parents felt, and which lifted them above the weariness, begins to fade. Mothers who stop their own Bible reading, rarely quote an actual verse or clear biblical principle when disciplining a child, and often no longer even correct worldly thinking patterns being adopted by their kids. The truth is: *second and third generation Christian moms are vulnerable to laziness and unbelief regarding the command to repeatedly put truth into their children’s minds. Don’t let this be your life or your home. Don’t live for one more hour of sleep today that will rob others (or your kids in the future) of a soul-rescuing truth for tomorrow.*

- **Discipleship questions:**
 1. **Have you thought about what you do now will impact the patterns you will have as a mother some day?**
 2. **What could you do now in your current living situation to fill your home with truth?**
 3. **Do you think there are areas in your thinking of where you need to think more soberly about the next season of life?**
 - **What areas?**
 - **What does the Scripture say about those areas?**

3. Remove all worldly entanglements and distractions – (Hebrews 12:1; Ephesians 5:1-3)

It is so easy for long-held convictions to erode these days. I have watched countless families slowly become fearful of the world’s opinions, leading them to flirt with earthly values and ethics in ways they would never have dreamed at first. Over time the clarity of God’s Word is lost in the mist and fog of worldly compromises. Families that begin with such biblical promise and strength end with nothing but broken dreams and shattered hopes.

Know and believe the Scriptures, girls, and you’ll never be duped! Satan wants your heart and he wants to captivate the hearts of the children God gives you in the future. And being the prince of this world, he has all the evil resources at his whim. You need not fear his wicked plots if you “resist him, firm in faith” (1 Peter 5:9). But make no mistake...

If you refuse to put off pop-cultural entanglements, self-serving distractions, and shallow friendships you and your family (in the future) will indeed suffer.

Don’t be like Abraham’s nephew, Lot, who secretly harbored the notion that he could enjoy what God provides without a sober concern for how it might steal his affection for God. ***Never downplay the dangers lurking in the world around you, nor overestimate your own ability to enjoy life’s comforts and amusements AND still honor God for them.*** Our hearts love possessions, power, and pleasure. Faith and a humble heart before God’s truth is our only true protection. Be very careful here!

- **Discipleship questions:**

1. **What worldly entanglements in your life do you need to untangle yourself from?**
2. **What is it about your heart that makes you drawn to those distractions and entanglements?**
 - **What lie do you believe in that area?**
 - **What does this show about your view of God?**
3. **What would confessing, repenting, and forsaking those areas look like?**

4. *Don't waste time and valuable resources* – (Ephesians 5:14-17)

I am afraid that the days of economic, national, and personal security are coming to an end in our country. It won't be too long before all of us face extreme financial hardship and increased cultural turmoil. The birth pangs are upon us already, but frightening days are ahead. With the most superficial church-culture all around us, standing firm under intense persecution will be a severe challenge for you, and hopefully, your future kids in the next 20 years.

And how will they stand if their more conservative parents succumb to fear, weakness and compromise?

Girls, hopefully you will never have to witness your children being hauled off in chains for proclaiming the truth of Jesus Christ. But you can't have a strong spiritual family life while also frittering your time away in things that don't really matter to the souls of lost men and women. The undercurrent and highest priority of your life ought to be the things of Christ and His kingdom (Colossians 3:1-4).

Innocent pleasures on earth still cost valuable time and resources.

Be wise, and make the most of your time...with your husband...with your children...and with the work of the ministry!

- **Discipleship Questions:**
 1. **If you took a monthly inventory on your life, would the way you use your time demonstrate that the highest priority of your life is Christ and His Kingdom (2 Cor 5:1-10)?**
 2. **What areas of your life do you waste time (Eph 5:13-20)?**
 3. **How could you replace that time you are wasting with what Christ would want you to spend your time on?**

5. *Guard your family* – (Deuteronomy 6:4-6, Proverbs 31)

With all the great gadgets and techno-bells-and-whistles these days, our 24 hour, global access is unprecedented. These are wonderful tools and offer a world of opportunities far beyond what people just a few decades ago ever dreamed.

Today's average pre-teen **in the church** grows up believing all kinds of lies about their family life:

- ✚ Home life is “OK,” but it should be a kind of best & breakfast from which I plan to do whatever I wish. I expect free food, a warm bed, hot shower, full entertainment system, storage for my things, and free wifi! And my home should never interfere with my growing “family” of peers and friends.
 - ✚ Parents have limited access to my world, but they should remember that I have things to do...places to go...important people to meet! If I am busy, then just give me my space and make sure tonight’s dinner doesn’t include any vegetables I don’t like!
 - ✚ I have a right to have “digital access” to my friends 24/7...My facebook and text messages are “private” and off-limits, as is other media content I choose to listen to or watch.
 - ✚ My obligation to my siblings requires only that I acknowledge their existence, but I don’t have to interact with them...and I’m certainly not under a call to serve them in any way, especially since they don’t do anything for me.
 - ✚ Parental instruction is an option to “consider,” worthy of regular protest, and should be received with suspicion if I “don’t understand it”.
 - ✚ Adulthood is a “right,” and my lack of family-faithfulness in my youth should not prevent my adult entitlements, nor should it be held against me in any way as I come of age.
- **Discipleship question:**
 1. **Do any of those lies still rest dormant in your thinking? Read on!**

Yet, the family is designed by God as the smallest, complete social unit of society. It is self-contained – established when one man, who’s been under the care of his father and mother, leaves them in his adulthood and is joined in marriage to a woman who has been blessed by her father and mother as ready to begin her own family unit (Genesis 2:19-24).

The two are recognized by God as their own complete family. It has been “blessed” by God through the blessing given to Adam & Eve, and they will now bear children (if God allows) who will expand the family and bring the potential for the next generation of families. The family is where society begins!

The home is the place where every necessary life-discipline is developed, and it is also the place where sin is either grotesquely allowed to spread or powerfully curbed through the grace of the Gospel!

A home is a place of insulated learning – where truth is taught, sin is checked early, the gospel finds softer soil, and sin’s fallout is curtailed. Your family is also for *interdependent* living. None of us chose our particular bloodline, history, or family personality. God did! He put you in your home, not as a staging point for your surrogate “family” of peers, but as a haven for learning how to strive against selfishness, meet the needs of others, experience human affection at the profound level God intended between blood relations, and to grow through life’s early lessons without destroying your future!

Let me be frank girls: If a young wife/mother does not protect her family by setting a protective hedge around the relationships inside the home, the cost will be great indeed! Children today are being robbed of a strong, truth-saturated, character-forming environment in many Christian homes because parents allow the outside world (cultural fads, peer opinions, lifestyle influences) to invade their personal family space almost without limit.

In the perfect design of God, the home is the protected environment where parents and siblings learn to serve each other in the difficult course of living every day at such close-range. It requires undistracted devotion to the priorities of family relationships and responsibility.

The unceasing intrusion from outside the home via electronic friends, opinions, and peer-groups cannot be sufficiently countered by so little commitment to who and what is inside the home. Staying connected with friends across town or across the country through the internet is a gift and privilege. But when this medium aggressively shatters the proper barrier between our “private” and “public” worlds, the family unit is dangerously given over to the whims of the village. Christians must be discerning! Each of you will answer to God for the decisions that affect the spiritual fortitude of your home life.

- **Discipleship questions:**

1. **While you are not in this season yet, what are you doing to put yourself in the lives of wives and mothers to learn how you can be preparing?**
2. **When you do involve yourself in people’s lives that are in that season of life, do you enter into those environments looking to serve?**
3. **In your relationship with other single guys, and with your social media, are you working hard to keep your public and private world separated?**
 - **Some day you are going to need protect your home in this way.**

The last of the *Three Vital Principles* you must apply to your life on a daily bases...

Be Alert to a Woman’s Particular Vulnerabilities

If you want discernment about the schemes Satan will try to use to take you down, you’ll need to deal with **four areas of vulnerability that women tend to face.**

1. Relational significance and gossip – (Proverbs 11:13, 18:8, 16:28, 20:19, 26:20 and I Timothy 5:13)

Women are personally engaging and enjoy relationships at a high level. But where an idol of significance (sinful fears and insecurities) takes hold there will be jealousy, strife, and tale-baring (James 3:16). Be very careful to learn self-restraint, and cultivate discernment about your motives for trafficking in certain information. Being women means that you’ll always treat relationships as deeply rich and emotionally fulfilling. But you’ll also be tempted to use them for a sense of personal worth, giving rise to habits of tearing others

down or desiring the intimate details of matters not concerning you. Help each other learn self-control and build habits that honor the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Discipleship questions:**
 1. **Is this something you struggle with?**
 2. **As you read through the passages above, and the principles highlighted, in what areas do you need to be battling more thoroughly?**

2. *Faintheartedness and emotional instability* – Because of the infinitely wise way God made a woman, her capacity for nurturing a home, a husband, and children is far greater than that of her masculine complement. Girls, (in your singleness) begin now to find your greatest fulfillment in the Lord alone. A discontent single is a discontent married woman. Enjoy relationships, but never set your affections on the fleeting nature of emotional stimulation. Only the Lord, through His power and grace, can fill our hearts with all that truly satisfies (II Peter 1:3). Never ground your faith in subjective thoughts and emotional sensations. Trust the word of God! Believe only what God says, especially when it seems to go completely against every sensation of your mind and body. Be brutally honest with where you are fragile, fainthearted, or timid.

- **Discipleship questions:**
 1. **In what areas do you think you rely too much on subjective feelings, and need to further ground your convictions, by faith, in the Word of God (Heb 11:1-2).**
 2. **What specific passages could you have greater faith in?**

3. *Vanity and "Beauty" Comparisons* – (Proverbs 31:30) Having a “charming outward manner” deceives. Being “Pleasurable to the eyes” is useless/worthless.

WHY? Because we immediately link outward charm and looks with things we’re convinced we must have in order to have our slice of happiness and fulfillment in life!

We will even dismiss or outright ignore flaws in a person’s character because we find their personal “charm” causes sensations of emotional pleasure...our imaginations race with the thought of more feelings like that... and we find their looks naturally pleasing to us...and we want to look at them a lot more and imagine ourselves being looked at by them in the same pleasurable way.

From there, we don’t even want to ask questions about character because we are lost in the infatuation of being around that person.

As soon as we start to proactively feed those cravings, the relationship will begin to serve the lust of the eyes and lust of the flesh. In fact, we’ll even dismiss the ‘yellow flag’ a close friend raises over the relationship, because the thought of saying “no” to those pleasures is just too radical to consider.

And yet the idolatry being nurtured is more sinister

That person's charm often deceives us because we have come to love shallow, temporary emotional fulfillment rather than to believe truth and have a clear conscience before Jesus Christ.

And on the issue of "beauty," we've often allowed ourselves to be convinced that physical attractiveness isn't shallow after all. We imagine that it does bring fulfillment.

Do you believe that being desired sensually by a man, merely for your body, is at least better than feeling alone? Do you believe that real sacrificial love and fulfillment doesn't really require the death of selfishness? Girls, you are choosing to believe the lie, "we can have our cake and eat it too!"

- **Discipleship question:**
 1. **Have you been comparing yourself to others, drawing ungodly conclusions through envy, jealousy, and bitterness?**

Ladies envy another's 'beauty' because they believe they must be beautiful in order to be "happy".

- **Discipleship question:**
 1. **Are you jealous of, or dislike others who are called "attractive" because you don't want them stealing the attention of the guys you want looking at you?**

Be wary! Bitterness develops when a person does not believe that God knew what He was doing when He created them (Proverbs 139:14). Bitterness can take root when you no longer believe that righteousness and purity in marriage are truly fulfilling. *This is when you will no longer believe that honoring God brings the greatest blessing.*

In the heart is where all these things begin. (Proverbs 6:25)

Proverbs 11:22 – A beautiful woman who lacks a righteous character is actually like exquisite high end jewelry hanging from the hideous nose of a pig.

So, what is the "comparison" you should use? In I Peter 3:3-4 the apostle explains where REAL beauty will be found. It is NOT outward beauty (vs. 3) where there is no eternal value. Beauty is found in the hidden person of the heart, (vs. 4) the heart that is developing the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit.

Inner beauty is precious to God and is the only beauty with eternal value.

Remember, there is always a price!

(Proverbs 5:11-14)

- **Discipleship questions:**
 1. **Are you currently working on cultivating an inner beauty that is precious to God (1 Peter 3:1-6)?**
 2. **What areas of your life could you be further working on cultivating an inner life of eternal beauty (Prov 31)?**

4. Sinful fear and manipulation – (Proverbs 21:19, 27:15, Titus 2:5b, 1 Peter 3:1-6)

When someone you love has a weakness that is affecting your life, you can try a thousand cheap, earthly weapons to fight the desire for control but you'll lose very time. The only sure defense against a lack of submission to Christ is knowing and trusting that He **made no mistakes** when He put imperfect, earthly authorities in your life. The same will be true in marriage. God calls a wife to willingly "come under" her imperfect husband. The Lord promises that a wife is blessed, protected, sustained, and strengthened with grace when she humbly honors the decisions and leadership of her husband (1 Peter 3:1-6).

Usurping the role of leader in the home removes you from God's protective covering and slanders the goodness of Jesus Christ's shepherding of your life.

Always remember that **the LORD, your Master has never failed you in even the smallest command or promise!**

So as single, no matter how "settled" or "comfortable" you feel by manipulating or controlling your relationships with others, in God's eyes it is unruly and brings upon you a severe chastening in order for you to learn the folly of "hoping in your own strength" (Hebrews 12:12-13).

*Every strength has a potential weakness
at the other end*

Women are wonderfully gifted, highly resilient, and relationally engaging. With such strengths come tendencies toward prideful condescension, lack of compassion, and strong opinions. Girls, you are setting patterns in place for your life right now that will affect your life and marriage for decades!

Don't manipulate and control people to get your way. When you get married, you can easily be tempted to emasculate your husband's leadership because you are afraid of his weaknesses.

Every time you choose to wield your influence you will potentially direct the course of your family's future. Be on you guard! If your family succumbs to your manipulation and control, you will reap what you have sown and have yourself to answer for it.

*“The wise woman builds her house,
but the foolish tears it down with her own hands.”*
Proverbs 14:1

In other words, if you form a habit of controlling and manipulating relationships now, you will carry that into marriage. You will desire to manipulate and control your husband and children in order to have the life you want. And that is all you will ever have in the end, a human prize gained by sinful means and used for self-exaltation. You may have temporary relief from your fears, but your guilt will compound before God (increasing your sense of fear), your capacity to find rest in the Lord’s purposes will diminish, and the flame of your spiritual passion will eventually be quenched. What will you be able to offer your precious children someday?

Whatever is gained through manipulation is actually a great spiritual loss for you personally. God’s way IS perfect! Take your fears before the Lord (I Peter 5:7), petition Him with pure motives and thankfulness (Philippians 4:6-7 and James 4:3), and wait upon Him to raise you up in supernatural peace and strength (Psalm 40:1-5, 119:73-77 and Philippians 4:7).

Hope in God’s unfailing love and care

(Psalm 38:15, 42:5, 11, 62:5, Romans 5:2,15:13, I Timothy 1:1, 6:17, I Peter 1:21, 3:5)

- **Discipleship questions:**
 1. **What areas in your life do you need to work on sinful fear and manipulating relationships (See passages above)?**
 2. **How are you currently coming under flawed leaders in your life (Heb 13:7)?**