

# **Refining Rubies**

**A Study of Biblical  
Womanhood for  
Young Ladies**

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## INTRODUCTION

This book was initially written for use in the youth program of a mainstream church, where not all of the girls come from conservative Christian homes. With that in mind, the first two chapters lay a foundation of God's love for us, His forgiveness of us, and our need to forgive others. If your daughter has grown up in a godly home these chapters may not be necessary - or even appropriate - for her, and you may wish to just skip them.

If you are using this study in a group setting where the girls' parents are not present, I recommend that you have the girls read each chapter and answer the accompanying questions the week *before* you go over it together. This will allow each girl's parents to be the first to offer her input, as well as to make any necessary arrangements if they are not comfortable with something. You may want to pair each discussion period with the study of a practical skill, like sewing, bread baking, or meal planning.

Scripture verses are taken from the NASB.

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## LOOKING FOR LOVE

Let's start with love. We have to come to grips with love - what it really is, its source, and how it affects our lives - before we can begin to understand our roles as women. First of all, what do we deserve? On our own, in our sinful state, not one of us deserves anything but hell. God's love for us is not an obligation; it's a gift. He *wanted* to offer it to us because we're special to Him. Now, you may not feel very special. If that's the case, you need to understand who you really are in Christ.

Let's look first at how God views you. Jesus *died* for *you*. That's powerful. So powerful, in fact, that it's worth repeating. Jesus died for YOU. Let that sink in. Think about it. You wouldn't die for someone unless you thought he was pretty special, would you? Jesus considers you so special that you are worth dying for. As you go about your daily routine today, this week, this month, meditate (keep thinking) on that. Jesus died for you. It goes deeper than that, though.

Jesus was - and is - God. He lived in heaven. We can't comprehend exactly what heaven is like, but the Scriptures do bring some things to light. Imagine a world with no pain. No sickness. No hatred. Perfect fellowship with God. Everyone gets along. Everyone has plenty to eat. No one is cold. Everyone is full of joy. Jesus was willing to leave His home - to leave the perfection of heaven and

that closeness to His Father - to come to this earth full of strife, hatred, bitterness, pain, lack, and all of its other sinful imperfections, to live among all that suffering for more than 30 *years*, and then to die - for YOU. Jesus told a story about a man who found a pearl of great price in a field. That pearl was such a treasure that he went away and sold all that he had just to buy that field so he could have the pearl. The parable was intended to describe the way that *we* give up what we have for Him, but I believe it paints this picture, as well. Jesus gave up all He had - his home, the perfection of heaven, his very life. Why would He be willing to give up all of that, for the ugly, dirty "field" of the earth? Because you are a pearl of great price. You are a treasure - a treasure that Jesus was willing to give up everything to acquire.

If you are in Christ, the Bible also says that you are a new creature. "The old things passed away; behold, new things have come....He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:17b,21) In Christ, you are His righteousness. Regardless of what you may have done in the past, regardless of what anyone else might think of you, regardless even of what you may think of yourself, in Christ you are the righteousness of God.

Let's move on to the book of Ephesians. Paul had a lot to say to the Ephesians about their position in Christ, but we'll just focus on a couple things. Look at 1:4, "...He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him." He chose you. Not only that, He chose you from the very beginning - before the world was even formed. Have you ever been the last one chosen when captains are picking teams for a ballgame? That feels pretty lousy, doesn't it? But

how does it make you feel to be chosen at the very beginning? It feels pretty good. It makes you feel important. Maybe some of you haven't ever felt that. Well, here's your chance. God believes you're so important that He chose you from the very beginning to be on His team.

"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation - having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." (1:13) What is the purpose of a seal? Two different types of seals come to mind for me, each with it's own significance. One type of seal is intended to protect its contents. I seal my car windows so the interior of the car doesn't get wet. I seal the jelly jar so the jelly doesn't spoil. God gave you the seal of the Holy Spirit to protect you. Why? Because He loves you. The other type of seal is a mark. It displays ownership. God has sealed you with the Holy Spirit to show everyone around you that you are His. You belong to Him. Every one of us is born searching for a place to belong. God is able and willing to provide for you that sense of belonging.

Who are you, then, in Christ? You're a very special treasure - so special that you're worth dying for. You are a new creature. You are loved, protected, and sealed by God. You are chosen to be His.

What if this chapter doesn't describe you because you aren't a new creature? What if you aren't protected and sealed by God, because you aren't yet in Christ? It's not too late for you. Thank Him for loving you and treasuring you enough to give everything up for you. Accept that He became sin for you, so that you could become the righteousness of God. He will make you a new creature. He will protect and seal you with His Holy Spirit. He already loves you very much.

## **Questions**

- 1. Is there anything keeping you from believing that you are precious to God?*
- 2. Are there other aspects of who you are in Christ you feel you need to remind yourself of?*

*Write or draw on an index card something that will remind you that you are valuable to God. Place it somewhere you will see it frequently to remind you all this week.*

## **RESTORATION**

Some of you have a tough time believing you are valuable because of the way you've been treated in the past. Your gentleness and vulnerability - the very core of your "womanness" and femininity - have been taken advantage of and trampled on. For many of you, it was your fathers who did the trampling - the men who were put in place to love and protect you, as the earthly images of God the Father. Let me tell you something. You did *not* "deserve" to be hurt. You did not "deserve" to be neglected or abused. You did not "deserve" to be mistreated or made to feel inferior. If any man (or woman) has ever treated you in such a way as to make you feel worthless, he was wrong. With that said, let's discuss forgiveness.

Maybe you think you can't ever forgive your dad - or whoever wronged you. Perhaps that's because you've been deceived about what forgiveness is. Some of you think that forgiving the person who hurt you means conceding that what he did was okay - that it was right. That can't be true, because there's no need for forgiveness unless you've been wronged. To forgive you must first admit that someone mistreated you. Now you know what to forgive.

Maybe you still think you can't. You're right. By yourself, in your own strength, you can't forgive. The beautiful thing is you aren't alone. You're in

Christ, and *He* can do anything. Because He can do anything, and you're in Him, then *you* can do anything *through Him*. Consider Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." It doesn't say "one or two things." It doesn't even say "many things." It says that you can do "*all* things through Him." Do you realize that's a promise? God has promised you that *in Him*, you can do *all* things. That "all things" includes forgiving the one who hurt you.

I can almost hear you now, telling me that you know you're supposed to "forgive and forget," but you really don't think that you can forget what he's done. You don't have to. God is perfect and all-powerful. When He forgives us, He throws our sins into the sea of forgetfulness. We're finite. Our minds are created to retain all the information that has ever entered into them. You don't have to forget; you have to forgive. A former pastor of mine gave a wonderful illustration of this. He has a scar on his hand where he once cut it deeply. At the time, it HURT. That was years ago but, even now, every time he sees that scar he remembers what happened. It doesn't hurt anymore, though. Forgiveness is like that. You may always remember what happened. With God's help and healing, though, it will begin to hurt less and less. Eventually, when you do remember, it won't hurt at all.

So how *do* you forgive? First of all, make sure that you are remaining in Christ. As a Christian that is your rightful place, but sometimes we wander away. Stay close. When you are in Him, He will make you strong. Second, ask Him to help you love the one who has hurt you. 1 Corinthians 13:5 tells us that "[Love] does not take into account a wrong suffered." I know that's *really* tough, but I promise you will feel better if you forgive. Bitterness

only eats away at the one who is bitter. Third, remember that forgiveness is a decision and a process; it isn't a feeling. If you have been deeply hurt it will probably take a while to heal, but it will gradually get easier. Make up your mind that you are going to forgive, and depend on Christ to be your strength.

## **Questions**

- 1. What does it mean to forgive?*
- 2. What does it not mean to forgive?*
- 3. Is there someone you need to forgive?*

## **Activity**

*Get out a piece of paper for each person whose name you wrote in response to question 3. Starting with the first one, write the person's name on the piece of paper. Now write out what that person did to offend you. Pray over the offense on that piece of paper. Tell God that person hurt you. Tell Him what that person did to hurt you. Then ask him to help you love that person and give you the strength to forgive. When you're finished, tear up the paper and throw it away. Commit to praying for that person every day for at least a month. It's hard to stay bitter toward someone you're praying for.*

## **WE'RE DIFFERENT**

We've talked about who you are as a Christian. Now we're going to add to that the image of who you are as a woman. Whether we like it or not, we women are different than men. When God created mankind, "male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:27) God distinguishes between male and female here for a reason - we're different! There are two ways we can choose to use that information. We can rebel against what we were created to be. Ultimately, this will make us miserable, because by denying what we inherently need, we starve ourselves emotionally and spiritually. The other option is finding fulfillment by joyfully becoming all we were created to be. For some of us that will be a very long process. It won't be easy, either, if we've bought into Satan's lie that men and women are the same. It will be worth it, though, to be able to give as we were created to give and to receive what we were created to need.

1 Peter 3:7 says, "You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered." Let's break this down. First of all, even though this verse is about wives, in particular, it describes all women. (Consider the phrase, "since she is a woman.") The phrase "weaker vessel" often causes women to rebel

against this, but God's Word is truth whether we want to hear it or not. So what about this "weaker vessel" thing? We are, in fact, not created to be as physically or emotionally strong as men are. We were created to depend on God first, and then on the men that He's placed in our lives - particularly our fathers and our husbands. This allows us to be a picture of the church's dependence on Christ. There is more to this phrase than that, though. A "weaker vessel" was a more fragile piece of pottery than those dedicated to common use. A more modern example might be "Grandma's fine china." The fine china is special. It's well cared for, sheltered and protected so it won't be broken, and just generally cherished. We wouldn't dare be so careless as to let anything happen to it. Peter is telling the men that they are to view women that way. They are to cherish us, take care of us, shelter and protect us from harm. He's saying that a "real" man would not consider being careless enough to let anything happen to a woman, much less to *cause* us damage, because we're special. He's not saying we are *not* valuable, he's demonstrating that we *are*.

There's more here. Peter also instructs the men to treat us with honor, as fellow heirs of the grace of life. What does that mean? He's telling the men that they're *not* better than we are. He's saying that we have the same inheritance in Christ that they do. The implication is that they have no reason to think that they're better than we are or to condescend to us. They are to treat us with honor.

This is what we are designed, as women, to need. We need protection. We need that honor and special treatment - the outward evidence that we're cherished. Perhaps we don't always need it outwardly, but it's what we're designed to thrive on. You may not always need a man's physical protection, but that protectiveness is what your

heart has been created to respond to. The bottom line? Men and women are equal in value and spiritual standing, but different in our needs and roles.

## **Questions**

- 1. How are men and women alike?*
- 2. How are we different?*
- 3. How do you feel about being different than a man?*
- 4. Look at your response to #3. Are you comfortable with who God made you to be, or do you need to ask Him to help you appreciate who you are? Do you need to submit yourself to him?*

## **OUR ROLE**

We're going to be centering the rest of our study around Titus 2:4-5, "...that they may encourage/train the younger women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the Word of God may not be dishonored." ("Train" is a much more accurate translation than the word "encourage," which is used here.) Ladies, here is our "job description". There are other scriptures which give us more insight and instruction into some of these things, and we will look at some of those verses, but most of them come back to this.

Why are we to do all these things? "That the Word of God may not be dishonored." Why would the Word of God be dishonored if we don't do these things? We are representatives of God's kingdom. The Church is His bride and everything we do as women paints a picture of the Church. Our interactions with men (particularly our husbands) portray the interaction between man and God. When we submit to our husbands (or fathers) we depict submission to God. When we are pure we depict the purity of the Church, His bride. When we care properly for our homes, we depict His people working to care for His body. Acts 1:8 says, "...you shall be my witnesses...". It doesn't say, "you shall be my witnesses if you want to be," or "you shall be

my witnesses when you work at it." It says, "you *shall* be my witnesses." We are witnesses to the world of who He is and what He's done, whether for good or bad. That is an awesome responsibility. There is a movie called *The Princess Diaries*. In the course of the movie, the main character discovers she's a princess and her grandmother begins to teach her how to behave properly. She constantly has to consider whether what she intends to do would be fitting for a princess and how it would reflect on the country she now represents. We are princesses. The Bible says that, "the Lord is King forever," (Psalm 10:16) and that, "the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." (Romans 8:16) Daughters of the King are princesses. Everywhere we go, in everything we say, and in everything we do, we ought to ask ourselves, "Is this [place, activity, word] fitting for a princess? What will this say about the Kingdom I represent?"

## **Questions**

- 1. What do you think each of the things listed in Titus 2:4-5 means?*
- 2. What do you think of when you think of a princess or a lady? How does she look? How does she act? How does she carry herself? Describe her.*
- 3. How much do you think you should be like the lady you described in the last question? How much are you like her now?*
- 4. Is there anything you currently do which is not fitting for a princess?*

## **LOVING OUR HUSBANDS - WHERE DO WE START?**

The first thing Titus 2 says older women are to train the younger women to do is to love their husbands. Where do we start? We start at the beginning - choosing wisely. You can - and should - love your husband even if he is not godly, but it's much easier to start out on the right foot by choosing a godly man, rather than "settling" for less than God's best.

There are a few important things you should keep in mind. The first and most important is that you must keep God first. His Word says that if you delight yourself in Him, then He will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4) The key here is that *He* is your focus; searching for a husband is not.

The second is that you are a precious treasure of God, and only a man who sees you, and demonstrates that he sees you, as such is an appropriate mate. Do you remember that I told you earlier that you are like the pearl of great price? Jesus instructs that you "not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet." (Matthew 7:6) In Christ, you are holy. Be wise in the decisions you make regarding who you give yourself

to. Don't give yourself - a pearl, a treasure - to someone who will only trample you under his feet.

The third is that you should desire a husband who can be trusted with all that God asks you to give - yourself, with all the vulnerability that requires, your gentleness, your quiet spirit - everything.

The fourth is that God loves you far beyond what you can comprehend, and wants to bless you beyond what you can even imagine. He knows you better than you know yourself, and he knows your heart's desires. What is it that you, personally, want? Your husband is *your* husband, and God wants to please *you* with that gift. Do you know what you want? Or are you looking at every piece of fruit in the basket, when only an orange is capable of satisfying your heart's desire? Imagine your life as a married woman. How do you want your husband to treat you? What do you want him to value? Do you have hopes for what he does to make a living? What kind of family do you want? What activities are important to you to share? And of those dreams, what are you willing to give up? Sometimes what God blesses us with isn't what we'd hoped for at all. It's more.

It's good to know at a young age what you want - and what you don't want. This will help you develop realistic expectations which will keep you from looking when you don't need to. It will help you prepare yourself for marriage. And when you're ready for a relationship, it will help keep you from damaging your heart by entering into a relationship with a man you would *know* is not right for you if you had only taken the time to consider what you're looking for. It's easier to make an objective list when you do not have your affections set on an individual. For these reasons, it is good to start

early in identifying not only what defines a good husband, but what defines a good husband *for you*.

If you have a godly father, he will know your needs and desires, as well. He will guard your heart from misplaced or premature affections. It is his responsibility to protect you until he hands that protection over to your husband. If your father is willing to carry this responsibility for you, let him.

## **Activities**

*1. Describe what you see as the ideal husband. Be specific. It's okay to dream/imagine a little here. What does he look like? What does he enjoy? What's his character like? How does he treat you? What lifestyle issues are important to you, which you want him to respect? (If you want to be a stay-at-home-mom, for example, what does he think of this?) When you're finished with your list, read back over it. Which of those things are the most important? (Being a Christian, for example.) Which of those things are not really important at all? (For example, if you really like dark hair, so that's on your list, but you'd gladly marry a blonde who fits the more important parts of your description.) Put your list somewhere you can pray over it on a regular basis.*

*2. Consider once again your description of the ideal husband. What kind of wife would he want? What is her character like? How does she treat him? What is her appearance like? Describe her, and be specific. When you're finished, read back over it. Are there any areas in which you are not that woman? Are they areas in which you should be that woman? Pray over this list, asking God to help you become the woman you want to be. Then place it with the other list so you can pray over them both periodically.*

## **LOVING OUR HUSBANDS - IN PURITY**

We talked about loving our husbands from the beginning. We will continue to love our husbands even before we meet them. How? By keeping ourselves pure. The most obvious aspect of this is abstaining from sex before marriage. This is very important. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God." This passage makes it clear that adultery and fornication are ungodly practices which Christians should not be part of. This is not because God doesn't want us to have any fun. It's because He wants to protect for us something that is holy and beautiful. When you have sex with someone, it is not just physical - especially for us women. You share a part of your heart with that person. Inside a committed marriage relationship, that sharing is a wonderful thing. Outside of a

covenant marriage, it's very damaging emotionally. There are also a number of physical risks involved. God is not limiting our freedom; He's limiting our pain.

There's more to purity, though, than abstinence. In Matthew 5:27, Jesus says this, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." While this is more of a temptation for men than for women, the principle still applies. Our thoughts, our mental and emotional purity, are as important as our physical purity. This doesn't mean that if you ever think someone is handsome you're living in sin. What it does mean is that you must keep a tight reign on your thoughts. 1 Corinthians 10:5b says, "We are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." I don't believe that we can control whether a negative or ungodly thought ever enters our minds. We can, however, choose to keep dwelling on that ungodly thought or to toss it out. Another way we can do this is to guard what goes *into* our minds. Measure what you read, watch, and listen to against Philippians 4:8. "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things."

## **Questions**

*1. How pure are the things you've been putting into your mind or dwelling on lately?*

*Write out Philippians 4:8 and keep it near your television, bookcase, CD player, etc.*

## **LOVING OUR HUSBANDS - COMMITMENT**

What we're talking about here is a lifelong commitment versus divorce. This can be a hot topic in the church but I think it's important to discuss what God says about divorce. "And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?' And He answered and said, 'Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh"? Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.'" (Matthew 19:3-6) This passage not only tells us that married couples should not split up, but reminds us of one of the reasons - divorce causes pain. Our society sees it as a quick fix, but it isn't that easy. Divorcing is separating one flesh. That's like taking your arm off. It isn't a pretty thing, and it's extremely damaging.

1 Corinthians 7 gives us more specific instructions concerning divorce, as well as remarriage. We are not to leave our husbands. If one of us has a husband who is not a believer, she

is not to send him away but, if he leaves on his own, she may let him go. (verses 10-13)

What about remarriage? 1 Corinthians 7:11 says, "but if she does leave, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband." Marrying someone else is not an option. What else does the Bible say about remarriage after divorce? "And He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.'" (Mark 10:11) We've already discussed that adultery is sin.

## **Questions**

- 1. What is God's position on divorce?*
- 2. What is God's position on remarriage after divorce?*
- 3. Is it important to enter marriage with the mindset that divorce is not an option at all? Why or why not?*
- 4. How can you avoid putting yourself in a position where divorce would be a possibility?*

## **LOVING OUR HUSBANDS - OUTWARDLY**

There are many, many aspects to loving our husbands. There are so many, in fact, that we can't possibly cover them all. We are going to cover just one more, because it's a trap that many women fall into. It has to do with our speech. Many women badmouth their husbands in public. Often this takes the form of jokes which assume that we all just "know" what the joker is talking about. Sometimes it's just part of conversation. This is wrong. "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear" (Ephesians 4:29) Consider again the question of what is fitting for a princess - or a lady. Are those ugly words you might be tempted to speak about your husband becoming to a lady? Or do they simply make you appear bitter? Do we want people to think poorly or highly of our husbands? In the description of the ideal wife in Proverbs 31, the Bible says that, "her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land." That means that he is highly respected. Why do you think that this is part of the description of his wife? Surely she was a large part of his reputation. How she behaved reflected on

him and I'm sure she didn't speak poorly of him to others. We've discussed the differences between men and women and our need, as women, for protection. One of the greatest needs of a man is respect. Ephesians shows us this is important when it says, "let the wife see to it that she respect her husband". (5:33b) One major way we demonstrate this respect is through our speech.

What if your husband really isn't doing what he's supposed to be doing and you don't know what to do? Must you suffer in silence? The first thing you need to do is go to the Lord and pray for your husband. Be specific. Pray for exactly what the problem is. Be humble, as well. It's possible that you are the one who is wrong. It's always safe to pray, "Lord, please change the heart and mind of whichever of us is wrong," (and mean it!). If possible, go to your husband and discuss your concerns with him. Just be respectful and don't drag it out. If he is not changing his mind and you have not changed yours, respectfully drop it and don't keep nagging him about it. If you really are not sure what to do, go to *one* woman who is godly and wise and who you know will keep what you say in confidence. Be very sure that you are really going to her for counsel and not just as an excuse to complain about your husband.

## **Questions**

- 1. What are some ways you can build your husband's reputation with your words?*
- 2. What are some ways you can tear it down with your words?*

## **LOVING OUR CHILDREN - BEFORE THEY'RE BORN**

Before we can love our children, we must learn to simply love children. (Other children are good at this; they just inherently know that babies are great!) Our society looks at children as an inconvenience, or maybe a status symbol or part of the fulfillment of our own wants. If a given family has "too many" children, society will even tell them that they are irresponsible and that they are not taking others into consideration, since they're contributing to "overpopulation". (This, by the way, is one of Satan's lies. We aren't close to overpopulating the world.) If we are going to love our children properly, we must change our mindset to match God's rather than society's, by renewing our minds with His Word.

What does the Bible say about children? "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them." (Psalm 127:3-5a) In Deuteronomy, the Lord promises that if His people keep His commands, He'll bless them. Included in His promised blessing is the promise that, "He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your

womb....there shall be no male or female barren among you." (Deuteronomy 7:13,14) Again in Deuteronomy 28:2,4,11, "And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you will obey the Lord your God....blessed shall be the offspring of your body....and the Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body." The Scriptures make it clear that children are a blessing and a gift from the Lord.

Being fruitful is also a command that God has given multiple times. The very first command God gave to Adam and Eve was, "Be fruitful and multiply." (Genesis 1:28) Again after the flood, the Lord instructed Noah to, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth....be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it." (Genesis 9:1,7) In Leviticus the Lord promised His people that He would, "make you fruitful and multiply you," if they followed His instructions. (Leviticus 26:9) Children are important to God.

We need to guard our tongues. We talked earlier about how we speak about our husbands in public. Another pitfall is speaking negatively about our children. Have you ever heard a comment like this, "Yeah, they're cute when they're that age, but when they get older...they're terrible." What an awful thing to say about a child. When we say things like that I believe it grieves the heart of our God who loves those children very much. When parents say these things in front of their children, how do you think it makes the children feel? Again, we need to be careful, even in the way we joke around, to only speak those things which are edifying.

## Questions

1. *How does society view children?*
2. *How does God view children?*
3. *How do you view children? Is your attitude like society's or like God's?*
4. *What attitude toward children does abortion reflect? Is abortion appropriate for a godly woman? Why or why not?*
5. *What attitude toward children does birth control reflect? Is it appropriate for a godly woman? Why or why not?*
6. *Read Proverbs 10:22. Does this apply to children? If so, how?*
7. *What are some negative things people say about children? What attitude do they reflect?*
8. *What are some positive things we can say about children? What attitude do they reflect?*
9. *Can you think of anything we say which subtly reflects an ungodly attitude toward children? Anything we do?*

## **LOVING OUR CHILDREN - AFTER THEY'RE BORN**

Real love is doing what's best for the person you love, even if it isn't easy or comfortable for you. Because of this, loving our children often comes down to very practical, "unspiritual" decisions, like decisions about his birth process, whether to breastfeed or formula-feed, who to let him develop friendships with, when to send him to a babysitter, how to let him dress, what school to send him to, etc.

Speaking of school, let's look at Deuteronomy 6:6-7. "And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." Some people, like myself, believe we cannot do this if our children are away from us for many hours a day and that's why we homeschool. You may not arrive at the same conclusion. Certainly, however, as Christian parents we should be involved in our children's education. We need to know what they're being taught so that if it contradicts the Word of God, we can deal with that. As Christian parents we are primarily responsible for teaching the things of God to our children.

Many parents today believe that the church is responsible for teaching their children. This contradicts biblical instruction and precedent. The church can supplement children's biblical education, and the church often fills in for parents who are not fulfilling this duty, but the primary responsibility for teaching children the things of God rests on the shoulders of their parents. This passage in Deuteronomy tells us how we're to do this. We're to talk of them when we're at home and when we're out and about and in the morning and the evening. In other words, we're to talk about the things of God everywhere, all the time. Teaching God's truth is part of life, just as His truths apply to all of life. Whenever there's an opportunity, take it. When your young child admires a flower, teach her - or remind her - that God made it and that He made her. When someone close to you dies, use the opportunity to explain to your children why we don't need to fear death. When someone mistreats them, teach them to pray for their enemies. Make learning about God relevant to their lives.

## **Questions**

- 1. What are some choices parents have to make about how to raise their children? How do these decisions reflect love, or a lack of love, for the children?*
- 2. What are the dangers, if any, of leaving all of the responsibility for teaching your children the things of God to the church?*

*Think of three examples of opportunities to teach your children about God and godly character in everyday life.*

## **LOVING OUR CHILDREN - DISCIPLINE**

Many people believe that love and discipline are contradictory. God says that loving includes discipline. He even disciplines *us* because He loves us. "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives....all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." (Hebrews 12:5,11)

Many instructions for discipline and child training are found in Proverbs. Let's look at a few.

"He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently." (13:24)

"Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death." (19:18)

"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him." (22:15)

"Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you smite him with the rod, he will not die. You shall smite him with the rod, and deliver his soul from Sheol." (23:13,14)

"The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother. Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; he will also delight your soul." (29:15,17)

"Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it." (22:6)

We can't possibly consider all there is to discipline and child training. For one thing, there is far too much to cover in one chapter of a study; it is a study unto itself. For another, there is much difference of opinion in the application of discipline and I do not want to undermine the authority of any of your parents. Let's touch on each of these verses, though, and see what principles we find in them.

"He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently." Wow. There's some strong language in this verse. I see two important factors here. First, it is made quite clear that spanking is essential if you love your child. We know that the "rod" here is actually used for spanking, rather than being a figurative picture of guidance, because of verses 13 and 14 of chapter 23. The second thing is that we are to discipline *diligently*. Webster's 1828 dictionary defines "diligent" as "steadily applied; prosecuted with care and constant effort; careful; assiduous."

"Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death." I believe we're talking about spiritual death here. We are to begin disciplining our children early so their character

develops in such a way as to bring them to repentance.

"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him." This is not talking about simple childishness. "Fool" in Proverbs is used in contexts such as, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no god'." Foolishness is wanting to do our own thing, rather than following after God. Proper discipline will train a child to follow the Lord.

"The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother. Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; he will also delight your soul." Permissive parenting is shameful; we should not spoil our children. Properly disciplined children will be a joy. Undisciplined - or improperly disciplined - children will embarrass us. Discipline involves verbal correction and instruction as well as physical discipline.

"Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it." I believe there are three key aspects to this verse. The first is *train*. Training is not simply teaching. Two different definitions and uses of the word "train" should give us a reasonable picture of this. The first is, "to exercise; to discipline; to teach and form by practice; as, to train the militia to the manual exercise." In other words, this is drill. Forming habits by continual repetition, as in the military. The second is, "to break, tame, and accustom to draw, as oxen." This is like training horses. When horses are trained, they are broken of habits which, though natural, are undesirable, and taught - again, by guided repetition - to form the desired new habits.

The second key aspect is individuality - train up a child in the way *he* should go. When we try to

force a child into some mold which does not fit his personality, strengths, and talents, we aim him in the direction of failure. Part of forming a child in a lasting manner is understanding who God designed him to be and refining him within that framework. We can teach children to be godly while still respecting their God-given abilities. An example would be if you have a child who possesses the spiritual gift of encouragement/exhortation. People with this gift are big-mouths. (Ask me how I know!) The proper way to handle this is not to discourage the child from speaking, but to direct his speech in a godly direction.

The third key is the second half of the verse, "even when he is old he will not depart from it." Some people do not believe this is a promise. I do. I believe it is a promise and a natural consequence. IF you *train* up a child in the way *he* should go, he will stay on that way. If you just *teach* a child in the way *someone else* should go, well, all you can do is pray hard and hope.

One more thing. There are proper and improper ways to spank. This is one of those areas in which Christians differ, so I won't say too much on this topic. I will say this, though. Never spank in anger. If you're spanking because you're angry, you're spanking for the wrong reason and you're likely to do more harm than good. Spank when you're calm.

### **Activity**

*Discuss discipline with your parents. What do they think of these verses? How do they believe the verses are to be applied? What do they believe the proper disciplinary process involves? Why?*

## **BEING SENSIBLE**

I admit; I had to look this one up. I had no idea what was meant by "sensible." The King James Version translates it as "sober". Strong's concordance defines it as, "to make of sound mind, to discipline or correct." Other forms of the word are defined as, "discipline, self-control, sound mind, moderately, soberly." So what are we talking about here? Self-discipline, self-control, and moderation. I believe this refers to the way we generally carry ourselves. Are we calm, not given to outbursts? (That one hits close to home for me.) Do we keep a godly reign on our tongues or do we gossip, either openly or in the name of "praying for" someone? Do we exercise moderation - in food, drink, hobbies, clothing, etc. Do we go on "kicks" and get carried away with things, then get tired of them and move on to the next thing? An example of that would be to go on a "health food kick" and begin eating sprouts and tofu, throw away the sugar, etc. - until discovering your family won't eat that way - then going on a no-carbohydrate diet, etc. That is a lack of moderation and sensibility. Do we latch on to every "fad"? A "sensible" woman does not follow every new trend - or every wind of doctrine.

## **Questions**

- 1. What are some examples of sensibility?*
- 2. What are some examples of failure to be sensible?*
- 3. Why should we be sensible?*

## **BEING PURE**

We've already talked some about physical, emotional, and mental purity. I'd like to talk now about modesty. 1 Timothy 2:9 says, "I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly." Webster's 1828 dictionary offers several definitions for modesty, "properly, restrained by a sense of propriety; not forward or bold; not loose or lewd; moderate, not excessive or extreme; not extravagant". ("Loose" here is not the opposite of tight; it means provocative or sensual.) Modest clothing is physically appropriate. Immodest clothing in this category of physical appropriateness comes in two basic subcategories. The first is clothing which is revealing. Any clothing which reveals undergarments or any part of the body which should be covered is immodest. This might include pants which others can see through, skirts with panty lines showing (a slip should solve this), or sleeveless shirts which show off bra straps, as well as low-cut shirts or pants, midriff shirts, too-short shorts or skirts, etc. The second category is clothing which covers, but which draws attention to body parts which should be concealed. This, too, could be too-short shorts or slips, along with tight clothing, clothing with decoration or words in

inappropriate regions, clothing without appropriate undergarments, etc.

Modest clothing is also that which does not draw undue attention. Outlandish clothing, extreme hair styles or colors, and extravagant fashions are immodest. Consider the last three definitions of modesty; they have nothing to do with sensuality, but with moderation.

Discreet is similar. It means self-controlled. Sometimes what we *want* to wear is not what we should wear. We should still exercise discretion.

Although not technically part of modesty, I'd like to discuss femininity and beauty. Let's look at a few verses, starting with 1 Corinthians 11:14,15. "Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering." Deuteronomy 22:5, "A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing." We are to be distinctly feminine in our appearance. Take a moment to think about what people see when they look at you. Would someone seeing you find it obvious that you're a woman? Would they find it obvious that you're a lady? How does your clothing affect your own attitude? I find that the more femininely I dress, the easier it is for me to feel good about God's design for me.

What about beauty? "And let not your adornment be merely external - braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God." (1 Peter 3:3,4) You can wear all the makeup you want, put on designer clothes, and spend an hour fixing your hair in the morning, but none of that will make you beautiful. God's Word says that we need to let our

adornment be "the hidden person of the heart." That's tough. Adornment is outward. You mean God's asking me to let "me" be seen? Absolutely. The you that's more "you" than any other part - the part that you hide for fear of rejection - God's asking you to let that "you" be your beauty. That means vulnerability. Some of us have built such thick walls around our "real" selves that it's impossible for us to be vulnerable, but we serve a God who specializes in the impossible. He is able not only to bring down the walls and help the real you shine through, but also to protect your heart in your vulnerability. (See Philippians 4:4-7) He wants you to "be yourself".

He doesn't ask us to let our adornment be ONLY our true selves, though. He asks that it be, "the hidden person of the heart, *with* the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit." Having a gentle and quiet spirit doesn't mean that you don't ever speak. It's an attitude. Gentleness is the opposite of harshness, and quietness is the opposite of strife. He's asking that we be peaceful and not contentious. This isn't patronizing! Men *love* gentle women. And God said that they're precious to Him.

## **Questions**

- 1. Think about the definitions we looked at of "modest". Do you have any immodest clothing?*
- 2. Are the other aspects of your appearance - your hairstyle, accessories, makeup, etc. - modest?*
- 3. Is it possible to wear pants and still appear feminine? Why or why not? Any pants, or just some pants? Why?*
- 4. Is it possible to wear immodest clothing and still appear feminine? Why or why not?*

5. *Is it possible to have a short haircut and still appear feminine? Why or why not?*
6. *Thinking again about the clothing you own, do you have any clothing which is not feminine? Would it be feminine if you partnered it with other clothing?*
7. *Thinking again about the other aspects of your appearance, are they feminine?*
8. *Do you need to make any changes to appear more modest? To appear more feminine? Why or why not?*
9. *How easy is it for you to "be yourself"? Why? What can you do to make that easier?*
10. *Do you have a gentle and quiet spirit? If not, how can you improve?*

## **BEING WORKERS AT HOME**

Let's add another scripture here. 1 Timothy 5:14. "I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach." This is specifically talking about young widows, but it's logical to assume that this is what was expected of all young wives, whether they'd previously been married or not. Paul says, among other things, they are to "keep house". In Titus he says they are to "be workers at home". What does this mean? Well, teaching you *how* to do it is largely a practical matter - learning to cook, clean, wash laundry, etc. - and can't be covered in one short chapter. What we don't like to talk about is to what extent we women should do these things. Do we all have to be stay-at-home-moms or is it all right to take an outside job? Let's look at the factors you should consider before you come to a conclusion. First of all, what has God instructed us to do? He's instructed us to love our husbands, love our children, be sensible and pure, be workers at home, be kind, submit to our own husbands, keep house, bear children, etc. Our primary responsibility, then, is to meet these responsibilities. We should not do anything else that would bump those things down the list of priorities. For example, if taking an outside job would mean not

doing what's best for your children (Remember, that's the definition of loving them.), but maybe what's the second- or third-best thing, you shouldn't do it. Another example would be if taking an outside job would keep you from being able to keep your house properly. It's wrong to insist that your husband finish *your* job so you can help him with his. If you can't finish your job you shouldn't be doing anything else in the meantime. I do not believe that I could complete my God-ordained duties if I worked outside my home, so I cannot in good conscience hold an outside job. You may arrive at a different conclusion.

Another option is a home-based business. The ideal wife in Proverbs 31 operated one. "She makes linen garments and sells them." (v. 24) She seems to have developed a business which fit well with her skills and talents. This is a good option for bringing in a little extra money while still being home to attend to anything needing attention and allowing you flexibility of schedule.

One final observation is this: the word in Titus translated "workers at home" (or "keepers at home," depending on your translation) is a noun. It is not a verb. We are not simply to keep our homes, or to work at home. We are to *be* workers/keepers at home.

## **Questions**

- 1. What do you believe is involved in "keeping house" or being a "worker at home"?*
- 2. What are some reasons women take outside jobs? Are any or all of these legitimate? Why or why not? Are any of them ungodly? Why or why not?*

3. *Do you think a woman can hold an outside job and still fulfill her responsibilities as outlined in the verses we've been studying? Would any adjustments need to be made?*
4. *How would having a male boss affect a woman's being "subject to her own husband," or would it? A female boss?*
5. *What are some skills or talents you have or could develop?*
6. *Could any of these skills or talents be used to start a home-based business? What kind? Would any training be needed? How expensive would it be to get started?*
7. *What does it mean to be a worker/keeper at home? Is this any different than simply working at home?*

## **BEING KIND**

This actually means "good." We're talking about general character here. Women of God should be virtuous in every respect. This is a pretty huge topic to cover - most of the Bible is about virtue - so we won't try. Instead, let's head straight to the assignment. This one is going to be a bit longer than the others.

### **Activity**

*Choose three virtues. For each one, define it. Give an example of it - either a theoretical situation or a biblical illustration of the virtue in practice. Determine its opposite and provide an illustration of it. Lastly, determine how well you, personally, display that virtue. Are you doing well in those areas or do you need to improve?*

## **BEING SUBJECT**

Although we don't always like it, Scripture makes it quite clear that wives are to submit to their husbands. "Train the young women...being subject to their own husbands." (Titus 2:4,5) "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:22) "As the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything." (Ephesians 5:24) "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." (Colossians 3:18) Our society tends to think of submission as almost a dirty word. This is partly due to our selfish, sinful natures, which cause us to want to have our own way and be in control at all times. It's also partly due to a misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of submission. First of all, why does God call us to submit? The first reason is simply that God has designed a particular order of authority - a chain of command, if you will - and that's the way it works because He's God and we're not. Christ is the head of the man and man is the head of the woman. (1 Corinthians 11) The second reason is the protection we talked about earlier. Women are designed to need protection, and that's not just a physical thing. We are not designed to carry the same weight of responsibility which men are. Submitting to our husbands takes that weight

off of our shoulders and places it squarely on theirs. Women are also much more prone to being swayed by our emotions than men are and, for this reason, men are better suited to making important decisions. Consider 1 Timothy 2:14, "And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression." Now, in this instance, the man still chose wrongly, but it demonstrates our vulnerability to deception. Men do not have this same vulnerability because we are created to think differently.

We often do not like to submit because of fear. We are afraid of the consequences if our husbands make wrong decisions. Look at it this way, though. If I step in and make the decision, I can still be wrong. In that case, I am held responsible for the wrong decision, not to mention my failure to submit, which is sin. If I give godly counsel and then allow my husband to make the decision (without nagging!) and he is wrong, the responsibility is his, not mine. Again, it's God's protection. And God *does* protect us when we submit, even when our husbands make bad decisions. Sarai (Sarah) submitted to her husband's instruction to tell a half-truth on *two* separate occasions, and God protected her. You can read these accounts in Genesis 12:10-20 and 20:1-18.

Is there ever a time we should not submit to our husbands? There are two schools of thought on this. The first interprets "as unto the Lord" as meaning, "in anything the Lord would permit". This interpretation is supported by the comment of Peter and the apostles in Acts 5:29, "We must obey God rather than man." I believe that a good standard here is to obey and submit to your husband except when that would mean disobeying something the Bible says in black-and-white, because it *does* clearly say to submit to your husband. Let's say, for

example, your husband tells you that you may not attend church on Sunday mornings. He doesn't, however, mind if you attend on Sunday evenings. The Bible doesn't say, "Thou shalt attend worship services every Sunday morning." In this case, you should respectfully appeal to your husband to change his mind and, if he doesn't, obey him and simply attend church on Sunday evenings. If you catch yourself in the awkward situation of being instructed by your husband to do something the Bible clearly prohibits (murder, for example), be very sure that you are truly not submitting for the right reason and that your "reason" isn't just an excuse.

The other school of thought says that we are always to submit to our husbands and that, because they are our heads, they will be held responsible. This perspective interprets "as unto the Lord," as meaning, "the same way you submit to God" (fully, in everything). This is supported by Numbers 30:1-15 where Moses specifies that if a woman makes a vow to the Lord and her husband contradicts it, her husband will bear the guilt of her breaking the vow. Think of it this way. We are to submit (at least) in everything that does not cause us to choose between sin and sin - the sin of not submitting or the sin of whatever our husbands are asking us to do. If we don't submit, we are held responsible for that sin. If we *do* submit, our husbands are held responsible. (Consider again the example of Sarai/Sarah.) If we are careful and only marry godly men, we should not even have to worry about such situations.

One last note. Most of these verses tell us to be subject to *our own* husbands. This is another aspect of God's protection. We only need to submit to our own husbands - not everyone else's.

## **Questions**

- 1. What does it mean to submit to your husband?*
- 2. What are three ways you could submit to your husband in everyday things? Are these ways you can submit to your father now?*
- 3. Do you believe a wife should submit in all things? Why or why not?*
- 4. What do you think of my guideline for when to submit and when not to? (If you believe the first school of thought is the correct one) Do you think it's good? Can you think of a better one?*
- 5. Give an example of one of these tough situations. What do you believe is the appropriate way to respond? Why?*