

Thoughts for Young Women

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

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

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 is having 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 be 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 ok, 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!

In a word, they need to redeem the time, because the days are evil.

I wanted them to know that nothing will ever be more important than what they're doing right now to prepare 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!

- 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 Pet 2:11) -
- And then 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 (First Timothy 4:7).

Our culture never encourages a long-term perspective of anything, but the word of God says different! 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**. 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 were they earned. Life is a privilege which belongs, not to you but to Christ (1 Cor 6:20). Companionship is a gift (the "grace of life" - First 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 potential spiritual influence God wants you to enjoy!

You can't think about being a virtuous woman later and expect to face temptation with any strength or discernment! That would be like hoping to pass your hardest exam after totally ignoring all the material and squandering weeks of prep time in your favorite past time.

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 hearts in what is right!

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'd actually built by their neglect – a wall that didn't have to be there!

I put all kinds of encouragements into THREE VITAL PRINCIPLES:

1. WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD

If you want this, it will mean cultivating **four spiritual habits**:

- a. 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're able to bring to your children **all depend upon 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 & abiding” (Hebrews 4:12; First Peter 1:23).

- b. Cast your cares on the Lord in prayer (Philippians 4:6-7; First 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). Turn to Him, pour out your heart, and know that He has felt exactly what you’re feeling, and He knows how to meet your precise needs in the moment (Hebrews 2:18; 4:14-16). That’s His promise to you personally, and He never lies (Titus 1:2)!
- c. Confess & forsake sin daily (James 5:16; First 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’re 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). 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; Second Corinthians 1:12; First Timothy 1:5-6,19; 4:2; Titus 1:15).

- d. Be thankful in the Lord & Rejoice (Philippians 4:4; Colossians 3:17; First 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 worthy only of judgment, then He is worthy of our constant gratitude. 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! **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 His glory (Romans 8:28).

2. PREPARE NOW FOR A GODLY HOME & FAMILY

If you want this one, it'll mean cultivating **five spiritual habits**:

- a. Serve the church of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 6:1; Hebrews 10:24-25)

Don't treat the ministry as a lifeless routine (Heb 10:24-25)
 Don't defy the authority of the church leaders (Heb 13:7,17)
 Don't neglect discipleship (Matt 28:19-20)
 Don't neglect your spiritual grace-gift (Eph 4:12-16)

- b. Fill your home with echoes of Scripture/Truth (Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Proverbs 2-9; Ephesians 6:4) – You only get one shot at family life. Girls, in the first ten years (the most formative) your kids will spend most of their time inside your home with you. What an 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” (Second Timothy 3:15).

Here's 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 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) of a soul-rescuing truth tomorrow. Think long-term, and believe the promises of God. Whether you're a second or third generation Christian, make sure you're a mother with *first-generation passion* for the souls of your little ones!

- c. Remove all worldly entanglements and distractions (Hebrews 12:1; Ephesians 5:1-3) – It's 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've never 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" (First 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 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!

- d. **Don't waste time and valuable resources** (Ephesians 5:14-17) – I'm 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 your 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!

- e. **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’m 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 chose 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...

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! It 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 your children in your home, not as a staging point for their 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 grow through life's early lessons without destroying your future! Let me be frank, girls: if you do not protect your 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 the across the country through the internet is a gift and a 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.

3. 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:

- a. **Relational significance & gossip** (Proverbs 11:13; 18:8; 16:28; 20:19; 26:20; First Timothy 5:13) – Women are personally engaging and enjoy relationships at a high level. But where an idol of significance (sinful fears & insecurities) takes hold there will be jealousy, strife and tale-bearing (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.
- b. **Faintheartedness & emotional instability** - Because of the infinitely wise way God made a woman, her capacity for nurturing a home, a husband & children is far greater than that of her masculine complement. Girls, begin now to find your greatest fulfillment in the Lord alone. 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 (Second 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

c. **Vanity and 'Beauty' Comparisons** -

Prov 31:30 - "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised"

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'll 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're lost in the infatuation of being around that person.

As soon as we start to proactively feed those cravings, the relationship is now beginning 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 have a 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...that it does bring fulfillment...that being desired sensually by a man merely for our bodies is at least better than feeling alone...and that real sacrificial love and fulfillment doesn't really require the death of selfishness...we can have our cake and eat it too!

And, we compare ourselves with others, drawing ungodly conclusions through envy, jealousy, and bitterness!

We envy another's 'beauty' because we believe we must have it to be happy...

We are jealous and dislike others who are called "attractive" because we don't want them stealing the attention of the guys we want looking at us...

We're bitter because we do not believe that God knew what He was doing when He made us...nor do we believe that righteousness and purity in marriage are truly fulfilling...nor do we trust that honoring God brings the greatest blessing...

The heart is where all this takes place - Prov 6:25

Yet:

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

- I Peter 3:3-4 - Real Beauty

>Not outward (v. 3)

>Only inner beauty is precious to God--

Beauty is powerfully enticing (Prov. 7:6-9)

Don't listen to flattery (Prov. 7:21)

- “You look good”
- “I just want to talk”
- “It can't hurt”
- “Don't you care about me?”

Remember: There is always a price! (Prov. 7:22-27)

Proverbs 5:11-14

- d. **Sinful fear & manipulation** (Proverbs 21:19; 27:15; Titus 2:5b; First 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 every time. The only sure defense against unsubmitting 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 (First 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!

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 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 of prideful condescension, lack of compassion, and strong opinions. You are setting patterns in place in 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 marriage, you'll be tempted to emasculate your husband's leadership because you're afraid of his weaknesses.

Every time you wield your influence you will potentially direct the course of your family's future. Be on your guard! If your family succumbs to your manipulation and control, you will reap what you have sown and have yourself to answer for it (Prov 14:1 - "The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands").

In other words, if you form a habit of controlling and manipulating relationships now...you will carry that into marriage...you'll manipulate and control your husband and children in order to have the life you want...and that's all you'll 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 then?

Whatever is gained through manipulation is actually a great spiritual loss for you personally. God's way IS perfect balance! Take your fears before the Lord (First Peter 5:7), petition Him with pure motives and thankfulness (Philippians 4:6-7; James 4:3), and

wait upon Him to raise you up in supernatural peace and strength (Psalm 40:1-5; 119:73-77; Philippians 4:7).

Hope in God's unfailing love & care (Psalm 38:15; 42:5,11; 62:5; Romans 5:2; 15:13; First Timothy 1:1; 6:17; First Peter 1:21; 3:5) –