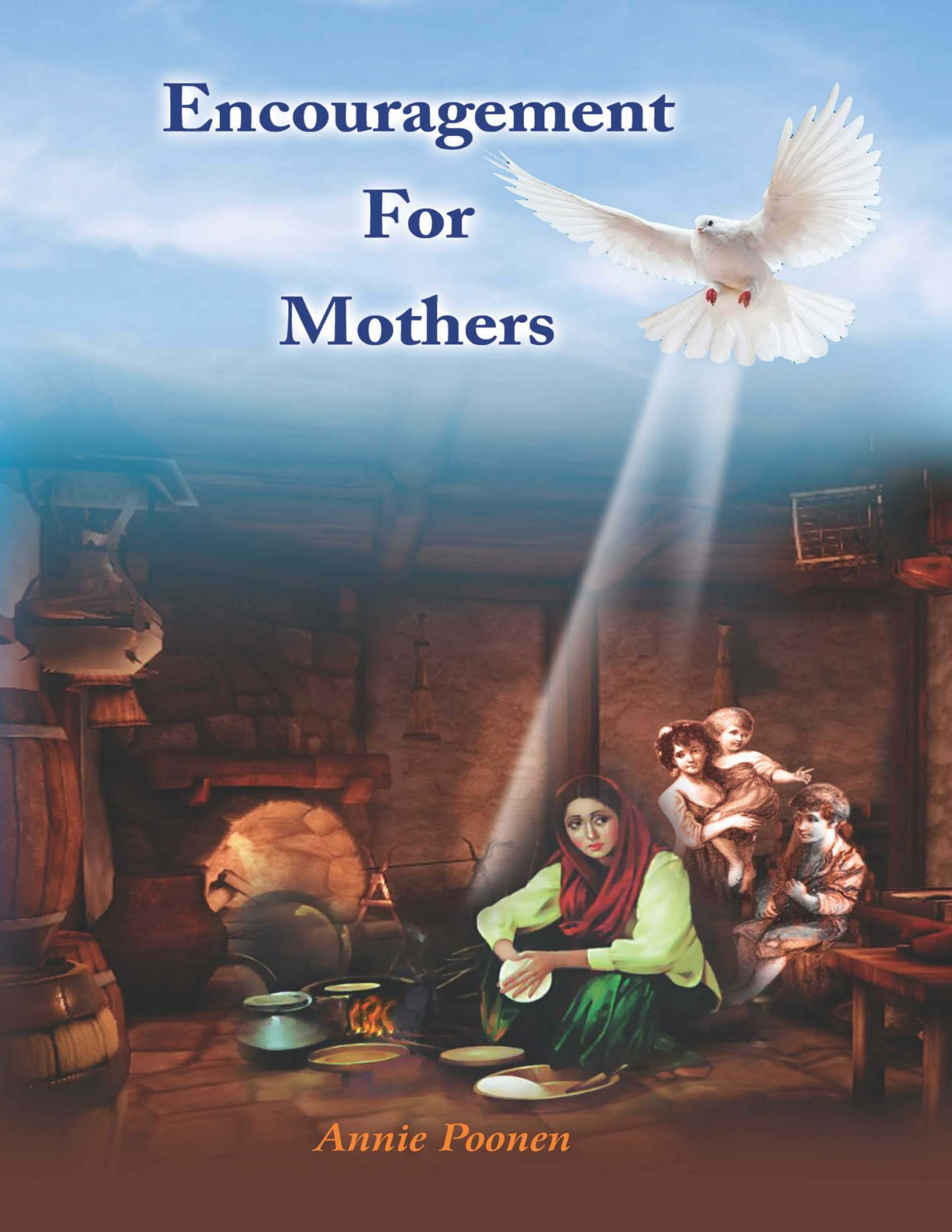
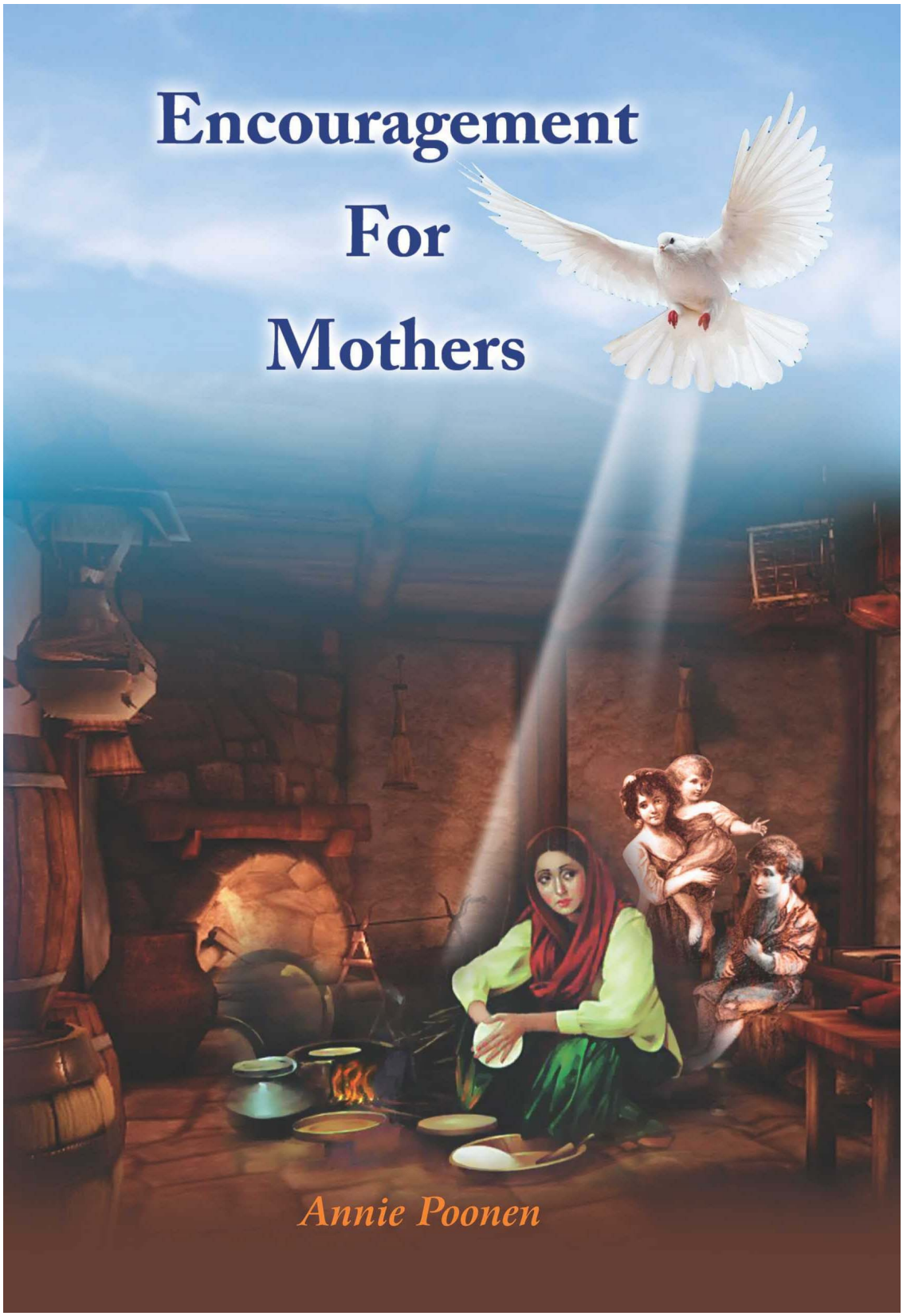
Encouragement For Mothers



Annie Poonen

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ENCOURAGEMENT FOR MOTHERS

by

Annie Zac Poonen

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About the Book

Chapter One

Building a Holy Temple for God

Many years ago when my children were young, I faced many challenges. Deep down in my heart was a longing to be a better wife, a better mother and a better person. I heard a beautiful story then that helped me.

Someone was walking by a large construction-site and saw many people working there. It looked like they were building something big there. Some were digging the ground, others were carrying logs and bricks, and some others were mixing cement and sand together, and so on. Everybody was busy doing something or the other. He asked some of the workers, “What are you doing here?” One said, “I am carrying bricks”. Another said, “I am doing the woodwork.” Another said, “I’m mixing the cement and sand”. Finally, one of them said, “I am the engineer working here. *We are building a cathedral*”.

When we think of the mundane things we do as wives and mothers, we may also say, “I am just changing the diapers”, or “I am just cleaning the house”, or “I am just cooking and washing the dishes”. But God is building His holy temple within us. It is a wonderful work that God is doing in us. Not only are we bringing up our children for Him, with His help, but He is also building His temple within us at the same time. Our home life and our family life are being built for the glory of Jesus Christ. And we can present our children to Him, so that they can experience the same glorious work in their lives as well. Our family will then be a beautiful temple for the glory of God – and our children

will be a part of that.

God encouraged me then to be faithful in the little things I do *at home, and to be content with my life,* and not to think that I should be doing something great in the eyes of the world, *as a career-woman* (since by profession, I was a medical doctor). Then I found a delight in the ordinary chores I did at home, knowing that God had planned every detail of my life and that He knew me and appreciated everything I did for Him.

Sometimes, as mothers, when we have not had enough sleep or are tired and drained out emotionally and physically, we may lose this vision. Then we must focus our spiritual lens and see this vision clearly once again – and we will see that the Lord *is* doing a beautiful work in our lives, which will be perfected one day!

When you are doing a piece of embroidery and you look at the under-side of it, there will be nothing beautiful there. All that you see will be a lot of knots and stitches. In our lives too, we may often see many things that we can't understand. One day God will show us (and the whole world) the upper-side – the beautiful '*embroidery*' that He wove into our lives, transforming us and our children through all that we went through on earth. It will all be *His* handiwork and so it will all be for the praise of His glory alone.

Even though we are struggling with our children now, let us believe that they will turn out all right finally, as children of God. God is not keeping a record of the little disobediences that they did. None of us is perfect. God will help us and He will help them too. When we realize that it is God Who is doing the work in us, we will not imagine that we have been wonderful mothers or that we have done anything perfectly. And we will not imagine that we can teach others. Everything is for the glory of God alone. He will reveal His mighty power in the final day and show that, in-spite of all our weaknesses, shortcomings and failures, we still partook of Christ's nature.

Yet another illustration comes to my mind. Someone said that if you take a rupee-coin and put it close enough to your eye, you won't even be able to see the sun. In the same way, some of the anxieties we face with regard to material things and earning and saving money, can so cloud our spiritual vision, that we don't see the light of God any more.

We often had shortage of water in Bangalore. So we had to be careful with the use of water and I was often busy with storing water for our needs. I was preoccupied with so many little things like that at home. But I knew that Jesus had said that the one thing needful for us was to be still at His feet and to listen to Him, as Mary did (*Luke 10:42*). But where did I have the time to do that in the midst of my hectic day's work? I discovered then that even in the midst of my daily work, my mind could still be on the Lord. I could have a Mary's heart while having a Martha's hands. While we go about our daily chores, our hearts can still be attuned to listen to the Lord always.

My great desire as a mother was to bring up my children in godly ways. Children are all different. Each culture and each parent is different too. We can get good ideas on parenting from Christian books. But ultimately, it is the Lord alone who can help us to bring up our children in His ways.

At one time, I was tempted to imitate godly mothers whom I had met or read about who used to discipline their children in different ways. But I realized that those were just different *methods*. My goal was to lead my children to true godliness – and I saw that there were many ways by which I could reach that goal. So I did not have to blindly imitate a method that I saw others using. Neither did I have to get discouraged if I could not follow that method myself. Some of our children may respond to a *quiet* word. Then we don't need to raise our voice with them. But our other children may be different. The important thing is to hear the voice of God. He will guide us as we seek to help our children.

In my own case, there were some other factors too.

The meetings of the church were held in our home for 6 years. We had

meetings every Sunday morning and on three evenings of the week as well. In addition to that, people from the church would drop in at home every now and then, for some practical or medical help, or for prayer. At times, we even had to accommodate some people in our home for the night, because they came from far away.

Yet another factor was that my husband was often away from home, travelling in his ministry. So I could not get his help at such times.

During such times, I would think how easy it was for other women who had their husbands at home every day. I learnt a lesson in those days:

> *Never compare your lot with that of others who have it **easier** than you; but rather compare your lot with those who have it **tougher** than you.*

If we do that, we will be thankful to the Lord for everything and at all times.

God had called my husband to preach the gospel. So I did not want him to be tied down doing many things for me at home. He would then have to limit his ministry, stop travelling to the different churches and be less available to help needy people. I realized that God's plan for *my* life and for *my* family was different from what He had planned for *others*. God helped me to accept my situation as He had planned it. I can see now that His plan for my life was perfect.

At times, when my husband was away from home, my children would be sick. At such times, I thanked the Lord that He had given me enough medical knowledge to know what to do for my children. I did not have to take them to the hospital every time they were sick. I could handle their little sicknesses myself. The Lord always came alongside me and helped me to cope with those situations. He even enabled me at times, to take a short nap during the day, on days when I had lost sleep at night.

I realized that I had to cut out some non-essential activities and some of my own social life and recreation if I was to have time to concentrate on important matters like my children's needs. I could catch up on my personal ambitions

after my children had grown up and left home and were standing on their own feet. But right then *they* needed my help with their studies and with other matters in their lives. I needed to be a friend to them and be available for them.

My part in the Lord's ministry, I felt, was to support my husband by taking care of the home, so that he would be free to travel and preach undisturbed. I wanted to try and preserve a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere at home at all times, so that it would be easier for him to go and speak. He should never be in any unrest because of anything that happened in our home – and especially with our children. I did not want anything that happened in my home to be a hindrance for the Lord's work through him.

There are three Biblical truths that helped me in my married life – and that have become increasingly important for me in these past years.

I came to realize these truths more clearly only after I was gripped by the *New Covenant*. Before God opened my eyes to see the *New Covenant*, I was just a born again Christian who knew that my sins were forgiven. Like other believers, I would regularly ask for forgiveness each time I slipped up and fell into some sin. Sometimes my spiritual life was dry. But, when I began to seek for a life of victory over sin, I realized how much I needed the Holy Spirit's power every day.

The Lord Jesus had baptized me with the Holy Spirit. But I saw that I needed to be filled with the Spirit *daily*. Only thus could His power, strength, and freshness be ever present in my life. The daily fullness of the Holy Spirit is the promise of our heavenly Father for all of us. None of us should miss out on it.

The *three* truths that have become important to me are:

1. I can know God as my Father.
2. The importance of being united with my husband.
3. The glory of submission to my husband.

In all these three areas, I could see Jesus as my example. The New Testament

became alive to me. It was not a text-book for me, but the living words of Jesus.

Chapter Two

Knowing God as My Father

Knowing God as my own Father was the first truth that became really important for me.

Many wives face a lot of problems, because they are insecure. They long for a friend or someone whom they can turn to, in a time of need, to share their problems with. Women especially have to adjust to many changes when they get married. And they long at times for someone who can give them a listening ear, one who can understand them, to whom they can pour out their heart – a friend or a sister or a parent. But all of these people have their limitations in their ability to help us. We cannot burden our parents or siblings too much, because they have their own problems. And not all our friends have the time to listen to our problems. But we don't have to turn to man. We can turn to our Father in heaven.

Jeremiah 17:5–8 says,

> *"Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind….But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord. He will be like a tree planted by the water. His roots will go deep and he will not fear the heat or the drought. His leaves will be green and always fresh and he will not cease from yielding fruit."*

The blessed life is one where we lean upon *God Himself as our Father* and not on any human being. Then we will never be dry. We will be perfectly secure.

Jesus told us in *John 14:17, 18* that once He sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within us, we would no longer be orphans, because God Himself would then be our Father.

Jesus told us that we must address God as our Father when we pray.

When I came to be gripped with this wonderful truth, that I have a Loving Father in heaven, my insecurities began to disappear.

Under the *Old Covenant*, people knew God as Jehovah and they trembled before Him with awe and fear. But now, we know Him as our Father – if we have truly turned from our sins and made Jesus Lord of our lives.

There are both *privileges* and *responsibilities* when we become God's children. We have the privilege of knowing Him as our Father. Our responsibility is to let Him have total authority over our lives.

We need to learn many things from our heavenly Father.

In *Isaiah 30:30*, we read,

"The Lord will cause His voice of authority to be heard".

Applying that to our lives as parents, our children must recognize our loving authority, as their parents.

Our Father guides us. In *Psalm 32:8*,

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go".

And in *Isaiah 30:21*, He says,

"Your ears will hear a word behind you saying, 'This is the way, walk in it, whenever you miss the way and turn to the right or to the left".

Applying that to our lives, we see that we also need to guide our children along the right way.

Our Father forgives us when we have failed. We also must be quick to forgive our children and all others when they fail.

Our Father has compassion on us. In *Psalm 103:13*, we read,

> *"Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him, for He knows what we are made of. He is mindful that we are but dust."*

We too need to be compassionate towards our children and not be hard on them.

Our Father speaks to us through His word and through the circumstances we face. And He corrects and disciplines us for our good, as we read in *Hebrews 12:7–10*. Our Father is *loving* as well as *strict*. We also need to teach our children through our instruction and the circumstances they face. And we must be *loving* and *strict* in our dealings with them.

Our Father is always consistent and keeps His promises. This is another thing we have to learn from our Father – to keep our word to our children.

We can talk to our Heavenly Father and tell Him everything that bothers us – our fears, our weaknesses, our failures and our longings. We need never fear anything in this world. How many times Jesus told His disciples,

> *'Fear not, your heavenly Father cares for you'!*

Our children also must always feel free to tell us their fears and their problems.

> What a great privilege it is to have such a loving and all-powerful Father. We must respect Him, honour Him, love Him, obey Him, and live to please Him alone.

In *John 17:3*, we read that eternal life is to know God personally – and especially to know that He loves us as much as He loves Jesus (*John 17:23*). This is an amazing truth. Our Heavenly Father is not partial. He will do everything for us that He did for Jesus. He will care for us as He cared for Jesus. We too, as parents, must be impartial in the way we deal with all our children.

When we believe this wonderful truth that our Father loves us just as much as He loves Jesus, we will be free from our insecurities and we will be strong when

facing the trials of life. As time goes on, we will get to know our Father more and more intimately and we will learn to depend on Him more and more. We will trust His wisdom even in times when we do not understand why things happen a certain way. We will be fully assured that everything He allows in our lives will be for our good. We can trust Him to provide a solution to our problems. We will not see Him as a God who seeks to punish us, but as a loving Father who is interested in helping us.

Our Heavenly Father can help us to be better parents to our children.

Chapter Three

Unity With My Husband

The importance of unity with my husband is the second truth that has guided me in my married life. In the *Gospel of John* there are many verses which say that the Father and Jesus are one.

In *John 17:21*, Jesus tells us that He wants us to be one as the Father and Son are one.

If we apply that to married life, we must have a strong bond of unity with our husbands. These days the devil is destroying the unity in many families. Homes are falling apart. So we must be watchful and alert.

Many wives are more attached to their parents or their siblings than to their husbands. This is one reason why they face many problems in their married life. If our unity with our husbands is not strong, the devil will easily get into our homes. When parents are not united, their children will feel insecure, and this can manifest itself in eating-disorders, bad behaviour and sleep-problems, etc.

In *John 1:1*, we read that Jesus was in the beginning with God, and that He is God Himself. This is something that our finite minds cannot understand. There is a deep and strong unity between the three Persons of the Godhead that we will understand fully only when we see God Himself. It is a very precious unity. Jesus prayed in *John 17* that the Father would show us a little bit of that unity, so that we too could have such a unity.

When God unites a man and wife in marriage it is His will that they should be

one. What God has joined together, no-one should separate.

In *Amos 3:3* (KJV), we read,

"Can two walk together unless they are agreed?"

In *Matthew 18:18, 19,* we read that when two believers are united and agreed they can bind Satan's activities and release those whom he has bound. This can apply to a husband and wife praying for problems in their home. Satan knows that there is power when a husband and wife are united, for the Lord will be in their midst (*Matthew 18:19, 20*). So he tries his best to break up that unity.

What a privilege it is, as husband and wife, to be able to taste a small measure of the unity that Jesus and His Father had. Jesus came down to earth to give us such a unity in our homes. It is our birthright. Our minds cannot fathom it – but it is possible.

What are some of the causes of disunity in a family? A husband and wife can have differences between them, because of their background, their culture, their upbringing and because they see things in different ways. But such differences need not bring disunity. God's grace can make two people one, even when they are different from each other.

I asked the Lord to make this true in my own married life. I did not want a life full of quarrels and unhappiness and loneliness caused by any distance coming between me and my husband. So I asked the Lord to help me to become so united with my husband that our differences would not bother me. I wanted to do all that I could to make that oneness happen in my married life. That became my goal.

As human beings, we have a tendency to blame someone else even when we ourselves have made a mistake. This can happen even in a marriage. We should remember then that we are separating what God has joined together. God's will is that we should be united and so we should do all we can to preserve that unity.

We must ask the Lord to help us to be patient with one another and forgiving each other, just as the Lord has been patient with us and forgiven us in Christ (*Ephesians 4:2, 32*).

Suspicion of one another is yet another factor that can disrupt unity. So beware of that. And remember that most suspicions are finally found to be baseless.

If you have had friendships with other men in the past, you must bury the memory of those events and never think about them. And don't ever renew old contacts through *Facebook*. This may appear harmless initially. But you will be opening yourself to unnecessary temptation.

Remember that even when your relatives are far away, they may still try to control you and rule you – which can bring a distance between your husband and you. Don't ever allow that to happen.

Sometimes money, material things, and earthly goals can cause division between a husband and wife. So have your priorities right.

Unity with our husband is a high goal, but it possible to achieve it, if we strongly desire it, because God is on our side to help us.

Every time a small problem comes up between you and your husband, think of it as a little thorn or splinter getting into your hand. If you allow it to remain, it will become an infected abscess. Be quick to turn to the Lord then and seek His forgiveness immediately; and be focused once again on preserving your unity with your husband. Acknowledge your error, ask forgiveness from your husband, repent and seek with all your heart to remain united. That is what it means to judge oneself and cleanse oneself. A small misunderstanding can be like a wedge that Satan uses to bring a separation between you and your husband. We have to work hard and be alert at all times, if we are to preserve this unity with our husbands. You will not regret the effort when you come to the end of your life.

When you find that you and your husband have a different opinion regarding

dealing with a situation at home, talk together in a mature way. And be prepared to change your mind, if he insists on his way. But it is also possible that after you have talked together, he may change his mind or you may come up with a new way of dealing with the problem. But we must work towards dealing with differences in a mature way, without quarrelling about it. The differences we have can also be used by the Lord to broaden our own views about different situations.

Church matters are the province of the elders of the church. As wives, we should not be interfering in such matters. We can always give a woman's point of view to our husbands. But be careful that you don't try to become an '*Assistant Elder*' in the church. In *Revelation 2:20,* we read of the Lord calling the elder's wife a Jezebel, a false prophetess, who was harming the church.

Where there are strong families in a church, that church will be a strong church. The gates of hell will not be able to prevail against such a church because the families in it are united. So let us do all we can to preserve the unity of the church. It takes years to build such a unity but we must work towards it – day by day. God will help us through His Holy Spirit to attain it. Remember the story of the cathedral. It may take years to be completed, but it will be done.

We will not always see things the same way as our husbands do. But when we disagree, we must make sure that we discuss our disagreements *privately* and not in the presence of our children or others. It is best to discuss such matters when our children are asleep and no-one else is around. And when we do discuss our disagreements in private, let us do so in a mature way.

When there is unrest between husband and wife, the children will sense it and they will become insecure. Then they will demand more attention from us and become demanding in many other ways as well.

> One good rule is to try and keep quiet, when you are upset. Ask God to help you to be calm and to get over the agitation in your heart before you speak.

Once your children are married, it is best to let them run their homes as they like,

without your constantly giving them advice. That way, they will respect you. You will also need a lot of wisdom in dealing with *their* children – your grandchildren. Remember that you already had your turn in bringing up children – in *your* way. Now let them have their turn to bring up their children – in *their* way, without your interference. Thus you will preserve yourself in love and unity with them. But be available to help them whenever they need your help. Give them advice only when they ask for it.

Chapter Four

The Glory of Submission

Submission to my husband was the third important principle which the Lord opened my eyes to see.

People don't like to hear the word "*submission*" because they think it means that you should just give in to your husband always and do whatever he wants you to do. But that is not what it means. I see submission as something that Jesus did throughout His life, to His Father and to whatever His Father told Him to do. He submitted to imperfect Joseph and Mary for 30 years, just because His Father told Him to do so. He submitted to His Father's will, because He loved His Father so greatly. We are to have the same attitude that Jesus had (*Philippians 2:5*).

In *Philippians 2:5–11*, we read that Jesus did not consider equality with God as something to be held on to. He gave it up willingly. And He did not come down *just one level* below God and become an *angel*. He came down even lower and became a *man*. And then he came down lower still and became a *slave*. A slave is one who has no rights and who cannot question anything done to him. Slaves could be starved or killed in the first century, and there was no law to protect them. Then Jesus went still lower and was counted as a *criminal* and died on the cross for us. There we see the amazing love of Jesus for us fallen human beings.

If our Lord chose to come down like that, we too should be willing to come down from our high positions. It is from Jesus' example that we learn

submission and meekness.

Satan was cast out heaven because of his pride and insubordination. But Jesus saved us by His submitting to the Father all His earthly life and finally even to the death on the cross. Thus He made a way for us to fellowship with His Father eternally in heaven. Such is the power of submission.

> The Bible tells us in *1 Peter 3:1–4* that a wife who has a humble and quiet spirit can win even an unconverted husband to the Lord without a word. God can do amazing miracles through a submissive wife.

And if God has given you a good husband, then it should be the easiest thing in the world to submit to him joyfully.

We must also see submission as a command from God to us wives (*Ephesians 5:22*). When we see that command in God's Word, if we are God-fearing, we will do just that and not question God. Every command in the Bible comes with the promise of help from God. So He will help us in this area too. Then we will discover that submission is not a difficult matter at all.

Some people may feel sorry for us and say, "Oh you poor Christians. How sad that you have to submit to your husbands. How can you do that? Why don't you speak up and stand up for your rights?'

But what they don't realize is that it is the happiest thing in the world to obey God. Nothing can give us greater joy than living the way Jesus lived on this earth.

> *"One who says he abides in Christ must walk in the same manner as He walked"* (1 John 2:6).

What a wonderful opportunity we wives have. We can do something that Jesus did throughout His entire earthly life – live a life of total submission to the will of God.

The Lord gives us a peace and joy that the world can never give, when we seek to live a life pleasing to Him. I have experienced this more and more as I have

sought to live such a life.

It is 46 years now (2014), since I got married and I can honestly say that the happiest life I can live as a married woman is a life of obedience to the laws of God, including the law of submission to my husband. My only regret is that I have failed at times to submit as I should have. Praise the Lord for the power of the Holy Spirit that enables us to live such a life. And praise the Lord also for the forgiveness He gives us readily, whenever we slip up and fail Him.

In *1 Peter 3:1–6,* the Holy Spirit gives us the example of Sarah, who trusted the Lord to guide her husband Abraham. So she followed him. That must have been difficult for her many times. For example, when Abraham said she was his sister and put her life in danger with a heathen king. But God protected her. The same God will protect us too. And when Sarah knew that God had asked Abraham to offer up her son on the altar, how difficult that would have been for her, if she did not trust God? She could have made it very difficult for Abraham to obey God.

When we submit to our husbands we are actually expressing our trust in the Lord to lead our family through the headship of our husband.

God's line of authority is described in *1 Corinthians 11:3* thus:

> *"Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ".*

Even though the Father and Jesus are equal to each other, yet Jesus chose to be subject to the Father. In the same way, even though we wives are equal to our husbands we still choose to be under their headship, *because this is God's order*. When we follow God's order, we can expect God's blessing in our homes.

> We can certainly express our views frankly to our husbands. But when it comes to making the final decision, we must trust the Lord to overrule and make our husbands take the right decision. Even if I have a different view, I still let my husband take the final decision. It is good for my children to see

that I respect God’s order in my home.

In *Ephesians 5:22, 32,* we are told that the relationship between a husband and wife is like that of Christ and the church. This is called a great mystery there. When a wife submits to her husband, she is actually showing the world the truth of the church being subject to Christ. *So a godly home is actually a miniature church.* When we see a miniature replica of the *Statue of Liberty* or of the *Taj Mahal* somewhere, we can see what those structures looks like. We may then have a longing to go and see those structures. Even so our home life should draw people to the church.

In *1 Peter 3:4* wives are exhorted to have a gentle and quiet spirit, *because that is very precious in God’s eyes.* And Jesus told us to learn gentleness and humility from Him (*Matthew 11:28, 29*).

In *Proverbs 31:26,* we read that a godly woman speaks according to the law of *kindness*. As wives, we must cultivate the habit of speaking *respectfully* to our husbands. Whenever we slip up and speak harshly or in an un-Christ-like way, we must apologize. It is often from mothers, that many children learn to speak rudely.

Chapter Five

Teaching and Disciplining Children

One of the most important things we have to teach our children is *obedience to parents* (*Ephesians 6:1*).

As mothers, we can teach them obedience by their observing our attitude to our husbands. For example, if they see us going against Daddy's rules for the home, when he is away from the home, that can make our children rebel against us also one day. But when we are respectful to our husbands, our children will learn to respect us as well as others.

We need to teach our children to be *truthful* at all times. Our children will easily know it, if we are not speaking the truth at any time. Even at a young age they are able to discern dishonesty.

Let us also teach our children to be *neat and tidy*. If we are tidy and we keep our homes also in a tidy way, then our children will learn tidiness. When they have finished playing with their toys, they should be taught to put them away.

We must also teach our children *not to be wasteful*. At food-time, it is best to serve them *small* portions initially. When they have finished that, then serve them a second helping. That way we can teach them to finish everything on their plate, and not to waste food.

If we ourselves are disciplined in the matters of time, speech, tidiness, eating habits etc., then our children will learn to be disciplined too.

Our children must also be taught *to share their things* with others, and not to

be selfish. When we ourselves are considerate to others, they will learn to be considerate too.

Contentment is yet another precious virtue to be taught. Many children are discontented with their clothes and their toys, because they compare themselves with children from wealthier homes. Teach them the value of contentment by the way you live – and then they will always remember your example.

The first thing that comes to most people's minds whenever we talk about bringing up children is the matter of discipline.

How are we to correct our children?

If you do positive things like spending time with them, talking with them, telling them stories from the Bible and other good books, and teach them to put away their things, and help you in the home, you can build them up in a constructive way. Then you won't have to do much correction. But if you leave them alone frequently, because you are always busy doing your own things, then you will find that they get into trouble easily and end up doing many wrong things – and need to be disciplined. So spend time with your children, especially when they are young.

If your top priority is your children, then correction will not often be needed.

You will then discover that they will be able to handle pressures in their adolescent years and make the right decisions, because you worked hard to lay a good foundation in their younger years.

The golden rule about correction is: *Never correct your children in anger.*

If you are angry when spanking your children, you will end up spanking them much harder than they deserve. If there are marks on your child's body, then your spanking has been too hard. I know that overcoming anger is easier said than done. But we can ask the Lord to help us to overcome it and to discipline

our children in a godly way.

Spanking however must be reserved as *final* form of punishment, when every other method has not worked. Withholding privileges from them is a good way to discipline too – for example, by giving them a "*Time out*" period, when they are told to sit quietly somewhere, or to lie down in their bed for 10 or 15 minutes. When this period is over, and they have calmed down, you can explain to them why you gave them that '*Time-out*'.

We must also bear in mind that children forget instructions very quickly. So we will have to keep on reminding them. Don't scold them and blame them unnecessarily, imagining that they have the mind of an adult.

We must also be consistent. For example, if you tell them not to do something, and they disobey you, and they find that you don't take note of their disobedience, then you are being inconsistent. Then they will continue to do such wrong things. They must know that you are aware of their disobedience and that you take it seriously. Children will try and take advantage of us, when there are visitors in the home. You should take the children aside at such times, and talk to them.

We should not keep on reminding our children about their past mistakes. The Lord's mercies are new every morning – and our mercies should also be likewise.

Don't always be a stickler for laws and rules. At times, you must be willing to compromise and say, "I will let you go this time. I will give you another chance".

When my husband was away from home (sometimes for five weeks at a time), there were many different issues I had to deal with in my children. Some of their disobediences were not serious and so I talked with them and dealt with them, then and there. But others were more serious. So I kept a note-book in which I would write down those disobediences – matters that I felt I needed to speak to

them a little more about later. I told them that that I would have to tell their Dad about those matters when he returned. But I didn't want them to look forward to Dad's return with dread, as if a policeman was coming to deal with them. I wanted them to look forward to his return with joy, knowing that he would be coming back with chocolates and gifts for them. So I would take out the note-book a few days before my husband returned and talk individually to them, and describe all their disobediences to them. Then I would explain to them the seriousness of each offence. They would always say they were sorry for each item of disobedience. So I would strike out those items one by one. Finally, there were no items left! Although these were not *major* matters of disobedience, I went through the items one by one with them, because I wanted them to take the matter of obedience more seriously thereafter.

After they had learnt to write, when they were disobedient, I would sometimes ask them to write down 20 times (or 100 times) on a sheet of paper, that they would not commit that particular act of disobedience again. I hoped thereby that they would recognize that I was not going to ignore their acts of disobedience. As a by-product, I think their handwriting also improved!!

If some matter of disobedience was important for my husband to know about, then when we were all sitting around the dinner table, I would bring it up and relate the incident, without saying who did it! Then my husband would speak words of correction and reinforce what I had said to them earlier. That helped a lot. I wanted to maintain discipline in the home; and I wanted my children to know that disobedience was a serious matter. But I didn't want to be like a strict school-teacher or judge. I wanted them to experience forgiveness just as God has forgiven us.

Sometimes, my husband would discipline the children by restricting them from playing cricket for a day – and cricket was their favourite game!

Children are under law but they must also taste grace from us. If we govern them only by the rule of law, they can end up being rebellious against us, when they are older. They will wait to leave home and be on their own and then they

will do whatever they like. I wanted my children to love our home and to see it as a place of refuge in a cruel world, and to always look forward eagerly to coming home to be with us, their parents.

Our greatest need as parents is for wisdom. We must ask the Lord to show us where we have been too strict with our children and where we have been too lenient. And in their adolescent years especially, we must deal with them always with great wisdom, patience and love.

> The most important requirement to build a godly home is for husband and wife to pray – individually and together, seeking God's help in everything. We should pray whenever possible – and we can do so at all times of the day, silently in our hearts. We need to pray especially when our children are facing problems. When we are united with our husbands, our prayers *will* be answered. My husband and I have experienced many wonderful answers to our prayers.

Family prayer must never be turned into a ritual that our children do as a routine matter. That can become boring and they can get fed up with it. They must see that prayer is talking to our Heavenly Father just as freely and as joyfully as they talk to us, their parents.

And finally: Whenever there is unrest in your heart due to any cause – and that can be often – ask the Lord to help you overcome it quickly and to come to rest. If you don't deal with it quickly, disunity and disharmony will come into your home – and that will open the door for Satan to come in and cause confusion. And then it will be your children who will suffer most of all. So, if you love your children, be quick to deal with disunity.

> It is only the Lord Who can help us build godly homes. And He stands *ever ready to help* us build such homes – homes that are a foretaste of heaven itself.

May it be so for all of us.

All praise and glory be to Him alone.

About the Book

When we think of the mundane things we do as wives and mothers, we may also say, “I am just changing the diapers”, or “I am just cleaning the house”, or “I am just cooking and washing the dishes”. But God is building His holy temple within us through all this.

It is a wonderful work that God is doing within us. Not only are we bringing up our children for Him, with His help, but He is also building His temple within us at the same time. Our home life and our family life are being built for the glory of Jesus Christ. And we can present our children to Him, so that they can experience the same glorious work in their lives as well.

Our family will then be a beautiful temple for the glory of God – and our children will be a part of that.

Read on…



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