

far above

Rubies

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Ornament & Grace

by grace custer



Who Can Find a Good Man?

For his price is far above silver. (In fact, he's worth his weight in gold!) The heart of his wife doth safely trust in him, for he has promised to be faithful to her and her alone. She will have no need of spoil, because she knows no other woman could ever lure him away. He will do her good, and not evil, all the days of her life.

He worketh willingly with his hands and seeketh diligently to find a means to support his family. He riseth also while it is yet night, if need be, to fulfill his role as provider and sustainer of

He is not afraid of the snow for his household. When it comes, he diligently works to shovel or brave it, by doing those "little things" that wives so easily take for granted. (i.e., making sure the family has a warm car to ride in, in sub-zero weather, giving her a ride when she's too afraid to drive, or shoveling the car out when she gets it stuck after a blizzard!)

He maketh sure his wife has clothing of tapestry and purple, by allowing her a shopping trip, now and then, even when he

"Who can find a good man? For his price is far above silver."

their household. He considereth a house or a vehicle, and buyeth it, and with the toil of his hands, he works hard to maintain them.

He girdeth his loins with strength, and strengtheneth his arms. Within the circle of his embrace, she finds security.

He takes pride in his accomplishments and perceiveth that they are good. He works long hours, and his candle goeth not out by night.

He stretcheth out his hand to the poor, and gives of his extra time and resources to help others. He reacheth forth his hands to the needy, yea, even to tithe and give to missions!

doesn't see the necessity of it. (One sure place to find a Good Man is at a shopping mall. While his wife goes from one end of the mall to the other, checking out all the clearance racks, he can be found sitting in the center court, dutifully waiting, or perhaps, trying his best to quiet a crying baby or entertain restless children. Every once in a while, you might even spot a Good Man looking rather bored, but nonetheless, he is there with his wife on his arm, walking the aisles of a department store.)

His wife is known in the church and the neighborhood, when she sitteth among the other women,

because her husband cares for her physical and emotional needs.

He maketh money for his family and manages his income, so as to ensure that their financial state is stable. Strength and honor are his clothing, for he is a man of his word.

He openeth his mouth with wisdom, and the family respects his decisions. In his tongue is the law of kindness.

He values each family member, and treats them with due respect.

He looketh well to the ways of his household, and is willing to minister to the needs of his children in everything from putting clothes on their backs and food on the table, to playing catch, reading bedtime stories, building model airplanes, or taking them to church on Sundays.

It bothers him to have to eat the bread of idleness.

His children arise up and call him, "blessed," when they are grown, because now they see and understand the great contribution of sacrificial love he has made to their lives. His wife, also, and she praiseth him.

Money is deceitful, and good looks are vain, but a man that feareth the Lord, he shall be praised! (A Custer "re-take" on Proverbs 31)

In a day when role reversal is encouraged and even upheld as the ideal, and men are ridiculed for being too "manly" and told to be more in touch with their "feminine side," godly women are sorely needed! Men are being henpecked, manipulated and mocked just for being who they are...male humans! Sadly, men become confused and frustrated, trying to navigate the loud feminist "voices" that permeate our culture, resulting in a reticence to embrace their God-given role as leader and protector. It is the old-fashioned Biblical values that constitute a "Good Man." A man like this desires to please the Lord by taking seriously, his responsibility under God, to his wife and family. We, as Christian women, should gladly support and encourage our men to be what God created them to be!

While most Christian women agree in principle, our words and actions can disagree. We were drawn to our husbands because of our differences, but we often spend years after the wedding day trying our hardest to change our man into being like us! Praying for our husband, instead of trying to "change" or control him, will allow God to work in his life and enable us to appreciate the man God made him to be! This path will lead us to being thankful for his good qualities, rather than always only seeing the things that annoy us!

Every marriage can use more doses of gratitude and thankfulness! I Thessalonians 5:18 reminds us "In everything give thanks..." When the toilet overflows, when the car dies, when your husband forgets to stop at the store for needed groceries for supper, and even when all 4 kids come down with chickenpox, on back-to-back

weeks! God knows all about the frustrations of our lives, and He is in control.

Women can be notorious for focusing on the negatives. Christian women desire a godly man who will be the spiritual leader in the home. While this is a worthy and noble goal, it also requires some balance. Reality is this: no husband can unfailingly meet all of his wife's needs, expectations, longings, or ideals! It can only discourage and defeat us if we make the mistake of expecting our spouse to meet needs only Christ can meet! The best marriages are those where both husband and wife humbly acknowledge their weaknesses before the Lord, relying on Him without placing unrealistic or critical expectations on each other. Life is not a fairy tale for any married couple! Every healthy, stable marriage involves some storms, valleys, challenges, struggles, and a whole lot of hard work!

Most of us should spend more time praising, thanking, and encouraging our husbands than we do! When I see women without husbands who struggle to put food on the table or are burdened down with things that I don't give a second thought to because my husband "always takes care of that," I am smitten in my heart! When was the last time I thanked him for doing that task? For many of us, it is much easier to be critical than to be encouraging!

When two sinners come together in a lifelong commitment, God knows, without large doses of thankfulness, that marriage will grow stale and sour, or become boring and bitter! In the Scriptures, commandments such as the one found in Eph. 5:33, "...and the wife, see that she reverence her husband" are much easier to accomplish with a thankful spirit. Are you a complainer who is often discontented toward your husband, your finances, or your life in general? As wives, we may not even realize that a tendency to complain translates to our husband as a general dissatisfaction **with him!** (Here's a little "marriage secret:" whether we are aware of it or not, our husband truly does want to make us happy! He needs your encouragement, NOT a sour spirit that adds to his burden!) The larger picture is this: Being thankful and joyful is a choice, NOT dependent upon life circumstances! Focus on the Lord and trust Him to work in the difficult situations you face.

Here are some conversation starters, some "confidence-boosting" encouraging phrases to help wives who may be a little "rusty" in the "Thankfulness, Affirmation Department!" Sincerely try these out with your husband and see what God can do in your marriage as a result!

I love you. I don't know what I'd do without you! I'm not worried about what the outcome will be because I trust the Lord to lead you. You do (fill in the blank) that very well. I will follow you. The best things in life are not things. I'm glad I have you! I value your input and opinion. I'm so proud of the man you are! How do you figure out things like that? (fill in the blank) I am not complete without you. I'm so in love with you. I admire your skills. I love to make you happy! What can I do to be a blessing to you?

Thank you for taking care of me. I trust you. You are the only one for me!

We wives are familiar with the Biblical admonition given to us in Titus 2:4-5, *"That they may teach the young women to be...discreet, chaste, keepers at home."* Being a "keeper" of our home can mean several things, but it obviously indicates using initiative to keep our homes neat and clean! Therefore, **tidiness** is Scriptural! While this word means to *take care, to be a good steward of*, it does NOT indicate perfection! Tidiness is reasonable while perfection is impossible! We've all heard the phrase, *"A man's home is his castle."* Does it not make sense to you for a "good" diligent man who works hard to provide for his family be able to enjoy the fruits of his labors, when he walks in the door at night after a hard day's work?

Tidiness indicates there is organization going on behind the scenes, a master plan in place. Deciding the rules of "what goes where" in the home and being consistent falls to the wife, mother—the "keeper" of that home! At times, all

"...see what God can do in your marriage..."

of us certainly fall behind in our chores. However, not ever catching up, and a home that is always a mess is a serious matter! If this describes you, I urge you to humble yourself and get some help and accountability! Disregarding this Biblical command is a sin and in direct disobedience to God's Plan! You are like that foolish woman in Proverbs 14:1 who is plucking her home down with her hands!

Tidiness—simple upkeep—can also be applied to oneself. We see in Proverbs 31, that the virtuous woman gave careful consideration of her clothing: *"She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple."* (Prov. 31:22) She was a *"crown to her husband,"* (Prov. 12:4) and because of her habits, talents, and her work ethic, *"...is known in the gates."* (Proverbs 31:23)

As Christian women, we should want to look our best, all the while striving to be modest, thrifty and resourceful. Putting our "best foot forward" and being diligent to be a good example in all areas, is a Biblically-based, balanced perspective! We should consistently seek to improve, learn, and grow—physically, emotionally and spiritually!

I don't know about you, but I need to check myself in all areas on a fairly frequent basis. *How are my personal habits going these days? Am I getting lazy with my household chores? When was the last time I cleaned_____? (Fill in the blank!) Am I causing my husband or other family members daily frustration because of my lack of organization? (Meal planning, laundry duty, clutter control habits?) To keep from appearing "thrown together," do I think ahead to make sure I have attractive, clean, neat clothing to wear? Do I give thought to what my husband thinks about how I look? Do I need to "spruce up" my hair style or clothing choices? Do I need to lose a few pounds? How would*

facing this issue help me in other areas of my life? (more energy, confidence, and better long-term health) How are my personal devotional habits these days? Do I find myself doing things, then realizing later I failed to pray about it? Deep down, do I see myself as hard to live with, while also knowing I am not spending enough time with the Lord for daily strength? Do most of my habits typically reflect a selfless or selfish motivation? Do I really want to change my quality of life and my relationships with others? Am I teachable? We all have potential to fail and must guard against laziness, which will surely result in leaving a tarnished legacy for others to follow!

Christian women can often be guilty of expressing a lack of **tenderness** in our marriage relationship! While it is not healthy to use this as an excuse, there are actual physiological contributing factors for this problem. A lack of tenderness can rear its "ugly head" as a result of a woman having to deal with "that time of the month!" (Only another woman can truly understand what it's like to live with the "predictable unpredictability of a cyclical nature," to quote Christian author, Debra Evans.) It would do us good to just admit that on certain days we are more "touchy," and tend to see ordinary "molehills" as mountains! Experiencing the up's and down's of ovulation, pregnancy, perimenopause, and postmenopause can certainly bring about the reaction one husband voiced, "Why is my wife never the same two days in a row?" (I must ask...which woman in this reading audience wants to tackle THAT question?) I have often lamented, "Is it any wonder men don't understand women?" Most of the time, we women don't even understand ourselves! We seem to be like onions where you have to peel off layer after layer to finally get to the heart of an issue! Men, on the other hand, are straightforward. What you see is what you get! They also don't "take the long way around" on things. For them, it's just a straight shot from point A to point B! My, how we need God's grace and help daily!

In spite of these difficulties, marriage is the most *important* human relationship a man and a woman can voluntarily enter into, designed by God to survive the stresses and strains of child rearing, health challenges, financial pressures and more! When done God's way, it has been described as a "little bit of heaven" here on earth! In the creation of marriage, Genesis 2:18 sheds light on God's Divine Plan, *"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him."* How comforting, to see the heart of God reflected in His decision to design a life-long relationship that nurtures both husband and wife in a soul-deep, heart-bonding way! When God created the man, He created him with a need for a companion. This need was met when God took Adam's rib and formed Eve. She was just the helper he needed: the one who could nurture, comfort and encourage him like no other!

A companion is one who accompanies you and spends time with you; the person you nurture and care for, and who becomes your dearest friend. Speaking about marriage, Author Sheldon Vanauken proclaims a solemn

warning: "There is such a thing as a creeping separateness. What do young people who are freshly married do? They can't rest when they're apart. They want to be together all the time. But they develop separate interests, especially if they have separate jobs or friends. So they drift apart. Pretty soon they have little in common except, maybe, the children. So the stage is set for one of them to fall in love with someone else. Later they'll say the reason for the divorce was that he/she fell in love with someone else, but it wasn't that at all. It was because they let themselves grow apart."

I'm sure your reaction is like mine, after reading this tragic commentary about how easily couples can grow apart over years of marriage. While I do not want my marriage to end up like that, I can imagine how it could, if I ceased to nurture the friendship and companionship my husband and I enjoy. If I'm not willing to be flexible enough to exercise patience, understanding and unselfishness, our marriage would suffer or be destroyed!

We women naturally think of our man as a "Good Man," willing and capable of fulfilling his responsibilities as head of the household and leader of our family. (Of course, he has to be a "Good Man," or we never would have married him in the first place, right?) While our men are strong, hard-working, and virtuous in many ways, they are also vulnerable. They have needs that only we, as their wives, can honestly and righteously fulfill. Some of these men may demonstrate a very hard "shell," but inside, they are hurting for a little tenderness from their wife. They don't always want to ask for it, and may secretly wonder if something is wrong with them because they even need it, but the fact remains. A man longs to feel close to his wife. This closeness need not always include the Marriage Act but that is an important component, because it affirms their God-given manhood to know their wives desire them as well.

There may be a man who struggles with bitterness toward his wife because she continually frustrates him with her laziness and lack of order in the home. He may be well past the point of saying anything about it, for fear of causing friction in their relationship. I wonder if he secretly dreams of calm on the "home front," instead of living in domestic chaos?

Other "Good Men" gallantly go on, selflessly investing in the family, but deep down, they have a wish to feel more appreciated for their willing sacrifice. A simple "thank you" or heart-felt compliment would make their day! Those "little things" mean a lot! By investing yourself for the sake of your husband, you have the opportunity to make a "Good Man" an even Better Man, as you travel life's long journey together! *(Although this article was written to married women, even if you aren't married, be thankful that you undoubtedly can identify some of these good qualities in your father or other man in your life. Pray for your future husband, as God prepares him for you, and you for him!)*

Whether Ye

EAT OR DRINK

by cindy chaney

It was a typical morning for Patty; she showered, dressed, and got ready for the day. Since the holidays were now over, Patty decided she was going to cut down on the junk food and eat lighter; after all, she had a few extra pounds to shed. Instead of a bagel with cream cheese, Patty decided to cook some oatmeal, and for added protein, she threw in a handful of almonds. She enjoyed the hearty oatmeal along with her morning cup of coffee.

Lunch for Patty was always different. There was the cafeteria at her workplace where she could grab something quickly. Their burritos were to die for, and the price was reasonable. Patty was tempted to indulge in her normal lunch, but after considering all the cheese that smothered the burritos, she decided today she would get a turkey sandwich on rye bread, a lowfat yogurt, and a banana.

After work, Patty did a couple of errands and then decided to head home for supper. The family would already be home, and she needed something quick. Wanting to provide something healthy for her family, Patty picked up a rotisserie chicken and a bag of frozen vegetables. Instead of garlic bread, Patty decided to serve the chicken and vegetables with rice. This was a better choice seeing that garlic bread was one of Patty's downfalls.

As Patty climbed into bed that evening, she felt better about the start of her goal to eat smarter. But as she went over in her mind what she had consumed that day, she realized that she hadn't had many food items from the fruit/vegetable category. Knowing that a healthy diet included on average 5 servings from this category, and seeing she had only had 2 servings that day, she vowed that she would include more of these foods to her daily menu.

We can all relate to Patty's situation because we, too, go through periods of consuming too much party food, usually over the holidays, or while on vacation. During times of overeating, as well as when we decide to cut down on the junk, we often find ourselves eating well below the daily recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables. Eating enough fruits and vegetables each day takes thought and planning. If you consume meals that are fast and easy, then most likely you do not get enough of them each day. You may even

be a wonderful cook and spend time in the kitchen cooking meals for yourself and your family, and still come up short of the recommended amount. Take Patty, for example. She spent time that morning cooking herself some oatmeal, and when breakfast was over, she had not even had one serving of fruits/vegetables for that day yet. If she had thrown in a cup of blueberries or a half cup of raisins in her oatmeal, then she would have been on her way to meeting the recommendation.

While I am shopping, I find myself having to consciously plan to pick up enough produce to help my husband and me reach the number of fruits and vegetables we need every day. One item that I buy regularly is fresh spinach. It is available year round, is fairly affordable, and is packed with wonderful nutrients. It is also a vegetable that is versatile and can be used in so many ways. Here are a few ways to include spinach in your diet.

For Breakfast:

Take a handful of spinach leaves and sauté with green onions. Add an egg and scramble together in the pan. Add salt, pepper, garlic powder and continue scrambling together. Top with parmesan cheese and allow to melt before removing from pan. (This is one of my favorite breakfasts that I eat often).

Make a smoothie and add a handful of spinach leaves. This adds a nice green, healthy flavor to any fruit smoothie. (Another one of my favorites).

Add a hefty handful or two of spinach leaves to any quiche recipe.

For Lunch:

Spinach leaves are great when added to any sandwich. (Well, I guess I never tried them in peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, but who knows? Maybe it'll work!)

Add spinach leaves to salads.

Find recipes for spinach salads and make them for lunch. There are some wonderful recipes on the internet. I have a couple of easy recipes that are delicious and great for lunches.

For Supper:

Add a couple of handfuls of spinach leaves to any stirfry. I usually add them the last minute or two so they don't become too overcooked.

Again, add them to any tossed salad you are having with your evening meal.

When serving soup, add spinach leaves to each individual bowl of soup instead of cooking it in the soup. The leaves don't become soggy this way.

Keepers at Home

by susan belcourt

UNHEALTHY CHOICES?

Life is full of choices. Some choices are easy (golden highlights or red?). Others bring us to our knees desiring to make that right choice. Many of our choices have life-long ramifications and cannot be changed. Others, thankfully, can be, and in a sense, we are given another chance.

Having good health requires many choices, and it is good that we can often change what our choices were and make better choices. God created a wonderfully functioning body (Psalms 139:14-"...I am fearfully and wonderfully made...") It is amazing that we can "abuse" (lack of exercise, lack of good food choices, lack of sleep, etc.) our body for years, and it still performs for us. It truly is "*amazing!*" I do know, though, that as we age, those choices catch up to us!

I have been given a book called Lose It for Life. It is an interesting book concerning health. Both authors (physicians) battled weight and had health issues for many years. They each spoke of the struggles (embarrassment over their size; shame; discouragement; feeling disgust toward those who recommended weight loss programs; etc.) they experienced while carrying the extra weight. They also noticed that in their practices, people who lost weight, most often gained it back. Why? What was the underlying issue? Why does it seem so difficult to lose weight and keep it off? What was their REAL problem? After much prayer and soul-searching, they both realized their eating habits (food choices) were directly related to their emotions. (Am I ringing a bell?) Although this next statement is certainly an over-simplification, it is, in essence, what happened: "Once they put a finger on their emotion, they surrendered their difficult struggle to the Lord and began to achieve victory." The female doctor realized that she carried much grief (emotion) over the loss of a dear brother, and found comfort in food. Slowly, but surely, as she recognized the emotional component of her eating, she decided to make better food choices and lost 30 lbs.! The gentleman had other issues, but, he too, surrendered it to the Lord and lost 60 lbs! Both have kept it off for 20 years. (This book might be a great source for those who struggle with health and weight. As you read this, the Lord can use the information to help you identify your issue. The book can be found in our church bookstore.)

Before I go much farther to encourage better choices for better health, I want you to understand that I am not suggesting a "Twiggy" mentality. I am NOT talking about size, necessarily, but I am suggesting that each one of us consider our health. I certainly am not the EXPERT. I struggle daily to make right food choices, as most ladies do. I love food. I have a huge appetite. I have to be conscientious every single day. Because this struggle with making the right food choices shows, it is a little different than other struggles that we women face. Those that struggle are impacted daily. What if I had to hang a sign around my neck with words like "Liar!" or "Gossip" or "Fearful" or "Prideful," so that my issue showed? How horrible would that be? The sign would show when I went to Target, to the Doctor's office, or to church. Many who struggle with

weight are in that place every day. Again, as you read, this is not criticism. Hopefully, it will arm you with information that will be an encouragement to make better food choices. (And, this isn't just for those who carry a few extra pounds; there are ladies that are thin but unhealthy. *I am encouraging a healthy lifestyle for everybody.*)

It is of utmost importance for overall health and long-term health, to work at being healthy EVERY DAY of our lives. You don't wake up at 65 being healthy if you have never applied basic, healthy principles at 25! Even at almost 65, if I WANT to do a DIY project, I want to physically be able to do that. If I WANT to go for a bike ride, I want to be able to do that. I love being the age I am. I have "freedoms" I never had at 40! I do not want my choices reduced because of something I have done or not done! Each "season" of our lives should be warmly embraced—whether you are 20-30-40-50-etc. I exercise 5 days a week with several ladies that are 75-80. They are lean, have great balance, most take no medication and have a positive outlook on life. In 15 years, I want to be as healthy/fit as they are! I have a goal! They are a great example to me!

Why do we struggle so with weight? Sometimes, we were raised with food choices that were not the best. Our palates seemed to be "trained" to like foods that we were introduced to when young. I am thankful I was raised on a farm where we had lots of good, home-grown food. (We raised our own beef, pork, eggs, vegetables, etc.) We did not buy pre-packaged foods; we did not eat at fast food places (maybe there were none 60 years ago!); my mother was careful to limit sugar; we didn't have pop or sweet juice drinks. Our taste buds were "programmed" to enjoy good, healthy, clean food. If you have grown up with soda, pre-packaged foods, frequent visits to McDonalds, macaroni hot dishes, etc., YOU are going to have to make a change if you want to be healthier! The question is this: are you interested in doing that? This goes back to choices!

There are some real health issues that make it difficult to lose weight. If you are having difficulty, but can honestly say that you have been conscientious about food quality and quantity, then get checked. There are a few primary diseases that can cause weight gain even when one is eating the right foods. Thyroid disease (low thyroid function) left undetected and untreated will result in weight gain and many other health issues. Over 30 million people in America suffer from thyroid disease. As many as one in three women over 30 suffer from some level of thyroid dysfunction. Women are ten times more likely to have a thyroid imbalance than men. (In my own family, all 3 of us sisters have thyroid dysfunction.) If you think that might be part of your problem, do some research and get checked. Proper thyroid function is paramount for the whole body (not just metabolism).

Polycystic Ovarian Disease is another female problem that will make it VERY difficult to lose weight. This disease makes it necessary to maintain a very lean diet and get plenty of exercise, in order to be healthy and at your best weight. Most women that go through menopause will realize that they do not need as many calories, and they need more exercise to be healthy. It is imperative that YOU do some research. Health is important. Be proactive.

Why is it difficult for some to quit eating the wrong foods and too much food? The authors spend much time on emotional issues that cause us to EAT, EAT, and EAT. Whether someone experienced abuse (physical, emotional or sexual) as a child;

had a huge disappointment at some point in life; are consumed with bitterness, self-loathing or feeling unloved; have experienced pain from losing a parent, spouse or child; endured pain from bad relationships, etc., the Lord can resolve those issues if you allow HIM to heal that emotional/spiritual need.

Overeating (and eating the wrong foods) can be very much a CONTROL issue. Often, it exists when we cannot control other areas of our life. People that are anorexic are also struggling with a control issue. For some women, food choice is the ONE thing—either eating or not eating at all—that is within our control. There is very real emotional connection to food. Food is very comforting. It does not talk back. It's delicious! It is often VERY soothing. It's always there when we desire it. It's all about love: who doesn't love food like cheesecake, nachos, fried chicken, pizza, or whatever else calls your name? The problem is that any of these food splurges do NOT fix the emotional/spiritual need. Though they may be delicious at the time, they are of absolutely no help toward meeting the true need.

Here are some "emotions" that can cause us to overeat or make unhealthy choices. See if you can relate:

ANGER—"That really made me mad! I think I'll just go out to eat and show them!" (No one chooses celery sticks and hummus at this time!)

FATIGUE—"I am so tired, ice cream will help!"

Often what you need is a tall glass of water and rest! Psalm 37:7- Rest in the Lord....

DEPRESSION—Often, when we are discouraged or depressed and think "no one cares," we opt to eat instead of doing what Isaiah 61:3 says- putting on the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. The last thing a discouraged person needs to do is eat the wrong foods and too much food. Try reading the Psalms and listening to some uplifting music. Enjoy a cup of good tea. Go for a walk. Recall the Lord's goodness. Call a good, godly friend, share your discouragement, and pray together. Get good rest.

LONELINESS—Food often becomes a trusted friend during times of loneliness. "I am all alone and I am going to order a pizza!" The better thing to do would be to *get up and do for someone else!* Being a blessing to someone else really does work. Be a friend. Try it.

FEELING OF INADEQUACY/INSECURITY—This is a very difficult emotion. Often one overeats because she "feels" inadequate. If you are a child of the King, you have special talents and gifts. Do you know what they are? Use them to be a blessing to others. Perhaps you are not one to sing a solo or teach a class, but can you make a meal? Can you pray for/with someone? There are all sorts of things you can do to be a blessing. Be willing to make a difference in someone else's life.

HAPPINESS—Now, we have all eaten because of this emotion! Celebrations seem to mean food, and not always healthy options! You don't often go to a birthday party where they serve only vegetables or fruit! Eating wisely with this emotion will require PRE-PLANNING. You literally have to tell yourself you are NOT going to overeat or eat the wrong foods at festive events!

BOREDOM—This emotion is a slippery slide into unhealthy choices and weight gain. Get busy and stay busy! Start

a project! Learn a new skill! Get involved in church so that you are busy!

The list could go on and on—GUILT. SHAME. JEALOUSY. DISAPPOINTMENT. HURT. EMPTINESS. REJECTION. Emotions so often powerfully influence our decisions. The very truth about emotions is they often are not TRUE. Who is the father of lies? You cannot trust your emotions.

As a side-note, do you realize that many of our health struggles—fatigue, joint pain, skin eruptions, mental fog, being easily irritated, sleeplessness, etc. are very definitely connected to our food choices? Good food choices make a difference in so many ways.

Sixty-five percent of adults in the USA are OBESE! About a year ago, I was with my endocrinologist for a yearly exam. She commented on how pleased she was that I had lost 15 pounds last year. Then, she said, “You look great and all of your test results are super, but I’d like you to lose 6-8 more pounds!” I sort of looked at her and thought, “Really?” She told me that my BMI was almost 26 and should be 25 or less. (BMI of 25.1-29.9 is considered overweight and a BMI of over 30 is considered obese.) The weight guidelines are pretty strict and according to this, I am overweight! (Be brave. Google BMI and figure out your number!) One of my good friends suggested I should just get another doctor! Ha. Love her support, but we need to be *honest* with ourselves about our health and weight.

If you are at a point where you recognize you are not at your healthiest state, maybe this is the time to do something about it. Your first step is to really identify the cause. Is it an “emotion?” Is it being lazy about food choices and preparation? Is it being unwilling to do a little research to learn about healthier choices? Are you in a rut? Are you waiting until you HAVE to change your choices? Whatever it is, the Lord is the one that can give you the strength and endurance to succeed, as He can with ALL/ANY of our burdens, concerns, sin. Remember?

With this information, will you make this a matter of prayer? Making wiser food choices for you and your family is a great choice. In the next article, I will give you some ways to make this easier to do. You can ponder this information and do something positive about it; or you can continue on with unhealthy choices and reap the health issues later on. I pray you will take this information, perhaps research more on your own and be ready to make those changes.

God bless your endeavor.



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Surrendering My Will

When I married at 19 years of age, I was a self-righteous, independent girl! Although I was religious, it wasn't until after 12 years of marriage that I came to the end of myself and asked Jesus Christ for salvation. By then, my marriage was about to fail and so was my parenting.

I was SO excited to have this WONDERFUL PEACE and JOY that the Lord gave to me! I enjoyed reading the Bible, and I wanted to do everything God told me to do!

Several months later, while reading the Bible, I came across the Bible passage that commands wives to reverence and submit to their husband. WHAT?! God wants me to that?! Reverence? Submit? To my husband?! The thought of having to do this grated against every fiber of my being! Of course, I knew that was in the Bible because I saw my mom reverence and submit to my dad far beyond my comprehension, but “independent me” didn't want to obey that part of the Bible. I felt justified in my decision because, “After all, my husband isn't _____, and he doesn't _____, so I shouldn't have to _____!”

My sin nature reared its ugly head, and I continued on in my independent, self-righteous way and tried to raise my children. “Okay, kids, say with Mommy, ‘Children obey your parents; honour thy father and mother.’” They obviously saw my attitude toward their dad: rebellion, rejection, bitterness... anything but reverence and submission! “Will they obey God when Mom doesn't?” However, just knowing the effect my choices could have on my children did not change me!

Things weren't going well. I was frustrated. I was losing the joy of my salvation. “Where are You, God? My marriage and home life aren't getting better, but worse! Why aren't you helping me?” It was then that God placed in my possession a Christian book that showed me my proper place as a wife. I saw my wicked sin of disobedience to God by not reverencing and submitting to my husband! God showed me

that He could not help me when I was disobeying Him! I fell to my knees, sobbing and begging God to forgive me, and asking Him again to please help me because I knew I could not do this on my own!

Submitting wasn't easy! I had to learn that I wasn't only to reverence and submit to my husband if I decided he deserved it, but "as unto the Lord." This amounts to simple obedience! The Lord showed me that He does not hold me responsible for the choices that others make, but that I am totally accountable for my own! If I wanted God to help me and to bless my home, then I must obey Him! No excuses, no justifying my disobedience—just obeying!

If I was to truly love my children, and to teach them to obey God, then I first must obey my Lord Who forgave me, and didn't give me what I deserved! I still fail at times, but I have learned it is never profitable to disobey God!

Now that my children are adults, and some are married and have children of their own, I am so thankful I chose to obey God! *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth,"* says 3 John 4. God's Word is truth. It is just not worth it to disobey God!

By Barbara Russell

Digging Deeper

Recently, I went to pick up my kids from a play date. Another mom was being a great blessing and was watching them for me on my birthday. Of course, my kids were super-excited to play and leave boring old mom to herself for a couple of hours. When I returned, I was visiting with my friend, and told one of my kids to return the toy they were playing with to the child who owned it. There was quite a bit of resistance when the younger sibling came to retrieve it, instead of the owner.

It was obvious that my child didn't want to give up the toy, especially to the younger sibling. I said, "What are you choosing right now? Are you choosing to do right or be selfish?" My child said, "I'm being selfish," and sheepishly handed the toy over to the toddler. I didn't think anything of this interaction, and we went about our business and left a few minutes later.

A couple of weeks after this happened, this mom approached me and said that exchange had made

a huge impact on her. She decided to start implementing those types of questions in her parenting, and had seen results in just a week or so.

I thought maybe it would be profitable to share with everyone. When Ellery was just a baby, someone gave me a sheet with about thirty different character traits to teach and train into our young children. It was overwhelming and often forgotten, especially because teaching a six-month-old to be a hard worker doesn't go very well. Can you tell it was my first child?

Something, though, that I did take with me was this: When my child is acting badly, I try to make a point of stopping the behavior and making them identify what is going wrong. "Are you choosing to do right or _____?" The most common issues that are identified are selfishness, disobedience, pride, lying, unkindness, disrespect, and just plain not controlling themselves. When they are first learning the definition of these big words, I use Bible verses to show them what God thinks of their behavior. "Walking them through" these simple steps keeps mom and child accountable to God's Word. This approach is available to all of us.

This has gone a very long way in showing our children that they do sin, and that God is not pleased when they sin. I hope this doesn't seem as if I'm promoting myself as having it all figured out, or that my children are perfect—that is certainly not the case. If you hang out with me for an hour or two, you will see my children for what they are—little sinners—and you will see at least one of my many weaknesses. I just simply thought it may be profitable to share something that has been effective for our family, and has turned out to be effective for another family as well.

By Malissa Custer



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What is in Thine Hand?

This is the year that, Lord-willing, I will make the change in job description from “wife” to include “mother.” It’s a change that is so exciting and thrilling, and yet in so many ways, terrifying. As I feel tiny kicks inside to remind me that my little one is getting bigger and stronger every day, I wonder about his personality and what he will be like once he arrives. What will his sense of humor be like? What sorts of things will he enjoy doing? What character flaws will this child pick up from ME? How will I be the sort of mother that God wants me to be?

It’s a big job, and in many ways, I feel like I’m getting ready to step into shoes that are much too large for me. The task ahead, to which I am committing the next 18+ years of my life as a full-time job, seems like one that I am little-qualified for doing. So much of what I will need to know can’t be stored up ahead of time; I must be ready for on-the-job training. I don’t know where exactly that training will come from, but I pray that the Lord will provide it at just the right minute!

One night as I lay awake (thank you, pregnancy insomnia!), I pondered again the momentous change about to happen within our family in a few months and started to feel a little panicky thinking about all the things that I need to be as a mother. The Lord gently reminded me of the story of Moses.

Moses felt much the same way, I think, when the Lord spoke to him from the burning bush in the desert of Midian. The Lord told Moses what He planned to do for the children of Israel, and gave Moses his marching orders for how he was to be involved in the whole process. Moses and God had a little bit of an exchange in Exodus chapter 3. Moses pointed out that he was not qualified; God told him that He would be with him. Moses asked who he should say sent him; God told him to tell the people that I AM had sent him. God told him exactly what he needed to say to the children of Israel to inform them of what great things He was getting ready to do, and Moses’ response in chapter 4 was to point out that the people surely would not listen to him.

What was the Lord’s response this time? He answered Moses’ question with a question of His own. **“What is that in thine hand?”** It was Moses’ rod, of course, which was the tool that he used for his job as a sheep herder

and protector. It wasn’t a special rod, I don’t think – just an ordinary shepherd’s rod to aid in walking and chasing off wild animals. The Lord proceeded to turn that very ordinary rod into a serpent as proof that it really was the Lord that would be with Moses.

It didn’t really matter how qualified Moses thought he was; the Lord was going to be with him! When you see the paintbrush in the hand of the master painter, and you view the painting as it has been completed, you don’t praise the paintbrush – you praise the artist! Someone has illustrated this truth in the saying, “God does not call the equipped; He equips the called.” Sometimes God will ask you to do something, even *expect* you to do something, and you don’t really feel ready for that task! But we can rest assured that if God asks us to do something, then He has given us what we need, *already in our hands*.

What is in your hands today? Maybe your hands hold a child, a dish, a laundry basket, a letter, or a tool. Each of these can be used to harm and to bless; each can be submitted to God and, like Moses’ rod for herding sheep, made into something miraculous for a greater purpose. It isn’t so much about what you are holding, but who you allow to control that thing. Dear Sister, you may not see it, but God has perfectly equipped you for exactly the place that you are. If you are married to that man, then you are the *perfect* wife for him. If God has blessed you with those children, then you are the *perfect* mother for them. If you have friends and coworkers, then you are the *perfect* one to influence them for the Gospel and for godly living! By perfect, I don’t mean without error, because we know that we all make mistakes. But God couldn’t have picked a better person for the job that He has given YOU to do. God did not put you where you are by mistake; He gave you to those people so that you can be used in their lives. The things that you daily hold in your hands can be the tools that God uses to work in someone else’s life.

These days, what do we hold in our hands the most? For some (I would even dare to say most) people, their phones are their most handled object within a normal day. From scheduling to texting, from researching to calling, from playing to working, our phones are rarely very far from us. We use them from morning until night to stay connected, to stay organized, and unfortunately, to stay distracted. To the person surrendered to what God wants in their life, the Lord wants to establish and bless the works of their hands (Psalm 90:12, Deuteronomy 2:7, Job 1:10). I think that promise can include your cell phone usage! Think about these verses about “our hands” in light of how you use your cell phone every day: we have the power in our hands to do good (Proverbs 3:27); we can also use our hands for violence (Isaiah 59:6); we can use our hands to remind us and our families of God’s Word (Deuteronomy 6:8); our hands must be strengthened for the work (2 Chronicles 15:7, Nehemiah 6:9); the fruit of our hands will be what speaks to our character

(Proverbs 31:31); we can use our hands to worship (Psalm 134:2), to work (Psalm 128:2), and to war (Psalm 144:1).

What is that in thine hand? And more importantly, how are you using that thing to glorify God? We just came into a new year, and maybe it's time to reevaluate our cell phone usage. It is a tool – for good or for bad – but it must be kept in its place. Let's remember that God has already given us what we need to accomplish the purpose He wants us to pursue. It's up to us to use what He has put into our hands wisely, conscientiously, and ultimately for His glory!



A "Goodly" Heritage

*"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places;
yea, I have a goodly heritage." Psalm 16:6*

In past issues of Far Above Rubies, I have written concerning my mom, her testimony, and her life lived for the Lord. I have so many memories of times spent with her, just talking about the Lord and seeing the example in her life over and over again. My mind has been going back over a lot lately, since my mom's sister, Jeanette Love, at 93, went home to be with the Lord this past October.

Like my mother, Aunt Jeanette lived with a handicap that never slowed her down. She always believed she could not do whatever she put her mind to. She had contracted polio when her two children were very young and was told she would never walk again. Of course, that didn't stop her. She did manage to walk again with a cane, but spent many years in a wheel chair in her later years. She had a sense of humor that was quite evident to all who knew her. I can still see her at the shopping mall, when she would come to visit Mom. At that time, she was able to walk with a cane, and she would take hold of Mom's wheelchair, and off they would go; then, we would have to go looking for them.

She spent many years at Camp CoBeAc, a Christian Bible camp in Michigan, where her husband, Dr. Harry Love, was the director. Everyone knew what a sense of humor she had! Just picture her in her wheelchair, holding her cane; if any of the campers got out of line, it would not surprise them if she would "tap" them with that cane, or use it to get their attention.

I was able to attend the funeral for my aunt in Saginaw, MI in October of 2015. I learned some things about my

aunt that I did not know but only proved to me what a godly woman she was. Something I did learn that was such a blessing to me was that my mother was so very instrumental in my aunt coming to the Lord in salvation. Auntie "Nette" had gone to the West Coast during the war years and was actually a "Rosie Riveter," living a life apart from God and her "goodly heritage." Mom and Dad moved out west, as well, and mom was able to be a testimony to her sister. In time, Auntie "Nette" gave her life to the Lord. Both her son and daughter are serving the Lord today, as well.

Not long ago, I began studying some of my earlier family history, and discovered there is a line of ancestors who left a "goodly heritage," as well. I knew from my mom, that her mother was a saved woman, was bed-ridden for many years, and died when Mom was only 17. Then, my mother went to live with her grandmother. Grandma Lyster came from Norway, and although she was raised Lutheran, she was saved after finding the true gospel, through personally reading her Bible. She was a member of Calvary Baptist Church in Fargo, the same church where I grew up.

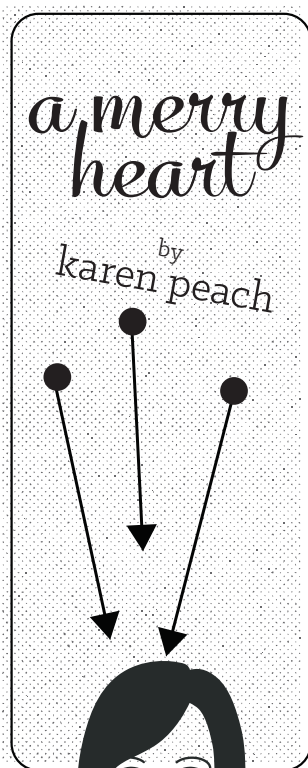
There is also evidence that my ancestors on my father's side were also saved people. I had been given some information about my dad's great grandfather and grandfather. They were Germans from Russia (another story) and had been baptized in the Lutheran church over there. After immigrating to the US, they settled in Ashley, ND and to the disgust of other family members, had been baptized and joined the Baptist church there. My great grandfather Weisser moved to town to work with the railroad, and was a charter member of the First Baptist Church right here in Grand Forks. I do not have any testimony from them concerning when they were saved, but their leaving the Lutheran church to become Baptists indicates something!

I am so very thankful that because of a "goodly heritage," the Lord brought me to a place where I came to know Jesus Christ as my own, personal Saviour. I could so easily have just continued on being merely a "good girl," but never seeing myself as a sinner that needed salvation and forgiveness.

The story does not end there, but it takes a turn that has always caused me to wonder. The "goodly heritage" that we have had on both sides of the family seems to have missed many along the way. I cannot help but ask how this happens. I am sure it just comes down to the fact that we all have a choice. God has promised that we all have the opportunity to give our lives to Him, but sadly, there are many that turn away. I cannot help but think that it is often because we just don't want to give up control of our lives. We want to do what pleases us and what we believe will make us feel good or happy. I praise the Lord that the "goodly heritage" that I had, I am able to pass on to my children. Just knowing that they are saved and ready to meet the Lord is joy beyond compare.

I have grandchildren now, and I pray for them, that they will continue with that “goodly heritage,” and live for the Lord. I continue to pray daily for many extended family members, that they will come to salvation. What kind of “goodly heritage” are you giving to your family?

Editor's Note- Even if you have not been blessed with a “goodly heritage,” remember that MOST of the heroes and heroines of the faith in the Bible weren't either! God's promises and love are the same for everyone who will submit to Him! By God's grace, we can all be exactly what God wants us to be! Look to Him for His sufficiency in all things! (2 Cor. 3:5)



Here's my list of things you CAN safely assume:

You can safely assume a person who can't park between two lines on the parking lot likes nasty notes left on their windshield.

You can assume a person who doesn't cover their mouth when they cough has insurance.

You can assume people who say, “No offense,” are totally trying to offend you!

Assume literally EVERYONE who says, “Literally,” doesn't have a clue what the word literally means.

Just assume using redundant exclamation points will drastically reduce your credibility!!!!

You can assume people that bite their nails are receiving little or no nutritional value for their efforts.

“Why weren't you in class yesterday?”

“It was, ‘Thank a Mailman Day.’ I assumed it was a national holiday or something. How am I gonna thank a mailman from school?”

“How many times have I told you not to assume; where's the paper that was due yesterday?”

“Uh...it's Canned Food Month, I assumed there was no homework this month.”

This was but one of the many times throughout my life I was told never to assume anything. I don't want to be difficult but I firmly believe there are a few things you can safely assume.

Feel free to assume someone who cuts in line wants to be beat up.

Assume that if it says “All Natural,” it's not!

You can safely assume people who refer to themselves in the 3rd person are minus a couple of cookies in the cookie jar.

Definitely assume people who leave their cell phones on at church want to see their picture on the big screen at the next service.

You can assume someone who posts on Facebook more than 12 photos of kittens/week—with quotes—that there will be at least that many people who will “unfriend” them.

You can safely assume if someone says, “You had to be there,” what they just said wasn't funny—even if you had been there.

You can safely assume if your computer is not detecting your keyboard, pressing F1 won't solve the problem.

Assume people who spend \$6.50 on a cup of coffee will complain about spending \$.49 on a stamp.

Just assume people who talk the way they text are as intelligent as they sound.

You can safely assume Don Weaver can't reach...anything.

Assume someone who throws garbage out their car window has no more room for it in their car.

If your child is screaming in public, you can safely assume the polite smiles of strangers are masking inner compulsion to “gently” remove your child from the premises.

You can safely assume if you have more cats than you can count on your fingers and toes, the kitty litter boxes aren't doing their job.

Here are a few things you should avoid assuming:

Don't assume a person born in America can tell you who the President of the US is.

Don't assume people who say, “Touché,” can speak French.

You shouldn't assume the elevator will come any faster, just because you hit the button 20 times.

Don't assume something is wrong, just because a “drama queen” teenage girl is having an emotional meltdown.

Don't just assume people who take more than 45 selfies a week aren't ridiculing other people for taking 45 selfies a week.

And last, but certainly not least, DON'T assume Don Weaver can reach...anything!



far above

Rubies

Our Goal - It is our desire that this publication be a voice for godliness amid a very ungodly world. We seek to encourage and edify the ladies of Bible Baptist Church and others, in their day-to-day walk with the Lord, and to strengthen them in their God-given roles as wives, mothers and servants of our Lord.

We believe God's designed intent for women is one of honor, purpose and fulfillment. After experiencing the joy of sins forgiven, and coming to know the Lord in a personal way through His free gift of salvation, obtained through His death upon Calvary (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9; Jn. 1:11-12; Rom. 10:9-10), we find no greater joy than that of living each day for His glory, and striving to become that rare and priceless jewel - a virtuous woman.

The value of such a woman, God declares, is *"Far Above Rubies."*

If you desire to know more about the Bible, or are seeking a true relationship with Jesus Christ, please feel free to write and request Part 1 of a seven-part Home Bible Study Correspondence Course, free for the asking.

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