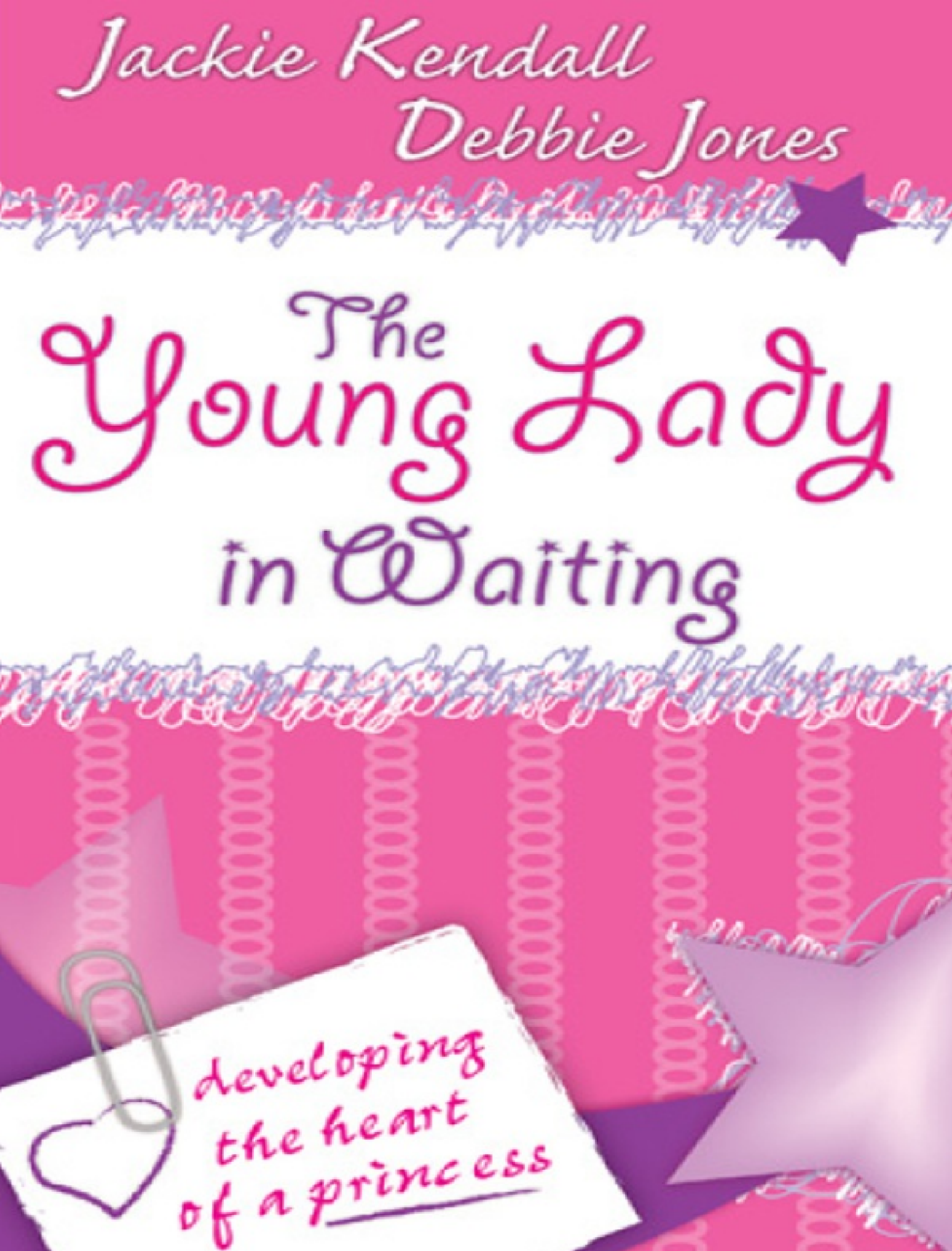
Jackie Kendall
Debbie Jones

The Young Lady in Waiting

developing the heart of a princess



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Debbie Jones

The Young Lady in Waiting





Young Lady in Waiting

Young Lady in Waiting



Developing Your Love Relationships

Debby Jones
&
Jackie Kendall

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DEDICATION



We dedicate this book to all the Young Ladies in Waiting, especially our daughters Jessica, Christen, and Lauren, who are seeking to become women of God.

ENDORSEMENTS

I have already ordered a number of books and sent them to pastors, youth leaders, single women, single moms, married women, high school girls, college women, career women, missionaries, and missionary kids in many parts of the world….

REBECCA WHISNANT

Bible Study Leader for Single Women *Young Lady in Waiting* is one of the most effective tools I have ever used in discipling single, young women. It has also been a great blessing in my own life as a single woman. I plan to use *Lady in Waiting* for many years to come in my ministry.

BRENDA RICH

Dean of Women

Columbia International University Too often in today's literature we emphasize reliance on self rather than on our Savior. *Young Lady in Waiting* goes beyond pop psychology and clings to the steadfast foundation of God's Word. Creatively integrating biblical truth with an honest evaluation of the struggles facing today's single woman, this book will add value to any woman's library!

TARA D. MCCLARY

Former Career Women's Coordinator Singles Ministry

Briarwood Presbyterian Church (PCA) Birmingham, Alabama

After 22 years of marriage, *Young Lady in Waiting* has

given me a sense of security in Christ that I never experienced before. This book helped me realize that my earthly father, my husband, or anyone else could not provide security—only God can. What a freeing principle—not only for me, but also for my husband! Now my marriage is better than ever because I no longer have unrealistic expectations of him!

JIMMIE DAVIS

Coordinator of Deaf Ministry First Baptist Church in Atlanta Having been sent to teach missionary children in Kiev, Ukraine, *Young Lady in Waiting* was one of the few books I was able to pack. It will be a treasure "map" for me and will help me recognize a Boaz if he ever comes into my life.

BECKY DEWITT

Foreign Missionary/SBC

In my job in the Education Department at the university, I have the opportunity at least weekly to talk to ladies about their relationships and have recommended *Young Lady in Waiting* many times.

DOTTIE MYATT

Education Department

Union University

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PREFACE



*I*s this just another book for singles? No! We believe this book is unique because its emphasis is not on a woman's status (single, married, divorced, or widowed), but on the state of her heart. We want to direct a woman's attention toward the One who really understands the longing of her heart. Too many women grow up believing that the inconsolable ache in her heart is for "a man." To love a man, get married, and then have children is thought to be the only script that will satisfy her heart's deepest longing. But no man, woman, or child can appease this longing; it can only be satisfied by the ultimate Bridegroom, Christ Jesus. This book nudges a woman closer to God, while acknowledging any longing she may have to be loved and cherished by a man.

Young Lady in Waiting is not about finding the right man, but being the right woman. Thus it focuses on ten qualities of a godly woman that are found in the Book of Ruth. These qualities will not only enhance your love relationship with your heavenly Bridegroom, but also guide you as a single woman, guard you while you date, support you in marriage, and comfort you if you are ever widowed or divorced. As you read you will see these characteristics beautifully displayed in the

life of Ruth. She recklessly abandons herself to the Lordship of Christ, diligently uses her single days, trusts God with unwavering faith, demonstrates virtue in daily life, loves God with undistracted devotion, stands for physical and emotional purity, lives in security, responds to life with contentment, makes choices based on her convictions, and waits patiently for God to meet her needs.

What are *you* waiting for? Is it for that perfect job, the ideal relationship, a home, a career, a child? What if you get what you are waiting for? Will it truly bring the fullness of joy you long for? Anything other than a love relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, regardless of how good that thing may be, will bring you discouragement and disillusionment. So come and explore the life of Ruth and learn what it really means to be a godly woman, a *Young Lady in Waiting*.

CHAPTER 1

Young Lady of Reckless Abandonment



The big day is over. Your roommate married a wonderful guy and you were the maid of honor. You shared your roommate's joy, but now you wrestle with envy's painful grip. As the happy couple drives to the perfect honeymoon, you sit alone in an empty apartment, drowning your envy and self-pity with a half gallon of Heavenly Hash ice cream.

Does this scenario sound familiar?

Have you assumed that your ultimate fulfillment would be found in marriage? Have you privately entertained the notion that the only satisfied women are married women? Have you been expecting your career to satisfy you until you are married? If you have answered "yes" to any of these questions, then you have a prospect of disillusionment looming in the future. On the back cover of the book *Learning to Be a Woman* is a key quote about fulfillment as a woman: "A woman is not born a woman. Nor does she become one when she marries a man, bears a child and does their dirty linen, not

even when she joins a women's liberation movement. A woman becomes a woman when she becomes what God wants her to be."[1] This priceless truth can help keep your perspective clear in relation to true fulfillment in life. Too many Christian women think that the inner longings of their heart relate only to love, marriage, and motherhood. Look a little closer and see if that longing isn't ultimately for Jesus. Gary Chapman once remarked, "I feel very strongly that marriage is not a higher calling than the single state. Happy indeed are those people, married or single, who have discovered that happiness is not found in marriage but in a right relationship with God." Fulfillment for a Christian woman begins with the Lordship of Christ in every area of her life.

A college professor (wife, mother of seven children, singer, and author) told a group of young women that when she was eight years old, her mother told her a secret that has guided her perspective on life. The most important thing her mother would ever tell her was, "No one, not even the man you will marry one day, can make you happy—only Jesus can." What a profound statement for such a little girl. This secret allowed her to grow up following Jesus with reckless abandonment.

Are you still convinced that having Mr. Right will chase away the blues? That's not surprising. On the front of a national magazine the lead story said, "Hollywood's hottest newcomer is selling more records than Madonna and filling her dance card with movie offers. All that is missing is MR. RIGHT!" Such a mind-set bombards singles daily. How can you renew your mind and rise above this stereotype? You can be an exception through understanding "the secret of the alabaster box."

The Secret of the Alabaster Box

In the days Jesus was on earth, when a young woman reached the age of availability for marriage, her family would purchase an alabaster box for her and fill it with precious ointment. The size of the box and the value of the ointment would parallel her family's wealth. This alabaster box would be part of her dowry. When a young man came to ask for her in marriage, she would respond by taking the alabaster box and breaking it at his feet. This gesture of anointing his feet showed him honor.

One day, when Jesus was eating in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came in and broke an alabaster box and poured the valuable ointment on Jesus' head (see Mark 14:3-9). The passage in Luke chapter 7 that refers to this event harshly describes the woman as "a woman in the city who was a sinner" (Luke 7:37). This woman found Jesus worthy of such sacrifice and honor. In fact, Jesus memorialized her gesture in Matthew 26:13 (see also Mark 14:9). This gesture had such meaning, for not only did she anoint Jesus for burial, she also gave her all to a heavenly Bridegroom. Yes, she was a sinner (who isn't, according to Romans 3:23?), but this sinner had dreams and wisely broke her alabaster box in the presence of the only One who can make a woman's dreams come true.

What is in your alabaster box? Is your box full of fantasies that began as a little girl while you listened to and watched fairy tales about an enchanting couple living happily ever after? Have you been holding on tightly to your alabaster box of dreams, frantically searching for a man worthy of breaking your box? Take your alabaster box to Jesus and break it in His

presence, for He is worthy of such honor. Having responded to your heavenly Bridegroom in such a manner, you can wait with confident assurance that, if it be God's will, He will provide you with an earthly bridegroom.

How do you know if you have broken your alabaster box at the feet of Jesus? Such a decision will be reflected in reckless abandonment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. When the Lord gives you a difficult assignment, such as another dateless month, you receive His terms without resentment. Your attitude will reflect Mary's response to the angel when she, as a single woman, was given a most difficult assignment. Mary said, "I belong to the Lord, body and soul…let it happen as you say…" (Luke 1:38 Phillips). Take your alabaster box, with your body, soul, and dreams, and entrust them to Jesus. When He is your Lord, you can joyfully walk in the path of life that He has for you.

Ruth's Reckless Abandonment

In the Book of Ruth, a young widow made a critical decision to turn her back on her people, her country, and her gods because her thirsty soul had tasted of the God of Israel. With just a "taste," she recklessly abandoned herself to the only true God. She willingly broke her alabaster box and followed the Lord wherever He would lead her.

But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your

God, my God" (Ruth 1:16).

As you look at the following three areas of Ruth's life that were affected by her reckless abandonment to God, consider the parallels to your own price tag of commitment to God. Have you broken the valuable alabaster box yet?

New Friends

When Ruth told Naomi, "your people shall be my people," she understood that she would not be able to grow closer to the God of Israel if she remained among the Moabites (her own people). Ironically, God called Moab His washbasin (see Ps. 60:8; 108:9). One rinses dirt off in a washbasin. Ruth chose to leave the washbasin and head for Bethlehem, which means the "house of bread."[2]

Even today there exist "Moabites" who will undermine your growth if you spend too much time with them. Sometimes mediocre Christians resist the zeal and commitment of a dedicated single woman. Realizing that one's friends drive you either toward or away from God, you may need to find a "new people" who will encourage your growth and not hinder it. "He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm" (Prov. 13:20 NIV).

Often the choice for deeper commitment produces resentment from people who were once "such good friends." Do not be alarmed; you are in good company. When the woman broke the alabaster box and poured it on Jesus, the disciples did not applaud her act of worship. Instead, with

indignation they responded, “Why this waste?” (Matt. 26:8 NIV) The disciples of Jesus were filled with indignation because the woman obviously wasted the ointment. But from a heavenly perspective, the great cloud of witnesses rejoiced as they beheld the woman giving such honor to Jesus. The broken alabaster box publicly evidenced the woman’s reckless abandonment to Jesus. Is there such evidence in your daily life?

This is not to advocate that you distance yourself from all who have not broken their alabaster box at the feet of Jesus. Just consider the ultimate influence your friends have on your commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Be careful if you spend most of your free time with a girlfriend who does not share your commitment to Jesus. It can affect your relationship with the Lord. If a non-Christian or a lukewarm Christian influences you rather than you influencing them, you may be headed for serious trouble. You mirror those who influence you. When a woman stops growing spiritually, the lack of progress can often be traced back to a friendship that undermined her commitment to Jesus.

Take a moment to think about the spiritual depth of the girlfriend who influences you the most. Is she daily becoming all that Jesus desires? If so, her growth will challenge you to grow. On the other hand, her apathy may ultimately be contagious. “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals’” (1 Cor. 15:33). Have any of your friendships caused your spiritual life to go into a deep freeze?

Maybe you, like Ruth, need to distance yourself from those who, spiritually speaking, are more like a washbasin than a house of bread. The friends who influence you the most

should be women who live by Hebrews 10:24 (NIV): "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." Your best friends should be cheering you on in your commitment to Jesus.

New Surroundings

Ruth had to relocate in order to be fed spiritually. Likewise, some single women may have to "relocate" because some of their former relationships keep them in a constant state of spiritual "hunger." They have to change jobs or even their church in order to continue to grow. In the same way, be open to a change that may benefit your spiritual growth. Like Ruth, look for something that will stimulate your growth in the Lord.

One young woman had to make a choice between playing on a championship volleyball team or being a part of a discipleship group. She knew that she was free to play volleyball if she wanted. But when she compared volleyball and the discipleship opportunity, the Lord showed her that the good often becomes the enemy of the best in life. Because of her reckless abandonment in following the Lord's leadership, she valued her growing commitment to the Lord more than playing volleyball, and it paid off. The discipleship training prepared her heart to respond to an invitation to serve as a short-term missionary in the Philippines. Another young woman may be called to spend her summer ministering to a volleyball team instead of being in a discipleship group, but the commitment to do as the Lord directs is the key.

Ruth moved from a hedonistic society into a culture that attempted to please the God of the universe rather than the

sensuous gods of the flesh. Within our advanced society of the 21st century, we often encounter women engaged in becoming a part of self-serving singles' clubs, singles' dating services, singles' cruises, singles' meet markets…all created to keep singles busy in the waiting time of life. A committed single woman must be sensitive to the inevitable challenges she will meet in her attempt to live unselfishly in such a self-serving society.

One single was persecuted, not by non-Christians, but by Christians, because she chose to spend her summer studying at a Bible Institute rather than playing in the sunshine with her friends. They actually accused her of thinking she was better than them because she planned to study the Bible intensively for eight weeks. Unfortunately, our self-centered culture in America has penetrated the Church so much that a young woman not only has to choose against the American culture, but sometimes against the more subtle, worldly Christian subculture tainting the Body of Christ.

Part of reckless abandonment is realizing how much our culture has affected our behavior patterns. You want to be Christlike, but your lifestyle is a reflection of *Vogue* magazine or *Cosmopolitan,* rather than a new creation in Christ. A.W. Tozer said, "A whole new generation of Christians has come up believing that it is possible to 'accept' Christ without forsaking the world."[3] Ruth had to forsake the familiar and comfortable in order to receive God's best for her life.

New Faith

Ruth moved from a false religion into the only true and eternal relationship. Too many women have been involved in a form of religious worship, but have never had a vital, growing relationship with Jesus. Has your religious experience been like Isaiah 29:13b (NIV)? "…Their worship of Me is made up only of rules taught by men." Has your faith been a lifeless ritual rather than a vital love relationship with Jesus? Why not spend some of your free hours as a single woman beginning a journey away from rituals into a deep relationship with Jesus Christ?

One single woman expressed this vital relationship with Jesus in the following way: "I desired that my relationship with the Lord be an adventure. One where I would find out what pleased Him and then do it, devoting as much energy to Jesus as I would in a relationship with a boyfriend. I am falling more in love with Jesus every day." Do you know more about pleasing a boyfriend than you do about pleasing the Lord Jesus?

Dividends From a High Price

Ruth's choice was costly, but the return on this high price far outweighed her investment. Matthew 19:29 (NIV) says, "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for My sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life." Ruth made the choice to turn her back on all that was familiar and begin a whole new life. Her "hundred times as much" was a godly husband, a son who would be the grandfather of King David, and inclusion in the lineage of Jesus Christ. She turned her back on all that was familiar and God rewarded Ruth's critical

choice.

Another costly aspect of Ruth's choice was the time frame in Israel's history. It was the age of the judges, a period of time described as "do your own thing"; "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25b). Ruth chose not only to break her family cycle, but also to challenge the lifestyle that many in Israel embraced. She wanted God's will, not hers; His blueprints, not her elementary scribbling; God's assignment, not her foolish plans.

Whenever a single woman decides to abandon herself completely to Jesus, as Ruth did, she will find herself out of step with society and, sometimes, even with her friends. A single woman today needs the boldness to challenge and break the cycle of the "American way" that exalts a relationship with a man as the answer to life. This "American way" blurs the reality of the ultimate answer to life found in a deep relationship with Jesus Christ. A modern-day Ruth wrote: "My deep satisfaction from my commitment to Jesus is constantly challenged by other believers. They treat me like some kind of Neanderthal, definitely out of step with today's woman."

The Missing Puzzle Piece

Often a woman will attempt to find delight in a career if Mr. Right has not arrived. In time, even her "great career" will prove to be less than satisfying. A career, a marriage, or even motherhood is not enough to totally satisfy you by itself. God knows that you will never be complete until you really understand that you are complete in Jesus. Colossians 2:9-10 says, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority." When a single woman enters a career or even marriage without understanding that she is complete in Christ, she will be disillusioned and dissatisfied.

Incompleteness is not the result of being single, but of not being full of Jesus. Only in the process of reckless abandonment to Jesus does any woman ever finally understand that, in Him, she is complete. When two "incomplete" singles get married, their union will not make them complete. Their marriage will be simply two "incomplete" people trying to find completeness in one another. Only when they understand that their fullness is found in a relationship with Jesus will they ever begin to *complement* one another. They can never *complete* one another. You were not created to complete another, but to *complement*. Completion is Jesus' responsibility and complementing is a woman's privilege. A woman not complete in Jesus will be a drain on her husband. Such a woman will expect her husband to fill the gap that only Jesus can fill. Only the single woman who understands this means of being complete in Jesus is mature enough to be a helpmeet (complement). "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ…" (Col. 2:9-10 NIV). Are you feeling full yet? Ask the Lord right now to begin this process of revealing to your heart the reality of your fullness in Him. "But it is good for me to draw near to God…" (Ps. 73:28a KJV).

In her book, *Loneliness,* Elisabeth Elliot states, "Marriage teaches us that even the most intimate human companionship cannot satisfy the deepest places of the heart. Our hearts are lonely 'til they rest in Him."[4] Elisabeth Elliot has been married

three times (twice widowed) and she knows from experience that marriage does not make one complete; only Jesus does.

Satisfied By a Heavenly Fiancé

Does your relationship with Jesus reflect reckless abandonment to Him, or does it reflect only tokenism, a superficial effort toward following Jesus? Are you content to offer to Jesus that which cost you nothing? Are you influencing those around you to consider a life-changing commitment to Jesus Christ? In the Song of Solomon, the Shulammite was so committed to the one she loved that other women wanted to meet him. They were anxious to go with her to seek for him. "Where has your lover gone, most beautiful of women? Which way did your lover turn, that we may look for him with you?" (Song of Solomon 6:1 NIV).

Who was this one so worthy of such reckless abandonment? Does your commitment to Jesus cause those around you to seriously consider whether Jesus is Lord of their lives? Or does your "token" relationship leave you and others still thirsty?

One of Jackie's single friends stopped by her home one day, glowing and grinning from ear to ear. When questioned about her grin, she replied, "I am on a honeymoon with Jesus." This woman had been through a brutal divorce (including losing custody of her children) and in her hopeless condition she met the One who gives everlasting hope. When she began to recklessly abandon herself to knowing Jesus as Lord, He began to fill the gaps in her heart left by the removal of her husband and children. In Christ she found comfort, healing,

direction, and purpose for her life. Do you understand such a relationship with Christ? It doesn't come cheaply, but the high price is worth the results of such a commitment, especially today. The depth of your relationship with God is up to you. God has no favorites. The choice to surrender is yours. A.W. Tozer so brilliantly stated in his book *The Pursuit of God:* "It will require a determined heart and more than a little courage to wrench ourselves loose from the grip of our times and return to Biblical ways."[5]

Ruth had just such a determined heart, and the Lord honored her faith to move away from all that was familiar and take a journey toward the completely unknown. Ruth did not allow her friends, her old surroundings, nor her culture's dead faith to keep her from running hard after God. She did not use the excuse of a dark past to keep her from a bright future that began with her first critical choice: reckless abandonment to Jesus Christ.

Have you made this critical choice or have you settled for a mediocre relationship with Jesus? Amy Carmichael, one of the greatest single woman missionaries who ever lived, once remarked, "The saddest thing one meets is the nominal Christian."[6]

Choose right now to put mediocrity behind you and courageously determine to pursue Jesus with your whole heart, soul, and mind. As a single woman, this is the perfect moment to establish a radical relationship with Jesus and remove any tokenism from your Christian walk.

Becoming a Young Lady in Waiting begins with reckless abandonment to Jesus. The strength and discipline necessary to be a Lady of Diligence, Faith, Virtue, Devotion, Purity,

Security, Contentment, Conviction, and Patience is discovered in this radical way of relating to your heavenly Bridegroom. If you find yourself struggling with any of the qualities discussed in the following chapters, you may want to re-examine your own commitment to Jesus. Is it real and all-encompassing, or merely ornamental? Do you remember a time when you broke your "alabaster box" in the presence of the Lord Jesus? The Young Lady in Waiting understands the pleasing aroma of the perfume that flows from one's "broken alabaster box." It is the irresistible aroma of reckless abandonment to Jesus Christ.



Becoming a Lady of Reckless Abandonment

From your perspective, what is the difference between "token commitment" and "reckless abandonment" to Jesus? Is your relationship with Jesus one of sacrifice or convenience? (See Second Samuel 24:24.)

Have you broken your "alabaster box" at the feet of Jesus? (See Mark 14:3-9 and Luke 7:36-39.) Are you afraid to break your box at His feet? Why?

Like Ruth, how has your relationship with Jesus affected your friends, your surroundings, and your faith? (See Matthew 19:29.)

Does your life have public and private evidences of your reckless abandonment to Jesus Christ? Explain.

Read Colossians 2:10. What does being complete in Jesus mean to you? In what ways do you feel incomplete? How can that be changed?

Have you experienced the completeness that comes from the courtship available with your heavenly Fiancé? Consider this dating prerequisite: You must understand you are complete in Jesus before you ever date or marry.

What does the following statement mean to you? “Any woman who does not understand that she is complete in Jesus is susceptible to idolatry?” (This idolatry is dependence on a guy to make her complete—thus putting him in God’s place.) Consider this verse: “How happy are those who know their need for God…” (Matt.5:3 Phillips).

CHAPTER 2

Young Lady of Diligence



While getting ready for a speaking engagement, she managed to get the kids up, dressed, and fed; fill the lunch boxes; load everyone in the car; and take them to school. Then she hurried home to set her hair and do her makeup. Finally dressed and ready to go speak, she made one last dash for the bathroom. While washing her hands, she noticed that the toilet was overflowing—not a slow drip, but pouring out all over the floor and into her open-toed shoes and nylons. She scrambled for towels and used them to build a dike then rubbed her feet dry and squirted her shoes with perfume. She ran out the door and jumped into the car. Halfway to the church she realized that she had left her Bible and outlines on the kitchen counter.

Such is the drama of Jackie Kendall's daily life. This kind of insanity is not unique to her. Every wife and mother daily deals with the legitimate needs of her husband and children. These needs take precedence over anything she might want to do, regardless of how "noble" her desires are! To be involved in the simplest form of ministry may require the married woman

three times as much time to accomplish in comparison to the single woman. Although a single woman may long for the "chaos" of a family, she must not waste her time wishing for it. She must be diligent to use her single time wisely now. She has more control over her time and choices now than she will probably ever have again. (The single parent is not included in this comparison, because her responsibilities are double that of a married woman. She must "solo" in raising children, increasing the burden of her daily priorities even more.)

The perfect time to make the most of every opportunity is while you are single. Every believer should use time wisely, as Ephesians 5:15-17 (NIV) says: "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is."

John Fischer wrote this:

"God has called me to live now. He wants me to realize my full potential as a man right now, to be thankful about where I am, and to enjoy it to the fullest. I have a strange feeling that the single person who is always wishing he were married will probably get married, discover all that is involved, and wish he were single again! He will ask himself, 'Why didn't I use that time for the Lord when I didn't have so many other obligations? Why didn't I give myself totally to Him when I was single?'"[1]

The single woman can be involved in the Lord's work on a level that a married woman cannot because of the distractions and responsibilities of being a wife and mother. Ironically,

some single women can be so distressed by their single state that they become emotionally more distracted than a wife and mother of four children.

Rather than staying home worrying about another "dateless" Saturday night, realize how much valuable time has been entrusted to you at this point in your life. Rather than resent your many single hours, embrace them as a gift from God—a package that contains opportunities to serve Him that are limited only by your own self-pity and lack of obedience.

No Time to Waste

Understanding God's promised provision for widows, Naomi sent Ruth to gather grain in the field of a kinsman. Ruth was willing to use her life working diligently at whatever her Lord called her to do. She would not be paralyzed by her lack of a husband. "And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, 'Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.' And she said to her, 'Go, my daughter'" (Ruth 2:2). She also did not allow the fact that she was a stranger from Moab to cause her to fear while she was gleaning in a strange field. Ruth was the "new girl in town," an obvious newcomer, but she was not afraid to walk into a totally unfamiliar situation. Countless single women stay home rather than travel alone into the unknown. They not only miss out on being encouraged by others, but also are not exposed to new relationships when they remain at home tied up by cords of fear and feeling sorry for themselves.

If a single woman allows the fearful prospect of meeting new people and new challenges to keep her at home, she may

find herself bored and lonely while all the time missing many satisfying and fulfilling experiences. Don't stay home as a fearful single woman. Take that step of faith and volunteer. Get involved and see what you have been missing. One single said, "Serving the Lord brings such inexpressible joy." People who are not involved in serving the Lord obviously have never experienced this joy; otherwise churches wouldn't have to beg them to get involved. If all the singles in the church just realized their strategic position, churches would never need to ask for help with children, youth, or college students. There would probably be so many available single workers that there would be a surplus of manpower!

Free to Follow

Are you busy serving Jesus during your free time, or do you waste hours trying to pursue and snag an available guy? Ruth was a widow, but she did not use her time sponsoring pity parties for all unhappy single women to gather and compare the misery of datelessness. When she and Naomi moved back to Bethlehem, Ruth did not waste a moment feeling sorry for herself. She went right to work. Instead of being drained by her discouraging circumstances, she took advantage of them and diligently embraced each day.

Ruth came to the God of Israel after years of living in darkness, but He gladly received her service even though she was a Moabite foreigner. She bound herself to the service of the Lord, interweaving her service with Him like the braiding of a heavy rope. Isaiah 56:6-7 (NIV) refers to a foreigner binding himself (or herself) to the Lord and Him willingly receiving their

"diligent" service: "And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to serve Him…these I will bring to My holy mountain…."

Are you tightly bound to the Lord, serving Him diligently, or has your relationship and service been unraveling over the years as you continue to be single and not married? Has resentment and self-pity unraveled what used to be a tightly woven labor for the Lord? You must be sensitive to the things and situations that distract you from redeeming your free time. "Whatever might blur the vision God had given [Elisabeth Elliot] of His work, whatever could distract or deceive or tempt others to seek anything but the Lord Jesus Himself she tried to eliminate."[2]

Some singles see the lack of a mate as God denying them something for a more "noble purpose"—a *cross to bear!* Our selfish nature tends to focus on what we do not have rather than on what we do have—free time—that can be used for others and ourselves. Is your life on hold until you have someone to hold?

A beautiful blonde told her story to someone across the table from her in a restaurant and the listener was somewhat overwhelmed. Here was a very attractive woman who had put her life with Jesus on hold after her world fell apart. She had been married for a few years and trying to conceive a child, when she heard her single best friend was pregnant. What irony: her unmarried friend was with child and she remained childless. The irony turned into a trauma when this married woman found out that the father was her own husband. Can you imagine the devastation caused in this beautiful young woman's heart? Have you experienced such a crushing emotional blow?

The stunned listener began to cry out for wisdom concerning this tragedy. Jesus reminded the listener that God is not intimidated by trauma. In fact, Psalm 34:18 says, "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit." This brokenhearted woman had put her life on hold after her husband divorced her. Such a response is understandable, but that day in the restaurant this now single woman decided to take her broken heart, her empty arms, and her loneliness and give them to Jesus. In exchange, Jesus taught her how to resist feeling sorry for herself and how to stop living in the arena of bitterness. After she made the choice of recklessly abandoning herself to Jesus as Lord, she was free to serve Him. This once brokenhearted single woman has been transformed into a fearless servant of the Lord. In fact, she became a missionary to Quito, Ecuador.

Have you also put your life on hold? Do you have an excuse for not serving Jesus?

A Full Place Setting

A former college friend remained single longer than any of us ever expected. She had dated incessantly in college, so we assumed if any of the girls would marry, it would be Donna. Ten years after her graduation from college, she was not married. Someone asked what helped her to be so satisfied as a single woman. Her immediate response was, "A full place setting." She had lived for several years eating her meals on paper plates while her good china and flatware were snugly stored in her hope chest. Then the Lord showed her that she did not have to wait for a "mate" to bring beauty to her private

world. She unpacked her china and silver and began not only to entertain others in style, but also to daily set out china and crystal for herself.

One Wednesday night at church, Donna sat in front of two people who were to become her future in-laws. They did not know each other at the time. On the way home from church, the future father-in-law remarked that he thought Donna would become his daughter-in-law. He was absolutely right. This satisfied single woman has someone sharing her china and crystal today, but her feelings of satisfaction did not come because of a husband. She found satisfaction by serving the Lord.

Some women put their lives on hold, each waiting for some guy to come riding into her life on a white stallion. They have no china, no decent furniture, and no pictures on the walls—none of the little extras that make a house inviting. They make minimal investment in what they hope is a temporary condition. Their lives reflect a "paper plate" mentality. They cannot comprehend fullness and satisfaction without a man. These precious women have settled for the "generic" version of life. How unlike Jesus' statement in John 10:10, in which He said He came so we might have a more abundant life. Do you believe that the abundant life is only for the married woman? Do you think that a woman with a husband, two children, a nice home, and two insurance policies is more satisfied with life than you are? Life is satisfying only when you diligently serve the Lord, whatever your circumstances.

Enviable Singleness

Singleness is an enviable condition. An unmarried woman has something that a married woman gives up on her wedding day: extra time for Jesus. Too many young women waste valuable years as they wait for life to begin—after marriage. They rarely realize the priceless free time they waste, until it is gone. Have you neglected some mission or ministry opportunities because you feared prolonging your unmarried state?

A young woman heard about this enviable condition and wrote a letter asking Jackie whether she should pursue a doctorate. (She continues to count more birthdays as a single than she had anticipated.) Jackie enthusiastically encouraged her to immediately get her degree. As a single woman, she diligently hit the books without neglecting a mate or a child. Her single state served as the perfect qualification for the pursuit of a doctorate. This is not to say that a woman can't pursue her dreams after she is married, but she will have a much higher price to pay and often the pursued dream turns into a nightmare!

If you love serving Jesus, please do not waste any of the free time you have. Do not consider yourself too unhappy to help anyone else. Self-centeredness will rob you of the joy of serving. Satan, who is effective at distracting you from God's best, wants you to continue dreaming about how "one day" you will get involved in ministry. He wants to sidetrack you from making a lasting investment. Too many women foolishly believe his lies. Therefore, they lose sight of opportunities to get involved in any form of outreach to others. Unsatisfied and unfulfilled, they sink deep into the quicksand of "maybe next year."

Many have embraced the ultimate deception, "Poor me." An excerpt from a single friend's letter exposes this self-pitying lie: "As is usually the case, as soon as I stopped asking what was in it for me and began asking what I was meant to give, things began to improve, beginning with my attitude. I continue to grow and be greatly strengthened in my relationship with God one-on-one and to seek out where I can serve those around me." This single woman is a classic beauty. She has learned how to use her free time for Jesus rather than sit home writing melancholy poetry.

Unrelenting Pursuit

Undistracted and unrelenting describe different facets of the word *diligence*. The Young Lady of Diligence embodies these terms. A verse that describes her attitude toward ministry and service is First Corinthians 15:58 (NIV): "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." Do these terms describe your attitude and approach to using your free time for Jesus? Let's examine how diligence affects every aspect of your service and ministry for the Lord.

Diligence and the Ministry of Teaching

Have you been diligently pursuing truth for years, but not giving out as much as you have taken in? Are you involved in

a regular Bible study where you give, maybe even teach? Almost as dangerous as neglecting the Word is the habit of taking it in but not putting it into practice. “Impression without expression can lead to depression.” Do you keep attending church, Sunday school, Bible studies, seminars, and retreats—taking yet never giving? Take advantage of this time in your life when you can be involved in teaching without so many encumbrances. Maybe you’ve considered leading a discipleship group. Hesitate no more—go for it! There is no time in your life more perfect than now. Maybe you have toyed with the idea of teaching a Bible study. Do not delay. The future may hold more distractions that would continue to keep you from your goal.

Diligence and the Ministry of Encouragement

How many times a week do you find yourself in a position where someone has shared a need with you and you want so much to respond with wisdom and grace? Isaiah 50:4 (NIV) says, “The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.” Do you have a hard time responding to such an early morning wake-up call? Rising early to develop the tongue of a disciple will open a door of ministry to those who are weary, whether they are at work, at church, or even at the grocery store. Your very words will be a ministry of healing and encouragement. “The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit” (Prov. 15:4 NIV).

Such predawn training will give you the privilege of becoming God's garden hose in a land of many thirsty people.

Diligence and the Ministry of Prayer

Do you have a prayer partner? Or do you only have someone with whom you have regular pity parties? If you do not have a prayer partner, ask the Lord right now for such a gift. A prayer partner can help you pray for others. Of course, this prayer partner needs to be a female, one who can encourage you to keep God's perspective on your commitment to being all God wants you to be, whether married or single.

A prayer partnership serves as one of the greatest assets for accomplishing the deepest and highest work of the human spirit: prayer.[3] Praying regularly with someone (or a small group) is such a vital part of your service to God. To intercede on behalf of someone else's need is a privilege. When you intercede with a partner, the "duet" of harmony before God can change your world. Matthew 18:19 (NIV) describes this harmonious duet: "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven." That little verb agree refers to harmony. Do you have someone with whom you can prayerfully approach God in harmony? Rather than searching for a life-partner, look for a prayer partner. Together you can participate in God-given prayer projects. Together you can discover how you can take your concerns for others and turn them into prayer projects.

Diligence and the Ministry of Service

It is doubtful that there could ever be a better time to serve Jesus than this "moment" of singleness. Rather than wasting precious moments fantasizing about an earthly lover, take advantage of your free hours each day to serve the Lord of Heaven. If you are frustrated and distracted, rather than fruitfully serving Jesus, then ask Him right now to adjust your vision.

As Ruth diligently worked at what she could, God sent her a man to protect and provide for her. God will do the same for you if that is His plan. Is there a ministry opportunity you should be working with? Why not consider a short-term mission trip? Don't worry about that certain guy you have had your eye on for a while. If he is God's best for you, he will be there when you return. Your single state may not be permanent, but it definitely is not to be a comatose state until your Prince Charming arrives and whisks you off to his castle. Single women are not "Sleeping Beauties" waiting for their prince to fight his way through the thorns and past the wicked witch to finally kiss them awake. That is an illusion often used by the enemy to defraud women.

Is there an opportunity of service that you have avoided because you can't give up your "post on the castle wall" looking for your knight in shining armor? Is there an application for a summer ministry waiting for you to fill out? Such a chance may come again next summer, but then it will be even harder to respond to the prospect of serving, for time brings more and more distractions. As you get older, you assume more obligations and responsibilities that demand your

time and attention. Such distractions will make serving Jesus even more difficult. Have you given Jesus full reign over your time?

Limitless ministry opportunities exist for the Young Lady of Diligence. These ministries are available right this moment. They do not demand a Bible college education. The only requirement is a single woman who desires to use her time wisely in ministry.

Diligence and the Ministry of Writing

This ministry requires pen, paper, and a willing heart. Much of the New Testament was originally written as letters to believers. An encouraging letter or postcard can be read and re-read. So often a person will think about writing someone a letter, but the thought never becomes action. You may ignore the inward suggestion because of a busy schedule or a resistance to writing. A personal note, though, serves as oxygen to the soul of the recipient. "He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed" (Prov. 11:25b NIV).

If you are not comfortable writing a full letter, or your schedule does not permit such a ministry in writing, then purchase some prestamped postcards and try to send them regularly to different people who need a refreshing word. The Lord wants you to be involved in the lives of those around you and writing is one of those opportunities.

Diligence and the Ministry of Listening

A ministry of listening is available right now. When someone is grieving, your presence provides more power than words. When someone is burdened, you may want to just listen and silently pray rather than verbally give the solution to the problem. Being content to listen to someone today is a gift you can give. A listener provides a healing audience for someone who is hurting. When Jackie's sister died, listeners who allowed her to share the loss and cry freely were God's greatest source of comfort. Being content to listen is a gift you can give to someone today.

It may take a gentle touch to minister to the spirit. It also may require just being with the person, whether standing for hours in a hospital hallway or sitting by a sickbed. Sometimes even the greatest songs or truths are not the appropriate thing during a crisis. "Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart" (Prov. 25:20 NIV). This ministry requires not seminary training, but a loving, listening heart.

Diligence and the Ministry of Hospitality

The ministry of hospitality is not producing a demo for the Parade of Homes or a feast featuring Julia Child. Simply cooking for others is a significant ministry, especially during illness or bereavement. Casseroles and cakes can be such a blessing to a new mother, an elderly neighbor, or someone emotionally devastated by a death in the family. What a way to share the love of Christ with someone who needs to see

Christianity in action.

Please do not limit your ministry of hospitality to candlelight dinners for the man of your dreams. Think how a beautiful, candlelight dinner for a group of single women, or even high school girls, could minister to them.

Diligence and the Ministry of Helps

This ministry requires time, but it is invaluable. Helping others with the "dailies" of life is a gift that breaks their exhausting monotony. Helping a friend get her apartment ready for special guests, or helping her move into a new place, leaves the recipient grateful. Mere physical labor may seem so insignificant in comparison to church visitation, but the Word of God speaks clearly to such a misconception. "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Maybe a friend needs a ride to the airport during rush hour, or maybe she needs her oven cleaned, or even her laundry done. These duties can all be done unto the Lord. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Col. 3:23 NIV).

Non-Newsy Works

For those of you who are diligently going after Jesus and the privilege of serving Him, here is a very special reminder. Sometimes you will be called to do some monotonous work that will not make the headlines. It may frustrate you because it doesn't seem very "impressive." Consider the reality of all the

non-newsy things Jesus did during the majority of His life (30 years), before He began His formal ministry. What more humbling work could Ruth have done than gathering leftover grain for the survival of her mother-in-law and herself? Richard Foster brilliantly penned this thought, "If all of our serving is before others, we will be shallow people indeed."[4] Jesus spoke clearly about the constant public display of our service. "Everything they do is done for men to see…" (Matt. 23:5 NIV). The next time someone asks you to help out in service that is monotonous and non-newsy, don't hesitate. The King records such works (see Matt. 25:34-35). Teaching Bible studies, going out on evangelism teams, mission trips, and even prayer groups—all these are priceless opportunities to serve, but they are not the only avenues. Serving in the preschool department at church, going to kids' camp, and even cooking in the kitchen for a junior high banquet are all honorable services that the Young Lady of Diligence can embrace with respect.

Look at your schedule and decide how some of your free time that was wasted yesterday might be redeemed today. Allow no more room in your schedule for "pity parties." Such wise use of your free time will give you the gift of "no regrets." Your future service will be focused and no longer distracted.

Free hours,
Not wasted by me,
using my free time,
To serve only Thee.
Realizing how temporary free time
will be

Never to regret a missed opportunity,
For others to be blest,
Through yielded me.
JMK



Becoming a Lady of Diligence

Determine what may have kept you from being more involved in ministry by seeing which of the following four characters you identify with the most.

JEALOUS JENNY: Do you focus on the gifts others have been given and, therefore, never find your own niche in ministry? Have you unwisely compared yourself with other women? (1 Cor. 4:7; 12:7; Rom. 12:3)

PRIMA DONNA PAULA: Do you want to serve God on your terms? Do you want to write the script and have the leading role? (John 4:34; 7:16,18; Matt. 23:5)

FEARFUL FRANCES: Do you fear what others think? Are you afraid of becoming too involved and being labeled a fanatic? Do you hesitate to be a Young Lady of Diligence because you feel so inadequate? (Prov. 29:25; 2 Tim. 1:7; 1 Thess. 5:24)

DOUBTING DORIS: Faith is believing what God says about you. Do you long to become more involved in a number of ministries, but feel your faith will fizzle before you finish? Have you struggled with serving the Lord in the past, so you doubt yourself today? (Part of ministry is learning, so don't let

yesterday's struggles prevent future successes.) (1 John 4:4; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Tim. 6:12)

To get involved in any ministry demands a sacrifice. Have you allowed your self-centeredness to dominate your daily schedule? Why not go through your checkbook tonight and see how many checks were written for things concerning others? (2 Sam. 24:24; Phil. 2:3-4; Matt. 19:29)

CHAPTER 3

Young Lady of Faith



Faith…
a fruit whose blossoming aroma
Inspires one to victory,
and sustains one after loss.
JMK

If you are spouse-hunting, we have heard that Alaska, Montana, and Florida have an abundance of men. Proportionately, women most outnumber men in the Northeastern states.

Are you panicked because you are residing in one of these male-sparse states? A recent statistic from the National Census Bureau states that the percentage of single men in Palm Beach has increased by 47 percent since 1980. Palm Beach, Florida—where the boys are! (Sounds like an old movie from the 1950s.) Do you suddenly have the urge to relocate? Don't start packing yet.

An article in *USA Today* stated: "The Census Bureau

reports today that for the first time since the early 1900s, the USA's male population grew faster than the female in the 1980s."[1] Are you breathing easier? Such a statistic does not alleviate your need to be a Young Lady of Faith. The existence of more single men does not mean exemption from the often trying process of waiting for God's best by faith.

One friend assumed that by going to a big Christian college, she would inevitably find Mr. Right. Considering that she was from a very small town where more livestock lived than people, her strategy for finding a spouse seemed quite logical. She completed her four years and returned home without her "MRS." degree. Where do you think she found her mate? You guessed it, back in her very small hometown. Her father invited her to come and watch their church baseball team, and guess who showed up on the opposing team? Mr. Right, a guy she had met at youth camp more than a decade earlier. You know the rest of the story. Her logic did not find Mr. Right. She returned to a hometown barren of many males, and God, who is not limited by our circumstances, delivered her mate from way out in "left field." God did not honor her logic, but He did honor her faith in Him to meet her needs.

Do you presently live in a town or city where you need "eyes of faith" in relation to the prospects of a mate? Do you attend a church where the pickin's are slim? Let's take a closer look at two contrasting attitudes toward one's circumstances.

Where the Boys Are

Think back to how the love story in the Book of Ruth

began. Three widows, Naomi with her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, have just been through the painful experience of losing the men they loved. Just facing each day without their mates required much faith because of the difficulty in providing for One's own needs. Naomi, being a Jewess, made the decision to leave Moab and return to her hometown in Israel (Bethlehem). Her two daughters-in-law had become young widows, so she encouraged them to return to their families where they each might find another husband. Naomi's suggestion appeared very rational. Naomi knew that they (being Moabites) had a better chance of finding husbands in Moab than in Israel. "…Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband" (Ruth 1:8-9 NIV). Would Ruth have ever found a Christian husband to be united with if she had also returned to Moab?

Naomi lovingly pointed Orpah and Ruth in the direction of possible prospects. She actually encouraged them to go in a direction where they could *see* how they might each find a husband. Orpah followed Naomi's advice and chose logical sight for future direction. She gave Naomi a kiss good-bye and headed "where the boys are." Such "choices" are often based on logical sight and do not need even a mustard seed of faith.

Many single women spend their free time searching for the same kind of location chosen by Orpah. They attend schools because they can "see" the prospects. They join churches based on apparent ratios of men to women. They go to seminars, retreats, and conferences looking for the man of their dreams, only to demand a refund for the nightmare they often find (the ratio of women to men typically registered at retreats

being seven women to every one man).

Some women have changed churches because they were in a "no prospective mate" district. Others avoid churches understocked with available men. Can you relate? Some single women serve only one term on a mission field and never return because the ratio of available men to women shrinks even smaller on the mission field than in their home church. A single woman serving as a missionary wrote: "Well, here I am in a no-hope situation. There is only 1 single man to about 50 single women." On what are these women focusing—on the situation or on the Sovereign One?

Chance Rendezvous

A woman who takes the route of Orpah (sensual, logical sight) often invents ways for a "chance rendezvous" with the man of her dreams. You can see her loitering in the very area that Mr. Right regularly frequents, hoping that he might finally notice her and the romance will begin. This sounds more like a Harlequin romance. Such a young woman might sing in the choir, not because she wants to make a joyful noise unto the Lord, but because she wants a weekly chance to sit near the prospect (single man) that her "sensual sight" has focused upon. Such impure motives for such a noble cause! Proverbs 19:14 says, "House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord."

If the Lord wants to give you a man, He does not need your clever "chance rendezvous." This is not advocating that you avoid men completely and expect the Lord to "UPS" His choice to your front door. You need to participate in activities that

involve men and women, but be sensitive to your motives whenever you find yourself in the presence of "available men." Consider this Scripture whenever checking your motives and your pulse! Proverbs 16:2 (NIV) says, "All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord."

You can prevent disappointing moments if you check your heart whenever you go to a singles' activity. Much preparation (like taking a shower, putting on makeup, styling your hair, doing your nails, and choosing the perfect outfit) precedes one's attending such an activity, yet so little heart preparation does. The gal with sensual sight can become so obsessed with finding her guy that she neglects her inner self. Orpah's style (logical sight) tends to become the norm, but Ruth offers an alternative to this vain search for Mr. Right. She demonstrates what it means to be a Young Lady of Faith.

Eyes of Faith

Orpah's example of going after the available men could have influenced Ruth to return to Moab, the home of her parents and the gods of her youth. Ruth, however, remained with Naomi and her God. Ruth certainly must have considered the probability of remaining single if she went with Naomi. Even though it promised no prospects of a husband, she chose to follow Naomi and her God back to Bethlehem. Ruth chose to trust God with her future. She looked not with sensual sight, but through "eyes of faith." Even though Ruth was young in her faith in the God of Israel, she chose to trust with her heart for the future her eyes could not yet see.

The International Children's Bible describes faith in this

way: “Faith means being sure of the things we hope for. And faith means knowing that something is real even if we do not see it” (Heb. 11:1). This childlike expression of such an abstract quality can become a daily reality in the life of the Young Lady of Faith. Your hope cannot be put in some dreamed-up future. It must be in the God who knows your past, present, and future, and loves you enough to give you the best.

Are you in what seems like a “no-hope situation”? Maybe you are attending a church that requires you to exercise faith to even open the door and go in, since every man there is either married, engaged, or the age of your baby brother. Instead of becoming fearful during this trying situation, look to the Lord through “eyes of faith.” To do so brings God great pleasure. Hebrews 11:6a says, “And without faith it is impossible to please [totally satisfy] Him….” Your daily use of “eyes of faith” brings Jesus such satisfaction.

Do you long to please Him? Then reconsider your circumstances and realize that what seems to be a hopeless situation (no prospects on the horizon) is just the flip side of the view through “eyes of faith.”

Sometimes in an attempt to be a Young Lady of Faith, one can get sidetracked trying to hurry the “male order delivery” process.

One must admit that it is more likely a woman would find a godly man in a church, at a Christian college, or in a local Bible study. These are obviously good places to find Mr. Right, but the assumption of finding him can result in disillusionment. Hundreds of wonderful single women live and breathe in all the right places, but they remain single.

You may wonder, *How can I be a Young Lady of Faith*

when I feel so insecure deep in my heart that God will deliver the goods? What if I have faith in God and end up being 98 and unmarried? Of course, you would never outright admit that you're not sure you can trust God. That would appear too ungodly! But there's that sneaking fear in the back of your mind: *If I really give up my search and have "eyes of faith," God might not give me what I desire, like a husband, a home, and children.* God knows when your heart aches for these precious things. But He also knows that these earthly things will not make you secure.

To be sure, your gnawing fears are very common. The enemy knows how common these fears are and he feeds them by adding a few lies like, "If you give your desire to the Lord, He will send you to outer Bufelia where all the men are three feet tall;" or, "If you give all your desires to the Lord, you might get married, but you'll definitely not want to take pictures of your fiancé for your friends to see."

Can I really trust God with all my hopes and dreams? How will I meet Mr. Right if I have eyes of faith? Doesn't God need any help in developing my dreams? What about needing to be in the right place at the right time? How will I meet Mr. Right if I'm not out and about where he might be? I feel the urge to make a mad dash to the next party or to attend the college with the most available men.

Such anxious thoughts are based on fears, not faith. "Faith does not eliminate questions. But faith knows where to take them."[2] You may say you have faith and are just being practical. Are you? What is the opposite of faith? Fear. Who

knows that better than the enemy? At the base of his being is the desire to trick you into missing God's best. Satan wants you to believe the lie that cripples faith: God cannot be trusted.

In order to have "eyes of faith," you may have to use a spiritual eye wash to remove the debris that the enemy has dropped into your eyes. The Young Lady of Faith will have times when her secure eyes of faith begin to blink into an anxious twitch of insecure, sensual sight. She can admit her insecurity to her heavenly Fiancé and He can calm the twitching eyes. Spending some quality time in the Word is the best "eye wash" for "eyes of faith."

Romans 10:17 says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." A Lady of Faith may have to spend dateless weekends in male-saturated churches. She can only be content in this trying situation if she has her "eyes of faith" properly focused on the ultimate relationship—with her heavenly Bridegroom. Datelessness is a common type of debris that irritates the "eyes of faith," but the eye wash treatment—quality time with Jesus and reading His Word—is always effective.

Divine Encounter

In contrast to the manipulated "chance rendezvous" of the single woman Orpah, Ruth had a divine encounter that affected not only her marital status, but also biblical history. That first morning in Bethlehem, Ruth happened to stop in a field belonging to Boaz. Interestingly enough, the same day, Boaz "just happened" to visit that very same field where Ruth was gathering the leftover grain. Their meeting was not an accident

nor the product of female maneuvering. Instead it was the work of a sovereign God.

God providentially directed Ruth to the field of Boaz. You find this divine encounter in the second chapter of Ruth, verse 3: "…and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz…." The verb *happened* in Hebrew means "chanced upon." This leaves no room for manipulation. She had a chance and her chance transported her into the center of God's will and right to Boaz's field. Boaz was wealthy and available. Ruth did not "have plans" when she chanced upon his field. Ruth's "eyes of faith" led her to the exact spot where she would meet her Mr. Right, Boaz, whose name means "pillar of strength." (Contrast the meaning of his name to that of her first husband, Mahlon, which means "weak and sickly"! God rewarded Ruth's faith with a husband who was a "pillar of strength.")

If Jesus wants you married, He will orchestrate the encounter. You have nothing to fear except getting in His way and trying to "write the script" rather than following His. Jesus does have your best interest at heart. He desires to bless you by giving you the best. Sometimes what you perceive as the best is nothing more than a generic version. Consider His wisdom and love in comparison to your own wisdom and self-love. In whom are you going to trust—all Wisdom and Everlasting Love or little ol' finite you? Ever since the Garden of Eden, women have often felt they could and should know as much as God. Much pain in our world has resulted from dependence on our wisdom rather than on our Father's.

Meeting Across Continents

A beautiful airline stewardess left her secular job and went to Germany as a missionary. Her "eyes of faith" sometimes twitched as the reality of no prospects, especially Englishspeaking ones, continued to loom before her while she diligently served the Lord. At a Bible conference, she met a single guy who served the Lord on the other side of the world. He was an unlikely candidate according to sensual sight and basic logic, but a longdistance courtship began and they eventually married. Today they serve the Lord together in the Philippines.

Your circumstances and geographical location do not threaten God's will and purpose. Just as God brought Eve to Adam, Rebekah to Isaac, Ruth to Boaz, and someday the Bride of Christ to Himself, He will one day bring Mr. Right to you if you are to be married. This is true regardless of your unique situation. Your location or your occupation may not make you very accessible to available godly men, but these roadblocks do not handicap God. Time and time again, we have had the privilege of watching God bring a wonderful, godly guy into the life of a Young Lady of Faith. He seems to suddenly appear out of nowhere.

One young lady faithfully attended her church for years. Often she needed reminding that "he's just not here yet." God brought her Boaz from across the country to where she was in Florida. This single woman had developed better than 20/20 vision in relation to her "eyes of faith." Many tears of faith had washed away the debris that often caused her to doubt if she would ever get married. She used those times of doubting to grow in faith as she turned to God who orchestrated the future blessing for her.

God brought His best for one woman all the way from Escondido, California, to Kenya, Africa, where she was serving her Lord. She was not anxious about the absence of available men. After a broken engagement and a couple of years of less-than-satisfying dating, Vivian had volunteered to go to Kenya, Africa, to teach missionary kids. Just before she left for Kenya, she attended a Bible study where she met a precious Christian guy named David. Had she not been leaving for Africa that week, they might have had time to become better acquainted. Frustrated by the reality of meeting such a fine Christian guy just before leaving to go halfway around the world, Vivian still followed the Lord to Africa with "eyes of faith." Little did she know the script God had written. Halfway through her first term on the field, a construction team arrived from the United States to do some work for the academy where she taught. Guess who was part of the team? You got it: David. He and Vivian not only got acquainted, but they also married right there in Kenya. Just as Jesus brought David to Vivian, Jesus can bring your life-mate to you, no matter where you live.

The ultimate demonstration of Young Ladies of Faith are the single women who have lived the ten principles in this book—and who themselves continue in a state of singleness. They have not numbed their longing to be married; instead, they have embraced their Lord so tightly that they face their prolonged singleness with peace, not bitterness.

One woman named DeDe has allowed her heavenly Bridegroom to sustain her through more than 40 years as a single. She has never stopped desiring a husband and children, but they are not the focus of her life. Her focus is on the "daily bundle" God gives her. Her "daily bundles" are specific assignments to love and encourage the people in her world.

Instead of having her own baby wrapped in a bundle, the Lord gives her someone else's child to love and encourage (she is the vice-principal of a Christian school). Rather than having a husband to wrap her arms around, she has teachers to give hugs and thoughtful notes to during their demanding and draining days. This Lady of Faith has not only pleased her heavenly Bridegroom, but also has been a blessing to the Bride of Christ.

Have you hesitated about taking a new job or even going to a foreign mission field because you might miss Mr. Right? Have you passed up opportunities to serve in another Sunday school department because you might miss meeting the man of your dreams? If you are trying to orchestrate the "divine encounter," you might be setting yourself up for a disappointing crash. Wherever you are, whatever your circumstances may be, whether divorced, widowed, or single and getting older every day, be assured that God has not lost your address or your file. He knows exactly where you are and what you need. Remember, God has already taken care of your greatest need—your salvation—and as Romans 8:32 reminds us, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will he not also with Him freely give us all things?"

You make the most important decision in life, giving your life to Jesus Christ, "by faith." The second most important decision concerns your life-mate. This decision also demands the element of faith. Waiting for one's life-mate and then saying "I do" to him demands secure faith, like Ruth's faith in the God of Israel.

Before you read any further, if you have been full of doubts

and anxiety in reference to your future mate, take a few moments to confess your doubts to God and ask His Spirit to develop in your life this quality of faith. Your faith during the "waiting period" pleases God.

Don't fear or resent the waiting periods in your life. These are the very gardens where the seeds of faith blossom. Whenever circumstances stimulate you to deepen your faith, don't resist them; instead embrace them willingly. Elisabeth Elliot said in *Passion and Purity* (a must-read for those who are having an anxiety attack during their extended waiting periods):

I do know that waiting on God requires the willingness to bear uncertainty, to carry within oneself the unanswered question, lifting the heart to God about it whenever it intrudes upon one's thoughts.[3]

Whenever the "unanswered question" captures your mind, or you are overtaken by the restlessness of singleness, take a moment to commit that care where it belongs. As First Peter 5:7 says, "Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you." This intruding anxiety about your lack of a life-mate is not reality, but rather a weakness that the Greater Reality is capable of handling. Just go to Jesus as soon as the intruder arrives. Such a practice will only enhance your life as a Young Lady of Faith. Many single women have not recognized that the trying, frustrating waiting period is the perfect classroom for the Young Lady of Faith. Don't skip class! Embrace those dateless nights and, by faith, rest in His faithfulness.

Becoming a Lady of Faith

Go through selected Psalms and circle the words *trust* and *rely upon* in red. Notice David's trust in God.

This exercise will strengthen your "eyes of faith." What are two other ways to strengthen your faith?

Can you see the parallel between a strong devotional life and the Young Lady of Faith? Read Romans 10:17.

Can you see a parallel between your own journey of faith and your daily quiet time with God?

Read through Hebrews 11 and underline all the verbs. Then go back through and confess, "By faith I can _____," filling in the blank with the verbs from each verse.

Is there anything you can think of that you can't do by faith?

Can you trust God to sovereignly bring you together with a Boaz?

What causes you to struggle in your walk of faith?

Explain how you tend to manipulate your rendezvous with men and/or how you can allow God to be your heavenly dating service.

Can you see how an extended period of singleness serves as a great opportunity to develop into a Young Lady of Faith? Explain.

CHAPTER 4

Young Lady of Virtue



"Providing lasting pleasure,
potential beyond measure,
the rarest of treasure,
a reputation of virtuous character."
JMK

One of life's most costly and beautiful objects is born out of pain and irritation—the pearl. A tiny piece of sand slips into an oyster's shell and begins to rub against the soft tissue, causing irritation. In response to the irritation, the oyster produces a hard substance. This substance eventually develops into one of the world's most beautiful jewels—a lovely luminous pearl. In fact, the greater the irritation, the more valuable the pearl!

Like the oyster, Ruth experienced many irritations or trials in her young life. She grieved the deaths of her father-in-law and husband. She bravely faced the turmoil of change in the direction of her life as well as a move to a foreign land with a

bitter mother-in-law. When she arrived in that strange land, the trials did not end. She was immediately thrown into a new working situation among total strangers with new customs. Through all this stress, her new faith began to wrap itself around the painful situations. The by-product was a pearl from the washbasin of Moab.

Many single women view themselves as ugly oyster shells lying on the beaches of life, beset with the trials and problems that come with not being married. To make matters worse, they compare their crusty exterior to all the beautiful seashells around them and wonder how any man could ever give his attention to them.

If you are one of these women, be encouraged. Don't view the trials of singleness as irritating grains of sand to be discarded as quickly as possible. Realize that God has them there to create something beautiful in you. James 1:2-4 says, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

God is using the sands of singleness to make you perfect and complete. He's developing pearls of character in your life. He knows that whatever you use to "catch" a guy, you must also use to keep him. If you attract a guy with only your looks, then you are headed for trouble, since looks don't last. As time goes on, we all end up looking like oysters. Therefore, what you look like on the inside is far more important than what you look like on the outside.

Consider again our Young Lady in Waiting. What enabled Ruth to catch Boaz's attention? Was it her gorgeous hair or

beautiful eyes? No! The answer is found in Boaz's response to her question in Ruth chapter 2.

Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?" Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know (Ruth 2:10-11).

Boaz was attracted to the virtue and character displayed in Ruth's life. A woman of virtue is irresistible to a godly man.

At a singles' conference, one pastor's wife spoke of her life as a child. She grew up with a harsh alcoholic father. He left the family without a penny when she was a young teen. Her outward appearance was very plain and she could not afford fancy clothing, makeup, or expensive hairstyles. She had very little time to socialize because she had to work to support her family. Instead of feeling bitterness over the rejection she had experienced or frustration over her lack of material possessions and free time, she trusted God to take care of her. She developed a strong prayer life and asked God to make her beautiful. She worked hard and grew strong in faith, believing that God would provide all she needed.

Her testimony was stirring, but the real climax came the next day as her husband spoke. He said, "My wife's character is what caught my attention. Her inner beauty was irresistible. Now, thirty years of marriage and half a dozen children later, I

am more attracted to and in love with her than when I first met her." This lady gained her knight's attention with lasting godly character. Today their marriage and ministry remain strong and blessed because of the qualities she allowed God to develop in her while she was single.

An ugly oyster shell is an unlikely place to find a lovely gem, but Isaiah 55:8 says, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways…." You may see an ugly shell, but God sees the beauty He is creating in you. Are the sands of singleness causing you bitterness right now, or are you allowing these trials to change you into a pearl? The Lord wants you to be a Lady of Virtue—a costly, beautiful pearl for all to admire.

The Body Beautiful Trap

The world has convinced many Christians that the only way to get a man's attention is through a gorgeous body. Hollywood has sold the lie that a woman will never marry the man of her dreams if she is not pretty enough or slim enough or tall enough or if she does not have high enough cheek bones! Most dateless women think their condition is the result of the "reflection in the mirror." Consequently, women spend millions of dollars every year believing the myth that physical beauty is mandatory for marriage.

Proverbs describes how a woman with no character got a man's attention. Some of the description used for her included the following: smooth tongue, captivating eyes, persuasive and seductive speech, a mouth smoother than oil, and flattering speech, (see Proverbs 5:3; 6:24-25; 7:21). The

techniques used today by the modern woman are as old as the first woman who ever snared a man's soul. The whole emphasis is on the superficial, external aspects of a woman—aspects that fade with every passing day. Many women's magazines glorify this woman's techniques rather than expose her bitter end. Marriage based simply on outward beauty can lead to immorality and ultimately, divorce when an even more attractive body comes along.

The Word of God very clearly warns women not to fall into "the body beautiful trap." "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes" (1 Pet. 3:3 NIV). Although braided hair and gold jewelry are not wrong in and of themselves, real beauty is not found on the outside. This verse does not advocate homeliness as proof of godliness. Some women are under the misguided perception that to be holy, one must look homely. This is not true. Women should seek to look their best. This verse simply challenges you to not devote all your energies toward painting the outside, thus neglecting the enduring qualities that need developing on the inside.

The key to beauty is found in First Peter 3:4 (NIV): "Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight." This kind of beauty can only get better the older it gets. As Jackie once said, "If a man chose me for external beauty, his destiny would be hugging a prune. But, if a man chooses me for my internal beauty, his destiny will be unfading beauty even in the twilight years of marriage, because of Jesus."

When you look at the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10-

31, you will see God's picture of a beautiful woman. There are 20 verses describing her. Only one verse mentions her outward appearance. If you were to spend 1/20 of your time on outward physical beauty and the other 19/20 on developing the other qualities God describes as beautiful, such as wisdom, kindness, and godliness, you would become the excellent woman Proverbs 31:10 says a man should try to find.

Remember what King Solomon said in Proverbs 31:30 (NIV) about the external emphasis of charm and glitz? "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." There are many women who fear pimples, wrinkles, flabby thighs, and crow's feet, but very few women who really fear the Lord. With which are you attractive to men: the snares of Proverbs 5, 6, and 7, or the beauty of First Peter 3:4?

Fit for a King

When you picture the perfect man for you, what is your prince like? Do you see a man devoted to God? A man of character—teachable, loyal, faithful, gentle, and kind? What kind of woman do you think this godly man desires to marry—a shallow woman or a woman full of charm who knows how to dress and capture other men's attention? Is this the one he imagines he will one day want to spend the rest of his life with—the mother of his heirs? No way!!

To marry a prince, you must first become a princess. To marry into royalty, you must be appropriately prepared. Even Diana, the Princess of Wales, had to go through a period of "waiting and preparing" before marrying Prince Charles. She

had to learn how to properly act, dress, and speak so she would honor the royal family. Is it any wonder that a heavenly princess must prepare inwardly for the calling to which she will give her life? As you set your attention on developing godly character, Christ will change you into the beautiful princess He created you to be.

Ruth is not the only biblical example of a Young Lady in Waiting who developed into God's virtuous pearl. Consider the story of the lovely Rebekah in Genesis.

The girl was very beautiful, a virgin, and no man had had relations with her; and she went down to the spring and filled her jar, and came up. Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar." And she said, "Drink, my lord"; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink. Now when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking." So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels. Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence, to know whether the Lord had made his journey successful or not. When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half-shekel and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels in gold, and said, "Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room for us to lodge in your father's house?" She said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor." Again she said to him, "We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to lodge in (Genesis 24:16-25).

The "pickin's were slim" in Rebekah's shepherding community. Worse than that, she worked full-time for her father tending sheep! As you read her story though, there is good indication that Rebekah was doing more than "just waiting." Look at the endearing qualities she developed for her unknown knight (Isaac).

Genesis 24:15-16 shows that she was a hard worker with a jar on her shoulder" serving her dad's sheep. She also was *"a virgin, and no man had had relations with her*." She had not settled for second best in her wait. She had been under her father's authority and in her father's home serving his interests. Her respect for others showed in her kindness to a stranger in verse 18: "…'Drink, my lord'; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink." This was no slow, lazy woman, but one with the character quality of genuine care for someone in need. She had character like "Ruby" in Proverbs 31:20: "She extends her hand to the poor; and she stretches out her hands to the needy."

Rebekah did not stop after one act of kindness either! "…I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking" (Gen. 24:19). Rebekah had initiative and served without even being asked. She was not being manipulative with her service either. This was not a plan to get a man. She was not initiating service and working with such gusto for the reward of a young man's attention. She was treating a smelly old traveler and his dusty cantankerous camels special because that was her character! She was attentive to the needs of those around her and sought to meet them. She didn't offer them a sip of water, just doing a halfway job—she waited until they were finished drinking. Look at her diligence in verse 20: "So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and *ran back* to the

well to draw, and she drew for all his camels." She was a gracious, giving woman, as Genesis 24:25 says: "Again she said to him, 'We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to lodge in.'"

The servant had found a wife for his master's son completely on her virtuous character. She wasn't even in Isaac's neighborhood trying to meet him. She was busy with her father's sheep, but God brought them together. When the servant made his intentions known and wanted her to leave with him in Genesis 24:54-57, Rebekah knew she had been in the Lord's school of preparation, and she was ready. Her answer was, "I will go" (Gen. 24:58). Are you becoming a virtuous woman that a man may need as a helpmate? Are you using these days to develop godliness in order that, if asked, you will be ready? Whether you marry or not, every woman should seek the virtues of Christlikeness.

Rebekah's story closes with the perfect ending to a love story. "Isaac…lifted up his eyes…. Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted…. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent…and she became his wife, and he loved her…" (Gen. 24:63-64,67). God rewarded this virtuous woman's wait with her dream come true. The wait was worth it. Isaac loved the woman who waited for him.

If Rebekah had not developed godly character, would Isaac have been so attracted to her? Perhaps for a time, but within marriage, the real man and woman comes out. That can be a wonderful or a horrible experience. God desires that every man and woman develop their inner lives so that through the passing years and fading of outward beauty, their love still deepens and grows. Are you developing into a woman who

will be able to live “happily ever after”?

To Tell the Truth

So there are two ways to get a man to notice you. The first way, “the body beautiful trap,” is to get his attention by how you look on the outside. This is a snare because looks don’t last. They are superficial. The second way is what caused Boaz to notice Ruth and Isaac to be drawn to Rebekah. A Young Lady of Virtue is noticed because she has gained admiration for her godly character. Be truthful. Which approach best represents you? Take the following test. Check the items in each column that describe you most often. Score each total of qualities on the two lists to see if you are developing inner or outer beauty most diligently.

Young Lady of Virtue	Body Beautiful
☐ A person to whom all people are attracted (friendly)	☐ Nice only to those who can help your dating status
☐ Seeking God first	☐ Seeking a relationship first
☐ Interesting—with goals for yourself personally	☐ “Shopping”—known to be looking for a husband

☐ Becoming the lady God wants you to be	☐ Waiting to be found
☐ Realistic	☐ Living in romantic fantasy
☐ Truly interested in the person you date and his best interests	☐ Looking for your future in the relationship
☐ One who is spiritually challenging	☐ Exciting sensually
☐ One who gives friendship	☐ One who expects friendship
☐ One who communicates verbally	☐ A wallflower
☐ Committed to trusting God	☐ Clinging to a guy
☐ Prepared for lasting friendships	☐ Playing games
☐ Open to other friendships	☐ Possessive

❑ Secure in the Lord	❑ Insecure without a "dream man"
❑ Building positive qualities in yourself	❑ Wanting him now
❑ Trusting God	❑ Trusting in schemes and plans to catch a man
❑ Patiently waiting	❑ On the hunt
Score yourself: _____ ***(total qualities)***	**Score yourself:** _____ ***(total qualities)***

How did you do? Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to use the sands of singleness to create in you priceless pearls of virtuous character?

Stringing Together a Pearl Necklace

The qualities Ruth and Rebekah displayed do not come from the jewelry store; neither are they activated the day someone places an engagement ring on your finger. Virtue is developed over time as you allow God's Spirit to do a special work in your life.

It is the Holy Spirit, not you, who produces the godly character you seek. These pearls of character are listed in

Galatians 5:22-23 as "…love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control…." As these qualities develop, your life will become like a beautiful necklace strung with the pearls of godly character.

Galatians 5:19-21, however, describes some "beads" with which many singles choose to adorn their lives instead. They are "…immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these…." If you desire to be a Young Lady of Virtue, these beads cannot belong on your necklace. If you see that you have a bad bead in your strand of pearls, it must be removed and replaced with the character quality that pleases God.

To remove the bad bead, confess the sin that developed this unattractive quality. Be honest with yourself and don't cover over or excuse the sin God shows you. Be specific. For instance, instead of saying, "Forgive me for all my many sins," say, "Lord, I have been envious of _____. Forgive me for dwelling on what You have given *her* instead of thanking You for what You have given me." After specifically describing the bead that detracts from your inner beauty, then receive God's forgiveness. His Word says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). You no longer need to feel condemned or guilty because "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12).

Once you have received God's forgiveness, ask the Lord to cleanse you from whatever caused the sin in the first place. For

example, envy often results from comparing yourself to others or from an ungrateful heart. This deeper problem must be changed if envy is to be decisively overcome. If you do not cleanse your heart of these deeper issues, you will find yourself always on your knees asking forgiveness because of a continual struggle with the sin of envy.

One deals with these deeper issues through the power of God's Holy Spirit. He provides the needed power to take care of the deeper issues that produce bad beads. Galatians 5:16 speaks of this when it says, "…walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." How does one walk by the Spirit and tap into this pearl-producing power? Three portions of Scripture make it clear.

The first, Ephesians 4:30a, says, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." You grieve or hurt God's Spirit when you choose to think, say, or do something that offends God. To tap into pearl-producing power, you must first decide to live a life that will please your Lord in all respects. From the time you wake in the morning until you go to bed at night, set your heart's desire on exalting Him.

The second verse is found in First Thessalonians 5:19. It says, "Do not quench the Spirit." To "quench" gives the word picture of throwing water on a fire. When God's Spirit prompts you to do something, give expression to that impression. Don't douse it with cold water by ignoring His leadership. For example, He may prompt you to perform an act of kindness, or caution you not to say something you are about to say, or lead you to encourage a friend who may be hurting. Whatever it is, seek to obey the Spirit of God in you on a moment-by-moment basis.

Finally, to tap into pearl-producing power, Ephesians 5:18 says, "…be filled with the Spirit." To be filled, something must first be empty. To be filled by the Spirit you must be empty of yourself and full of God. You give the Holy Spirit complete and total control of your life. When you became a Christian, you received all of the Holy Spirit. To be a virtuous woman, you must let the Holy Spirit have all of you.

There are many imitations of a true pearl, but with years, the shiny pearl paint cracks and wears off and all that is left is an unattractive bead hanging on a string. God's Spirit, however, produces true inner beauty. As you confess your sin, avoid displeasing God's Spirit, obey even the slightest of His promptings, and give the Holy Spirit full control of your life. Pearls of godly character take time to develop, but how blessed is the woman adorned by them.

You can settle for an imitation necklace of fake pearls by trying to simply cover over ungodly character, or you can allow the Holy Spirit to use the sands of singleness to create the real thing. If you want a cheap imitation, a modeling or charm school will be sufficient for what you seek. But if you want genuine pearls, you must allow the Holy Spirit to perform a special work in your life. Determine to string a lovely pearl "necklace of virtue" as a treasure for your Lord.

THE PEARL

In every oyster there lies the ability
to produce something rare.
Truth like a grain of sand
will produce

the pearl that is hidden there.
Young woman you are often mocked
and scorned.
And told you never should have
been born.
You want to run away, to hide your hurt.
Your heart is wounded, bleeding
and torn.

God makes not mistakes
every life is special,
every life is planned.
Seeds can sprout in sand.

Open yourselves up to the Spirit
of God
Grow in grace and maturity
Be what He wants you to be
Your beauty your strength lies deep
within you.

Young woman, young girl,
open yourselves up to God.
Allow Him to reveal your pearl.

SYLVIA HANNAH



Becoming a Young Lady of Virtue

Study Rebekah in Genesis 24 and write out all the character qualities you find. Which of these do you need to develop? Pick one of these qualities and describe how you will specifically work on making it real in your life.

What books have you read dealing with the virtues/disciplines of a godly woman? In contrast, how many magazines have you read that deal with external glamour? What good books can you begin to read that will help develop your own personal godliness?

Pick out a picture of a woman who, according to magazines, "has everything." What features do you see? What appeal has been used? What is dangerous about comparing yourself with pictures like that?

Read Proverbs 31. In prayer admit, “Father, You don’t choose to zap me into completion. So today I choose to cooperate with the Holy Spirit as You make me a Lady of Virtue. From my Scripture reading, show me one quality from Proverbs 31 that I need to develop.” (For example: discipline, thoroughness, graciousness, giving, diligence.) Pray over this quality for a month before moving to something else.

Examine the “necklace” you are stringing by checking it in the light of Galatians 5:16-24. How many bad beads do you see in your necklace? Confess these sins and ask God’s Spirit to control you in these areas. Get with a godly friend who will pray for you weekly until the bad beads are replaced by quality pearls.

CHAPTER 5

Young Lady of Devotion



In the receiving line at her younger sister's wedding, many guests greeted Brenda over and over with teasing remarks. She heard comments such as, "Always a bridesmaid but never a bride. When is it going to be your turn? The only girl in your dad's home still unmarried!" Though these well-wishers may have been speaking out of fun or even compassion, their speech was not wise. The barrage caused its damage. It is hard enough for a single woman to keep her focus where it should be without friends making insensitive comments. How much better it would be for the Young Lady in Waiting if she were encouraged to pursue her undistracted devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, instead of being made to feel like she does not quite measure up. If Jesus had been one of the guests, He would have surely commended her for productively using her single time to its fullest.

Much too often people view a single woman as though she should be pitied rather than envied. Nothing could be further from the truth. A Young Lady in Waiting has the advantage of

being able to develop her love relationship with Christ without the distractions that a husband or family inherently bring to one's heart.

This has been God's plan from the beginning. He tenderly created woman to love Him and to experience the blessedness of fellowship with Him. In those first days, Eve communed with God in indescribable fellowship and oneness. When God came to walk in the cool of the day, there was no fear; only love. Eve had only positive feelings about God. She loved Him and knew He loved her. She enjoyed Him and devoted herself totally to His pleasure.

God still desires to know and be known by women today. But because sin entered the world, we no longer have a clear picture of the true God. "Satan's first attack upon the human race was his sly effort to destroy Eve's confidence in the kindness of God."[1] Satan lied to Eve about God's character. *"Indeed, has God said…?"* (Gen. 3:1) Satan has continued to lie to Eve's daughters. As a result, fear has often alienated women from the One who loves them as they need to be loved. Deep within a woman's soul remains the longing for the gentle embrace of the God Who Is, not the god that the enemy has craftily devised.

Boaz spoke of Ruth's devotion to God when he said, "May the Lord reward your work, and your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge" (Ruth 2:12). Ruth chose to cling to Naomi's God as her own even though her mother-in-law had drawn a negative, harsh picture of Him. "She said to them, 'Do not call me Naomi [pleasant]; call me Mara [bitter], for *the Almighty* has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but the Lord has

brought me back empty. …the Lord has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?'" (Ruth 1:20-21).

Would you be devoted to a God like Noami's? In Naomi's bitterness, she no longer referred to God as "the Lord" as she had in verses 8 and 9, but with a title that can cause one to feel alienated and insignificant—"the Almighty." Though Ruth clung to Naomi as a mother, she did not accept her mother-in-law's view of God for herself. "If we think of Him (God) as cold and exacting, we shall find it impossible to love Him, and our lives will be ridden with servile fear."[2]

Your past experiences, present circumstances, or your parents' devotion or lack thereof may cause you to have an incorrect view of God. But nothing and no one can give you a clearer picture of the true God than slipping under His wings and discovering for yourself who God really is, the refuge for which you long. He desires for you to come again "into the garden" and walk with Him in complete fellowship. This is the fullness of devotion.

As a single, you have a wonderful opportunity to use your time to maximize your fellowship with God. When you love someone, you give them your heart, the center of your being. God asks for no less. He desires a totally devoted heart. Deuteronomy 6:5 says that you are to love Him with all your heart (deepest devotion), your soul (what you think and what you feel), and your might (your strength and energy).

Many women today are devoted, all right! They have devoted themselves to developing a love relationship, but not with the Lord. They erroneously seek for love in sensations and promises. The world's version of love is something they want to "fall into." Meanwhile, "true love" escapes them. True

love can only be found in undistracted devotion to Jesus Christ.

To love Him like this, you must know Him intimately. Paul expressed the desire to "know" God in Philippians 3:10. In Greek, this *know* means "a knowledge that perfectly united the subject with the object."[3] Paul was desiring to know God intimately. Second Peter 1:3 says that everything pertaining to life and godliness is yours "through the true *knowledge* of Him." Peter and John in Acts 4:13 were identified as uneducated men, but the people observed their confidence and devotion to the Lord and marveled. In the King James Version of Scripture, the people exclaimed that these men "knew" Him, or that "they had been with Jesus." This "knowing" has the same depth as the term in Genesis 4:1 when Scripture speaks of the intimate relations Eve had when she "knew" or "had been with" her husband. It is a personal, intimate knowledge. Do you have a devotion to God that causes people to marvel at how intimately you know Him? Do you know God in a way that causes Him to be an intimate, personal part of your being as you may desire a husband to one day be?

As a woman, you have been created with a desire to be known—not just in a physical or general way, but deeply known and intimately loved. If you are hoping a man will one day fill your heart's desire for intimacy, you will be disappointed. God knows your deep longings for intimate love. Only He, the Lover of your soul, can fill this need completely. Your heavenly Father tenderly created you with needs that only God can fully understand and fulfill. As you come to know who He really is, He will meet your needs for love.

Your heavenly Father is incapable of doing evil. He loves

you, and forgives and completely forgets confessed sins and grievances. Is this the God you know? You may think you know God, but your responses to God will betray you. If you retract in fear, try to hide things, give excuses when you do something you feel God would not like, then it shows your knowledge of God, like Naomi's, is incorrect. God is not supersensitive, selfish, or temperamental.

Do you ever have a feeling of guilt hanging over your head that you are not doing enough to please God? Do you feel like the scale of expectations is tipping heavily in the negative and you must balance it? Do you feel like you could never do enough to pay for your inability to be perfect? Then your view of God is incorrect. God is not hard to please. He takes delight in His creation and quickly notices every simple effort to please Him (see Ps. 103:11-14).

Do you feel like God requires too much of you? Do you feel like God denies you the things you need most? If you do, then you don't really know God. Psalm 103:8-14 destroys these wrong assumptions about God. Have you lived with lies about God for too long? Get to know Him.

God wants to do you good and not evil. Jeremiah 29:11 says He wants to give you a future and a hope. Has your wrong picture of God been invented by the enemy in order to rob you of a true knowledge and love of God? Do not be deceived as Eve was in the garden. Get to know the One your heart truly desires to love. To love God, you must know Him intimately, personally, and devotedly. This does not require immediate entrance into a convent; you get to know Him by seeking Him.

Seeking True Love

Seeking God is very similar to developing a friendship. You talk a lot, you listen, you write each other letters, you think about each other, you find out what the other likes and does not like, and you try to do things that please that person. The more you spend time together, the more intimately you know your friend. And the more intimately you know your friend, the greater your love will be. It works the same way with your relationship with God.

Jeremiah 29:12-13 promises that a woman who diligently seeks God with all her heart will find Him. Your heart is the key to devotion to God. To find God, you must seek Him with your whole heart. A halfhearted search is not sufficient. This means you cannot seek God while you do your own thing.

Is God demanding too much to require that you seek Him with all your heart? No way! Think of it this way. Mr. Right comes over one day and begins to speak of his devotion to you. He says what you have been waiting to hear: "I love you. I give you my heart completely. For 364 days of every year, I will devote myself to you and you only." But then he adds, "However, *one* day each year I want to date others and see what I have missed. Don't worry, you can have *all* the rest. Will you marry me?"

What would your response be? Would you want this kind of devotion? Would it be selfish of you to deny him his heart just one day a year to give to others? No! Absolutely not. You would want his total love and devotion. You would want his heart all 365 days a year. Similarly, giving Christ your heart means you are not free to give it away to other things or people

that come into your life (in idolatry). You can't give a part to relationships that delight you in this world and still seek God with a *whole* heart. You cannot keep a part of your heart for something that may seem better if it comes along. Devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ is giving everything or nothing at all. Your devotion to Christ must be a serious commitment to His Lordship. Christ loves you and is completely committed to you. Wholeheartedly devote yourself to loving and enjoying Him in return 365 days a year.

If you are to know God intimately, then you must seek Him, not only with a whole heart, but also with a clean heart. When you think of the word *bride,* you probably first imagine a beautiful, clean, pure woman in white. No grime or dirt mars the image of purity. As a Christian you are part of the Bride of Christ. Any grime or dirt of sin will mar your image before Him.

The Lord's fiancé must have a clean heart. You must clean up any blot of sin that may arise between you and your heavenly Sweetheart. Sin causes God to back away from a person. It is disgusting to Him; He will not abide with it. Picture a couple deeply in love. He loves to be near her—so near he can breathe the fresh aroma of her sweet breath! What love! He hates onions though, especially on his beloved's breath. It really turns him off. What do you think she does before she sees him if she has eaten onions? Well, she wouldn't want the sweetness of their fellowship hindered, so she brushes away what offends him. Not only does she brush, but she also "Scopes, Close-ups and Gleems." She doesn't want to offend her love! She wants nothing to come between them. Sin is far more repulsive to God than even onion breath is to a sweetheart. If you want your devotion to God to be complete, don't merely brush at sin lightly. Get in there and confess it,

clean it up, and clear it out. Be rid of it. If you notice you have spiritual halitosis during the day, take care of it immediately. Let Psalm 51:10 be your prayer: "Create in me a clean heart, O God…."

Many seek God, but only for His hand. They don't want God as much as they want something from God, such as a man, happiness, or a family. This impure search for God is limited to what you can get. It is more of a self-love than a God-love. This seeking will end in misery, not in the union of love you desire. God cannot be used like your credit card. He knows your motives. To grow in your knowledge of God, you must seek God correctly, which means you must also seek God with a pure heart.

A woman with a pure heart for God does not focus on what He gives, but delights in who He is. She seeks God's *face,* not just His *hand.* Would you want someone to say he loves you just so you would do something for him? To find God, you must seek Him with pure motives. Seek Him for who He is, not just for what He can do for you.

Have you ever tried to develop an intimate relationship with Jana Jabberbox? She's the gal who has lots to say and loves to hear herself say it. You try to say something when she takes a breath—which isn't often—but she keeps right on talking. She never listens. It's a one-way conversation, and you are left out. Even when someone is very special to you, you do not get too excited with a steady monologue. Listening is an important part of developing a closeness with someone else. If you want to get to know the Lord, you must seek Him not only with a whole, clean, and pure heart, but also with a listening heart.

As you spend time with God during your daily devotional

time, learn to listen to Him as you read of His love and thoughts about you in the Bible. Think about what He is saying to you personally. Sit silently and write what impressions come to your listening heart. As you read and study His love letters, the Bible, you begin to see what He really thinks of you and what wonderful plans He has for you. As a result, your devotion grows and grows.

To find God you must seek Him with a whole heart, a pure heart, a clean heart, and a listening heart. Hebrews 11:6 (NIV) says that He "rewards those who earnestly seek Him." Does this describe your growing relationship with the Lord?

Singleness does not have to be a curse. Single gals do not have to wear long faces and be pitied until they are finally married. Quite the contrary! Singleness puts you in an advantageous position because, more than likely, you have much more time to seek the Lord now than you will ever have if you marry.

An Advantageous Position

Married women wrestle constantly with having to balance the physical and emotional demands placed on them. All women must learn to balance their priorities, but the single woman's heart is not sent in different directions by the needs of a husband and children.

Before the sun rises, a mother of young children may gingerly creep down the stairs and dig under the pile of unanswered letters and school assignments to find her Bible. "Ahhh! A few moments of undistracted time," she whispers as

she opens her Bible. To her chagrin, from the top of the stairs she hears, "Is it morning yet?" She puts her Bible down and whispers for the little early bird to come quietly down. She encourages him to sit with his favorite book, turns to find her Bible, and begins to read (while Junior makes animal noises reading beside her). Suddenly, from upstairs comes the sound of splashing. "Oh no—Mommy! I missed the potty and it got on me!" Up the stairs she races to free the soggy victim, mop the floor, wake the school-age child, and get breakfast for everyone.

Her husband needs a button on his shirt, help finding his keys, and dinner an hour early. The kids need an arbitrator, a chauffeur, a nurse—and their P.E. clothes to be washed immediately. She sorts her way through piles of unwashed clothes cluttering the bedroom, trips over toys in the hall, and shovels aside newspapers and coloring books to collapse on the couch for a minute, only to be roused by screams from the children as the day's first civil war breaks out. Phone calls and drop-in visits continue to interrupt her day at every turn. It's midnight before she finally gets to the dirty dishes…and where is her undistracted time for devotion? If she was a wise Young Lady in Waiting and used her singleness to develop her devotional life, she has resources that allow her to commune with God during the wildest of days. A wife/mother may find her day beginning early and ending late, often before she has had any uninterrupted time to seek her heart's True Love. A single woman can choose to cherish the single time instead of feeling unhappy with it.

The Word of God illustrates the advantageous position of the single woman in relation to the affairs of life.

"…An *unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband"* (1 Corinthians 7:34 NIV).

God says the unmarried woman has the advantage when it comes to her devotion to the Lord. An unmarried woman can give the Lord what a married woman rarely can—undistracted devotion. The time to develop a consistent devotional life cannot wait until you marry. Many single women waste valuable years as they wait "for life to begin"—after marriage. Ask any wife, even without children, and she will tell you her own juggling routine. A married woman struggles to have time alone with herself, much less time alone with God.

Becoming a Young Lady in Waiting, devoted to loving, knowing, and seeking God, will not come cheaply. You are the one who determines the depth of your relationship with God. He does not have favorites. You must choose to pursue the Lover of your soul—your heavenly Fiancé.

A single woman, one who chose to take advantage of her singleness, wrote the following poem:

The Single Gift

How blessed you are, you single one,
Don't talk of care and woes.
You've got too much to be thankful for,
Oh what, you'd like to know.

It's no mistake, no misdirection
Of God's perfect plan
That you've not found your special lady
Or you, that certain man.

God loves you so and has much more
To give than you've ever received.
That He's giving His best to
you right now,
You really must believe.

His best is Himself, do you have it in full
Or only a bit on the side.
No man can meet your needs like God,
Nor can a lovely bride.

If your life's not complete, you know
that Jesus is
And your life He will fill
If you'll only put Him first each day
And live to do His will.

He's gifted you for undistracted
Devotion to the Lord.
There should be nothing that
can interfere
With Him and prayer and the Word.

Unless you let down the guard of
your heart

And let others take His place,
Then you'll lack joy and peace
and hope
And not experience His grace.

So give your heart right back to God,
Let Him keep it safe for you.
And when it's better than His best,
He'll make your one into two.

DONNA L. MIHURA

God has given you a precious privileged time. Don't waste a day of it! You will never have it again. These days can be treasurefinding days in your Kingly Father's chambers. As you linger at the window ledge searching for a glimmer of your knight's shining armor, don't miss the jewels your Father has for you to adorn yourself. Will you grow cold and bitter at the window sill, or will you hold your royal head high, glowing in your Father's love and attention. The choice remains with you, dear princess. Your Father will not force you to turn from the window, but He longs to fellowship with you. Come into His chambers, delight in His Presence. May you be found in Him—a Young Lady of Devotion.



Becoming a Young Lady of Devotion

Read Deuteronomy 30:11-20. What are the benefits of devotion to Christ? What are the results of living a life not devoted to Christ?

What warnings does God give about your heart in Deuteronomy 11:16 and Deuteronomy 30:17? What gods seek to distract your heart?

How did David seek God in Psalm 63? What was his reward?

How is your heavenly courtship progressing? How can you make it better?

Have you come to a place where your relationship with Jesus is beyond comparison with any earthly love?

Does your daily devotional relationship with Jesus satisfy you from the top of your head to the bottom of your toes?

Are you following hard after Jesus, or every eligible guy?

Read Song of Solomon 6:1. Does your love relationship with Jesus cause your friends to seek after Him as the Shulammite woman's praises did her friends? Why or why not? What can you do differently?

If you have never spent a consistent devotional time with God before now, begin by reading a Psalm a day. After reading the Psalm, write answers to these three questions in a notebook:

What does this passage say about me?

What does this passage say about the Lord?

How can it apply to me?

CHAPTER 6

Young Lady of Purity



No one was surprised when Tim and Susan began dating. They seemed just right for each other. They could talk about anything and had the same ideals for a strong Christian dating relationship. After a year of steady dating, Susan realized how deeply she loved Tim. She wanted to be his wife. She began to show her affection for him in different ways. They began to kiss and touch a little. She felt this was all right. She rationalized that she was in control of the situation and intended to remain pure until they married.

Marriage? Well, Tim had not actually made any kind of commitment, but she felt in her heart that he soon would.

Their little kisses and touches became more involved, but they always quickly asked forgiveness of each other and God when the petting became intense. After several months of these heavy petting sessions, Susan began to feel Tim had become distant. She then began to think that she may not have adequately assured him of her love. Maybe he was having second thoughts about her. She feared she might lose him—

but she couldn't! He was the one.

Susan purposed to do whatever it took to keep him. She wondered if she had acted oldfashioned. After all, she just knew they would marry one day. Maybe he just needed to know the depth of her commitment to him.

Gradually, their relationship became more and more physical until one evening, Susan gave Tim the gift she had vowed not to open until her honeymoon night. She had imagined how strong and pure this moment of intimacy would make their love. Certainly this would cement the deep love they had for each other. It didn't.

Tim's face was no longer gentle. Susan felt as if he were a stranger. Her heart died within her. They were together, yet further apart than they had ever been. As he rose to leave, he said nothing. Instead of cementing their love, this one act of physical affection destroyed it. Susan longed to take her treasure back. She longed to start the night over. Unfortunately, the harsh reality had only just begun.

Tim and Susan are fictitious names, but this is a true story —and not just for this one young lady. It is true for hundreds of women who want to do what is right, but who unwisely give away their gift of physical purity too early. The gift is a treasure that can be rewrapped and given again, but never again for the first time.

We live in a day of blatant sexual impurity. A woman who marries, still a virgin, has become the exception, not the rule. Statistics say 80 percent of all unmarried women have given away their virginity by 20 years of age.[1] The Ruth of our biblical story, like us, also lived in a society of rampant moral decay. Ruth's story occurs during a time of year when sexual

promiscuity would be at its height in the small farming community of Israel. "Immoral practices at harvest times were by no means uncommon and, indeed appear to have been encouraged by the fertility rites practiced in some religions."[2]

In this promiscuous society, Ruth was a Young Lady of Purity, even in the midst of a potentially compromising situation. Ruth 3:7 says, "When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down." At a glance, you may read this and picture the beginnings of an X-rated scene in Ruth's story. But you must realize that Ruth was acting according to the customs of the time. She was not slinking into Boaz's bed to seduce him. In obedience to her mother-in-law's instructions, Ruth quietly lay at his feet for him to notice her, thus symbolizing her subjection to Boaz as her nearest of kin. This would give him the opportunity, if he so chose, to take legal action for the wellbeing of Ruth and her mother-in-law. (A woman had no form of social security and very few rights in that culture without a man.) This was not a brazen act of seduction, but an act of obedience to God's plan for her provision in that day. One thing is certain. When she left to go home, she walked away as a Young Lady of Purity.

Although the customs of Ruth's day may be difficult to understand, the temptations to compromise physically are not. Unfortunately, many women have been snared by the devil's deceptions and robbed of their innocence. How does today's single woman safeguard this special treasure and, like Ruth, go home at night a Young Lady of Purity?

Deadly Deception

Remember how the serpent deceived Eve by causing her to question God? He caused her to believe that God wanted to deny her something good, not provide her with something better. The enemy wants you to believe that if you wait to have sex, you will miss out on some of the delights of life.

Godly women must avoid basing their comprehension of the pleasures of sex on what commercials advertise, magazines glamorize, or books sensationalize. These are all full of the enemy's propaganda. Today's society seeks ultimate pleasure with no pain. But following society's example usually brings just the opposite. Look to your heavenly Father, your Creator, for the truth. God gives true sexual fulfillment to the lady who waits for this gift. God intended for you to enjoy the fulfillment and pleasure of sex within marriage only. The wonder and joy of this intimate act is maximized through purity before marriage.

Ask any woman of God who waited and she will tell you with eyes aglow that it was worth the sacrifice of denying her desires for a time. Look at that woman's marriage. Most likely the romance between her and her spouse still burns in a delightful love affair. Compare this real-life situation to the illusions in just one half-hour of "true life" romance on the television in an episode of "As the Stomach Turns" or "Body Watch." Have those actresses and actors (who, by the way, never scrub a toilet or break a nail and who always seem to be in their evening gown attire) found true fulfillment? They should "Ah! Yes—the delights of sex." Do not be deceived. Sex is special! Not sensuous sex, but satisfying sex in your Creator's way and time.

Why Wait?

Since sex is desirable, why not have sex? Why would God want to limit your pleasure with someone for whom you feel affection but haven't married? Have you ever been dieting but treated yourself to a huge piece of rich chocolate cake with fudge icing to celebrate some special occasion? Cake is good. Cake is desirable. The more cake, the more pleasure. But cake, in the midst of a strict diet, can really make one sick! The pleasure of a big, luscious piece of cake depends on the right timing, just as the pleasures of sex do.

God wants you to be a Young Lady of Purity because He wants to protect you from the consequences that sex before marriage brings. These consequences can be physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual. Let's look at these a little more closely.

Physical

Have you ever secretly opened a Christmas gift before Christmas Day and rewrapped it, putting it back under the tree? How thrilling and exciting it was when you saw the surprise. But what about the "big day" when the gifts were supposed to be opened for the first time? Where was the excitement when you opened your gift? The gift did not seem quite as special because it had already been opened for the first time. Each woman receives one "first time." God desires for your precious gift to be given to a committed lover who will cherish, keep, and protect you in marriage. God wants you and your gift to this man to be treasured and cherished, not trampled and conquered. Song of Solomon 8:4 (NIV) says, "…Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires." God wants to protect you

from losing your virginity.

God also wants to protect you from the sexually transmitted diseases that could affect not only you, but also your future husband. One young single cried the night she discovered that she had contracted genital warts. She grieved over the realization that when her future knight in shining armor proposed to her, she would have to disclose the fact that she carried an infectious disease. This grieved her more than the fact that genital warts are incurable. Not only could you or your husband personally incur irreparable physical damage, but also transmit these infectious diseases to your future children.

God also desires to shield you from an unwanted pregnancy. Although precautions exist, pregnancy always remains a possibility. A rushed marriage, adoption, or abortion, only complicate the consequences.

Judy, a wonderful Christian girl with a promising future, looked forward to graduating from high school. To celebrate this special occasion, she went to a party with a great-looking guy. She decided a few drinks that night would be okay. She didn't want to seem "different" in front of her date. His invitation to go off to a secluded room made her feel uncomfortable, but the evening was so special and her date was so kind and tender and romantic.

In the following months, Judy tried to deny the physical changes she was experiencing. Bible College would start soon, so she blamed them on the stress. God had forgiven her for going all the way that night—surely He would not have allowed her to get pregnant. It would ruin all her plans.

Only after her mother noticed her condition did Judy go for

a doctor's appointment. Unfortunately, it confirmed the worst of her fears. Judy would soon be a mother. Regardless of how sorry she was and the fact that God had forgiven her, the consequences of that one act changed her life forever. God wanted to protect Judy physically, but He left the choices up to her.

God desires to shield you from the negative physical consequences of premarital sex. He wants to protect you from sinning against your body. First Corinthians 6:18 (NIV) says, "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a [woman] commits are outside [her] body, but [she] who sins sexually sins against [her] own body." "He wants you to be free from an addiction to premarital sex. Passionate physical exchange is a short-lived high. As with drugs, you keep wanting more intense highs."[3]

Emotional

God intricately and delicately formed women with emotional characteristics that differ from men. A woman cannot separate her emotions from her physical state. If a woman's emotions could be separated from her physical state, she would not struggle with PMS. The man who touches your body, also touches your emotions. God made you that way, and He desires to protect your heart from being ripped apart by any man. You cannot make love to a man and remain emotionally untouched, no matter how hard you try. Therefore, if God knows that the man you think you love cannot care for your heart, He does not want you to give him any part of your body. You cannot give one without affecting the other! How your heavenly Father longs to keep your emotions safe and to guard you from feelings that threaten to wreck your emotional wellbeing.

God wants to protect you from the devastation of condemnation. The devil loves to get you down, to make you feel unworthy, thus making you unable to glorify God or stand before others. He enhances this tactic when he can whisper in your ear, "Some Christian you are. How can you witness to Jane?…She may have heard…You can't be a missionary; you compromised, remember?…Condemned…Condemned… Condemned."

If your emotions lied to you, causing you to give away your treasure to the wrong man, haunting fears may also begin to plague you. "Will he still respect me? Will he still love me? Why is that all he wants from me right now? What if I'm pregnant? Will anyone else find out? What if my parents find out? How can I face them? If we break up, what if the next man I date finds out?" Day and night these fears can play on your mind and emotions. God wants to protect you from these emotional traumas.

After premarital sex, there will usually be some lurking doubts. Would he have loved me without my body? Would he have married me if I hadn't gotten pregnant? Will he be attracted to someone better-looking after we're married? Most overwhelming are the doubts of God's love for you and, possibly, doubts of your salvation or your ability to ever again have a morally pure relationship.

You can be fully forgiven and cleansed by Christ, but damaged emotions take time to heal. The Lord doesn't want you to suffer these hurts. You are precious to Him. That's why He sets loving limits on your physical relationship and emotional attachments.

The emotional burdens of condemnation, fear, and doubt

are often compounded with many other emotions such as resentment, bitterness, depression, and mistrust. God created you with emotions that can be overwhelmed by sexual promiscuity. Let Him protect your heart.

Relational

A woman has a depth of soul that desires an intimate friendship, apart from anything physical, with the man she loves. She desires to be known for the woman she is, not just for her physical body. A couple who chooses to remain physically pure gives all their time and attention to knowing one another on a deeper mental and emotional level. Once passion is introduced into the relationship, it is difficult for the man to stop and be satisfied again with just developing the friendship. The man becomes distracted by the physical. This is why so many women enjoy the relationship until the "friendship" changes to "dating." Something is lost when physical passion begins.

You cannot give double messages. Either you want him to know the you on the inside or the you on the outside. If you encourage your date to play with the bow on your package, he will want to untie the ribbon and unwrap the gift. Don't distract him with the bow. Allowing sex to enter into a relationship before marriage will almost always result in the loss of an intimate friendship with the one you desire to know you for you.

Premarital sex also brings a consequence that remains hidden until you marry. Mistrust and disrespect surface after the wedding cake has been eaten and "postmarital insecurity" begins. When a couple becomes involved sexually before marriage, they massage their consciences with the

rationalization that they will marry anyway, so their lack of self-control doesn't matter. This is where they are wrong! Lack of self-control before marriage is *fornication*. Lack of self-control after marriage is *adultery*. The seeds for adultery are planted in the "hotbeds" of fornication. A woman subconsciously wonders, "If he did not exhibit self-control with me before marriage, how can I be sure that he will not give in to temptation during marriage when an attractive younger woman comes along?" A young man who cannot control himself before marriage does not suddenly become a man of self-control because he wears a wedding band!

Two other very real relational consequences deal with your present and future families. Think of your parents' shame about your sexual choices. Also, what about your future children? One day you may face your children's knowing that you did not set an example of purity for them to follow. What will you say if they ask the question, "Did you and Dad wait?"

Finally, should you not marry the man who opened your gift first, you take memories of him into your marriage that flash back to haunt you. God wants you to have the joy of saying to your knight on that special wedding night, "Here I am, clean and pure, emotionally and physically. No one has touched the treasure of my love. I kept myself for you."

God knows that a woman has much more to offer than a body. He knows that the dynamic relationship a woman has with a man is more than a physical experience. God intended for man and woman to enjoy not merely sexual intercourse, but a love that the physical relationship merely enhances. This love remains even when there is no physical culmination. Sometimes physical contact distracts a couple from developing and

enjoying communication. If you want the friendship to be knowing who you each are, don't distract each other with early or inappropriate physical contact.

Spiritual

Passion makes it difficult to see that God also set physical limits to protect you spiritually. Hebrews 13:4 (NIV) very clearly says that "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." God judges the sin of immorality. It feels awful to be separated from your Lord by the guilt of sin.

Actions speak louder than words, and this is especially true regarding premarital sex. It is difficult to share Christ with one who knows your reputation. Your actions can also cause weaker brothers and sisters to stumble. One night of passion can totally destroy a reputation you have built over a lifetime."The spiritual side of sex is often overlooked. Even many Christians are not aware of the profoundly spiritual nature of their sex lives. A person will feel acute spiritual pain and separation from God when engaging in sex outside of marriage, but may not even realize how spiritually beneficial and unifying sex is within marriage."[4]

God does not intend to deny you pleasure. He protects you so you might enjoy physical health, emotional stability, relational intimacy, and spiritual blessings. If you marry, He wants you to grow more in love with your husband with each passing year. He wants you to live in complete trust of one another and spend a lifetime in love instead of the consequences of a fleeting night of uncontrolled lust.

Guarding the Treasure

How then does a Young Lady in Waiting guard her purity? Once a man has a woman's heart, her body is not far behind. That is one reason Proverbs 4:23 says, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life." To walk in purity, a Young Lady in Waiting must first guard the key to her heart. This does not imply that your relationships with men are robotic and free from feelings. It means that you focus on growing in friendship, not romance.

Here is how Debby guarded her purity while dating.

"I asked the Lord to help me remember not to take my heart away from Him and give it to a boyfriend too quickly. To keep this commitment, I decided I would pray before accepting any date. Before going out, I would pray again, this time asking that my thoughts and actions during the time together would not center on encouraging him romantically, but building a friendship and encouraging his love for the Lord. At times, when I felt flutters of romance rising and my heart trembling, I would ask the Lord to renew my strength and reset my focus; I would picture myself kneeling in new commitment.

"I enjoyed friendship-building 'dating' more after deciding to let God protect my heart. The only man who was given the key to my heart was the man I married. When we were engaged, I gave him a small red velvet box with an antique key inside to symbolize that I was giving him my heart to care for and cherish as the Lord had done before I met him. I am grateful that now Bill cherishes me as a priceless treasure and views the key to my heart as a privileged possession. An added bonus is

that marriage is full of the extra special' romances that I denied myself before I met my husband."

Don't let your heart be given away too easily. If a man says he loves you, you don't have to echo the phrase. To men these three words can mean all kinds of things, like "I lust for you" or "I want you to kiss me." Or maybe he just can't think of anything else to say at the moment! But what did that "I love you" do to your heartstrings? Gradually those "I love you's" can trap you emotionally and lead you on physically. To guard the key to your heart, make a commitment to say you love someone only if you love him with a committed love, not a casual love feeling. You will remain much more in control of your friendship. Real love will have time to blossom and grow without those three words. Guard and save them to be whispered when God reveals it is time. What a gift to tell your fiancé, "You are the first person I have ever said this to: 'I love you.'" Give meaning to those precious words, and you may use them and hear them with fondness through many happy years of marriage.

There's a second step you can take to guard your purity. It's a radical statement, but save all your kisses for your future husband. One woman who made this decision said, "Early in my dating, I tired of giving a kiss at the door for a hamburger, coke, and fries. What would I have to give next for a steak dinner or a night on the town? After I was married I realized the decision not to give my kisses freely to my dates had an added bonus. For every kiss I denied dates at the door, the man I married received my kisses with interest' in our years of marriage. It was worth waiting for kisses—so they would be

full of meaning—for years."

A woman's kiss or embrace is not just another way of saying thank you! A kiss should say something more intimate. If so, do you want to say intimate things to every guy you date? All the kisses you give before marriage and all the kisses you give after marriage express the love that belongs to one person: your knight.

If you remember to whom your kisses belong, you won't be so quick to give them away. If you think you may be dating Mr. Right, give your friendship time to grow before you give the "fringe benefits." He will appreciate them and respect you much more if you wait.

Realize that a kiss starts physical contact and once you get started it's hard to turn back from passion. Determine what you mean with a kiss. Let it reveal your heart, not "rev up" your hormones. One lady put it this way when asked why "friends" have trouble becoming friends again once they start dating: "Once you start having sex, that's about the only thing you have in common."

A third practical step is to make your decisions and choices about what you will and will not do with a date *before* things become hot and heavy. Here are some examples of "dating standards" that many godly women have made. They will help you resist the pressure to "open the gift" too early. (You can find more in Chapter 9.)

- I will date only growing Christian men. (You will most likely marry a man you date. This is important!!)

- I will concentrate on the friendship—not romance. (Don't be tricked!)

- I will not spend time with him at home when we are alone.

- I will not give kisses and hugs freely.

- I will not lay down beside a man.

Don't set standards "as you go." Emotions can be tricky. You must make wise choices before the "flutters" and "heartthrobs" become so loud you cannot hear yourself think. Write them down and read them often! Commit them to God regularly in prayer.

During a Bible study, one Young Lady in Waiting made this point about "dating."

"Before Jesus became Lord of my relationships, I accepted our society's idea of dating as the time for a man and woman to be alone together. This time usually was devoted to romance and involved a measure of physical involvement—gradually accelerating if the dating continued. As I became closer to the Lord, I began to see dating from His perspective as a time for friendship-building without a need for promises of love or giving physical affection. As I spend time in group situations instead of one-to-one dating, I can really see the character of the guy friends I am spending time with. Doing things with groups also guards our purity, but doesn't limit our friendship-

building and communication. When I do spend time with a guy, I don't refer to it as dating any longer. I talk about 'friendship-building' founded on Christ—the One who holds my heart and guides the friendship."

Too many women think that if they give a man what he is longing for in terms of physical satisfaction, they will inevitably win his love forever. Hundreds of women have lowered their standards sexually and gone further than they knew the Lord wanted in hopes of hanging onto the guy they were spending time with. It's a lie. Don't believe it!

Women are easily turned on by words. Most men know this. Another way to protect your purity is to stand on guard when you hear "sweet talk." Don't let any of these lines cause you to surrender.

- If you love me…
- I have never felt such love before…
- Just try it once…
- I won't get you pregnant…
- I want to spend the rest of my life with you…
- Since we're going to be married anyway…
- Nobody is still a virgin at your age…

- What we do in private is no one else's business…
- If we only go so far and not all the way, it's okay…
- They are doing it, and they are Christians…
- If you won't prove your love, I'll find someone who will…
- You are too oldfashioned…
- Do it now so we will be prepared for marriage…
- It will never happen to us…

You can't believe any of these. They have been said before, the gift has been opened, and the lady left in an emotional heap labeled "conquered." These words have trapped many ladies—beware! When you catch yourself rationalizing what you are doing and assuring yourself you are in control, make a second check. You'll be glad you did. A godly man will not pressure a woman verbally, but will cherish her with his declarations of love and take her home before they have to regret any violation of their purity.

What If It's Too Late?

You do not have to make the same mistakes many have

made. But if you are reading this "after the fact" and are dealing with the guilt of the lost gift, do not be discouraged. Although it is true that there is only one first time, God is the God of the first-time experience. Let Him heal your broken heart through forgiveness. Agree with God that you have sinned and leave the sin before Him. Then guard yourself from entering into that sin pattern again. Learn a valuable lesson, but do not continue to beat yourself with condemnation. Jesus paid for those sins at Calvary. Do not continue to allow yourself or the enemy to defeat you with remembering a sin once you have confessed it to God and those you have offended. There may be consequences of your sin, but you do not have to live with the guilt of it.

God is the God who forgives and forgets. Jeremiah 31:34 says, "…for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." One of God's greatest abilities is that He forgets the sins of those who belong to Christ Jesus, "I, even I, am the One who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins" (Is. 43:25). Let this be your motto: "…but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind [as God does] and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

Even though you have been freed from the guilt by confession, do not use it as an opportunity to continue in sin or to leave yourself open to temptation. Continue to choose freedom over sin's mastery. Lay aside every encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangles you and run with endurance the race set before you (see Heb. 12:1). How? Fix your eyes on Jesus (not on your sin, the past, or even yourself). Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of your faith (see Heb. 12:2).

There is one last response that brings complete freedom. You must forgive and forget the sins of those who sinned against you. Jesus is very clear in Matthew 5:21-24 about what to do with anger toward a brother. But how do you do it? First choose to forgive your brother with your heart and then God will help you work through the emotions that may remain. You will not be free of the hurt if you harbor bitterness. A quick way to ruin a beautiful complexion is to hold on to an unforgiving, bitter attitude.

If you have opened your gift too soon, do not be kept from beginning new again. Accept God's forgiveness and refuse to feel like damaged goods. God has better in store for you. You, dear Young Lady in Waiting, are a treasure. The enemy attempts to deceive you when he offers to delight you by his ways and means. Don't lose sight of the value of what you have or of who you are. Don't allow the flickering pleasures of an evening of "making love" destroy a lifetime of "lasting love."



Becoming a Young Lady of Purity

Second Samuel 13:1-19 is a painful story of rape, but note the reaction of the man who got what he wanted. After his sexual thirst was quenched, what was his response toward the woman for whom he lusted? How did he feel toward the woman? Why?

How can a young woman stay pure? (Ps. 119:9,11).

How do friendships affect your purity? (1 Cor. 15:33).

Write out a specific list of ways you will guard your purity as you build relationships with the opposite sex.

Is striving to be pure too hard? (1 Cor. 10:13). List some of the ways of escape God has given you.

Write out what a kiss means to you. What are you wanting to say when you kiss a man? Is there any other way to say this? How could adding physical affection to a friendship limit communication-building?

CHAPTER 7

Young Lady of Security



"*I* still can't believe it!" one friend exclaimed. "I had a date with the perfect guy! I spent days searching for and finding a gorgeous outfit, I had my nails done, and my hair looked better than it ever has. I took a whole day off work to get ready and left in plenty of time to get there. The 150-mile drive to pick him up was nothing. I could have flown I was so excited. I tried to calm myself down the whole drive, but could not help thinking how right we were for each other, how beautiful our relationship and future would be. We went to a very romantic setting. I can't believe it! I was ready, willing, available. Everything was perfect except for one problem. It turned out that he was gay."

This single woman diligently and faithfully "went after her man," only to find disappointment and pain. Ruth, our epitome of a "Young Lady in Waiting," had a totally different approach.

Then he [Boaz] said, "May you be blessed of the Lord, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better

than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich. Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence" (Ruth 3:10-11).

Ruth—single, young, and widowed—must have experienced the lonely longings for the warmth of a husband. But she lived in victory over the desire to "man hunt." Instead of "going after the boys," she sat still and let God bring her prince to her. She was a Young Lady of Security.

Feelings of Insecurity

Why do women tend to "go after the guys"? Why do women experience difficulty being still and waiting for the man to initiate and develop the relationship? You find the answer in one word: insecurity. An insecure woman has her world centered on something (marriage) or someone (Mr. Right) that can be lost or taken away. Insecurity keeps a woman from experiencing consistent joy even within a relationship because a man cannot provide security, only God can.

Insecurity causes you to cling to a relationship. You feel a lack of confidence unless you have a man. When he is not with you, you fear he will not come back or call again. You want him to make a commitment so you will not lose him. You want all his time and attention. All your dreams, plans, and goals revolve around him. Insecurity in a relationship can cause jealousy and bickering. It makes you lose your confidence when he looks at another woman. You want to know his plans and with whom he

spends his time. You don't want him to be around other interesting or attractive women; you feel threatened when he is.

Insecurity can cause you to be demanding and have unrealistic expectations of your relationship. When he hurts or disappoints you, you can be upset for days. You live with the fear of doing the wrong thing and losing him. You constantly feel the need to "define" your relationship and talk about your love for each other. You feel that you must show your love for him in greater and greater ways.

Insecurity fills the relationship with frustration and worry. You think, "I can't live with or without him!" You find yourself scheming to keep him.

Lisa even told her boyfriend she was pregnant so he would make a commitment to marry her. Her well-devised plan backfired as she had to go deeper and deeper into the lie when her new husband discovered she was not. She felt she would experience happiness and security only when he was hers. Instead her scheming caused guilt, making her feel alienated from him. His anger toward her for being married before he felt ready resulted in great difficulty in their relationship.

Believing a Lie

Why do women feel they have to go after men? Many women have believed a lie. They think, "I must get the best for myself because God may not give it to me." What do you think would have been the outcome of Ruth's life if she had chosen to believe this lie? Would she have returned home with Orpah

and married one of the local guys? Would she have followed Naomi to a new land, but taken control of her own destiny in choosing a mate to care for herself and her mother-in-law? With these poor choices, her life of blessing and joy found in Boaz would not have happened and we would have missed the blessing of a book such as Ruth.

Ladies, God gives you the choice between His plans and yours. In the midst of her circumstances, Ruth could not have possibly seen that a man like Boaz would one day be her prince. Neither can you with your limited perspective see who or where your prince will be. Only God has all things in view. Are you trying to control your own life? Are you making plans for your life that only God should make? Don't settle for less than God's best. Surrender the terrible burden of always needing life on your terms. Don't look back one day and regret that you made your "life mate" choice from a limited perspective because you longed for the security of a relationship. God can and will give you His best if you wait for it.

Secure Love

Women tend to struggle with insecurity because of the unique way God created them. God made every little girl with the need to love and be loved by her earthly father. God designed His world with a picture of a family as the theme. The father protects, loves, and cares for his wife and their children. The ideal earthly father models the gentle, nurturing love of the heavenly Father. Many young women in our society did not have a father who followed God's design. This God-given need

for a father's love caused a deficit in their lives.

Karen described it this way.

"I never really felt loved the way I needed to be. I wanted someone I could love and who would love me in the deepest way. I met and dated a wonderful man. He was a Christian, good-looking, popular, and best of all, he loved me. A deep, wonderful friendship with him flourished for almost two years. I wanted to be his wife, but he was not making any move toward a commitment. I was a 21-year-old virgin. I wanted to keep him so badly that I knew I was willing to do anything. I did not intentionally plan to compromise my high standards, but I felt if I were intimate with him, it would show my deep commitment to him and I would be able to keep him.

"As a child I wanted my dad to really love me, but I never seemed to gain his love. I thought this man could fill that need for love that I felt. I was wrong. I lost both my virginity and my closest friend with one act. I believe if I had dealt with the insecurity in my life, I would have seen clearly that no man could meet the heart-felt need for secure love I wanted."

As a little girl, you may remember feeling the desire to be cherished, loved, and accepted by your daddy. If he failed to show that love to you in God's way, perhaps you continued to search for a man who would. No man, not even a husband, can fill the need you have for secure love. Only Jesus who "is the same yesterday and today and forever," will never disappoint or fail you (Heb. 13:8).

Turn to your heavenly Father now. Pour out to Him your heart's longing to be loved. See His arms open wide and His

empty lap ready to embrace and hold you near. He considers you dear. He longs to give you satisfying love. Perhaps He does desire to give you a man to love also. But the man you marry cannot meet your need for security. Only God's love brings security.

Manipulation and Maneuvering

When you see a woman going after the guys, you probably don't immediately say, "Yes, I see that she really is insecure!" Insecurity dwells in the heart. What you see outwardly is a woman's age-old ability to manipulate and maneuver. When a woman manipulates a situation, she feels personal satisfaction because she believes she is in control.

At one college, a new student arrived who was one of the most attractive guys ever to arrive on campus. In fact, whenever he walked by, the air would move because of all the gasping women. When he walked into the dining hall, the females would suddenly stop talking. (That alone was a miracle!)

Linda, who worked in the Dean of Men's office, had a myriad of females ask for his class schedule. Why would his class schedule be significant? Such information offered a chance for a "life-changing" experience. These silly women would find out his daily schedule and, as soon as their classes ended, would *run* to wherever he would most likely be walking, and "just happen" to be standing on the corner as he passed. Daily, these committed manipulators "just happened" to see him after English Literature and then "just happened" to see him after World Civics. Such a schedule definitely kept these

gals in peak aerobic condition as daily they frantically tried to arrive in his personal hemisphere.

Manipulation and maneuvering can also take the form of serving as a "surrogate (substitute) helpmeet." Many women want to marry as badly as they want to go to Heaven. They long to care for a man, so they run around trying to find at least a "generic" version of the real thing. These precious (but deceived) women constantly look for a man with a need and pounce on that need in hopes of eventually winning the affection of the man. Any male in need irresistibly attracts them.

Once, a single man at a conference mentioned his need for some name tags, and a mob of women scurried to get tags for him. It was like a race, or a spring sale at the mall! One typical surrogate overheard that a man needed his house cleaned because his parents were coming for a visit. The young man had little time to do it himself because he had been so busy helping at his church, so he made his need known. This "Martha" decided to help the needy man, but didn't check her motive. She assumed that he would appreciate her help so much that he would repay her with some extra attention, perhaps even a date. At the same time, she knew that one of her female friends at the church also had a need, yet Martha would not lift a finger to help her catch up domestically.

What is the difference? Women may find more pleasure doing for a man than a woman because the potential "payoff" seems more valuable. She envisions surrendering her "surrogate" apron for an engagement ring. A wise woman once said, "Do not do for a brother that which you would not do for a sister." Brownies often are baked for the best-looking and

most desirable guys, but seldom for the average Joe. (How all these guys stay slim is a miracle—except for their constant running from all the aggressive, manipulative women.)

A "manipulator" may hear of a female friend who needs help and callously allow her to do without it. But if one handsome guy even slightly alludes to his desire for something to drink, she may "crawl across broken glass" to get him a cool drink, all the while quoting Scripture about giving a cup of cool water to him who is thirsty. Allow God to use you to minister to brothers and sisters equally with no ulterior motives. In the beginning, Ruth ministered not to a desirable man, but to a bitter widow—her mother-in-law, at that!

Another form of maneuvering is to become the guy's "mom." Insecure females all too often deceive themselves into thinking that because they do so much for a particular young man, they will surely win his love. *Wrong!* It is easy for a man, whether he is young or old, to let a woman sacrifice for him. Why? Most men are used to the sacrifices of a woman. Good ol' mom has been sacrificing for him since the womb. Sure, the young man will say, "Thanks," but young men do not marry their mothers! When a woman does something really nice for a certain guy, he usually does not spend the rest of the day thinking about her unselfish service—service he may be accustomed to receiving. The woman may begin to feel used.

Some women prepare meals, sew on buttons, and wash the guy's clothes—all the things a mom would do—assuming all this is practice for their future together. Inevitably, the man she has served so unselfishly may fall for a girl who can't bake or sew and thinks you take all clothes to the dry cleaners that "fluff and fold."

Elisabeth Elliot says she is often asked the question, "What can I do to get him to notice me?" Note carefully the advice she gives.

"My answer is 'nothing'. That is, nothing toward the man.

"Don't call him. Don't write a little note with a smiley face or a flower or fish under the signature and put it in his campus mailbox. Don't slide up to him in the hall and gasp, 'I've just got to talk to you!' Don't look woebegone, don't ignore him, don't pursue him, don't do him favors, don't talk about him to nine carefully selected listeners.

"There is one thing you can do: turn the whole business over to God. If he's the man God has for you, 'No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly' (Ps. 84:11). Direct your energies to obedience, not to nailing the man. God has His own methods of getting the two of you together. He doesn't need any help or advice from you."[1]

Notice the word *nothing*. Maybe this little dose of reality will help you constantly check your motives whenever relating to a guy.

Motive Check

This is not to say that you cannot do nice things for a man; it is simply a warning to check your motives. A woman with selfish motivation mentally plots the next maneuver to capture the attention of the man of her dreams. Before you go to another activity to spend time with the available guys, as you

check your hair and makeup and teeth, give yourself a thorough "heart flossing." Ask the Lord to reveal any impure motive that resides in your heart. Before you bake one more thing for a brother or purchase one more book or meaningful card, be very careful to check your motive and honestly respond to whatever the Lord shows you. You can save yourself many tears and much frustration if you are just willing to do a regular "motive check" on your heart.

To keep your motives pure, check them daily. Proverbs 16:2 (NIV) says, "All a man's [woman's] ways seem innocent to him [her], but motives are weighed by the Lord."

Manipulation and maneuvering can be deadly. If you maneuver to get a man, you will have to maneuver to keep him! This is not implying that there is no work involved in a good relationship, but there is a huge difference between working and maneuvering. You recognize the difference between the two by discerning your motive. Refuse to be a member of the M/M (Manipulation and Maneuvering) Team!

Quitting the Hunt

To quit the hunt and stop "going after the guys," you must first avoid maneuvering and manipulating. Ruth did, and God can give you the grace to do it too. Believe that God will take care of you regardless of your circumstances. Don't put your own devices to work. You can only see the outward man from today's perspective. God sees men's hearts from the perspective of eternity. With His perspective, He can see much better what you need. Trust Him and let Him show you His dependable love for you.

Second, you must put your security in Christ. He longs for you to be secure in His love. He wants to protect, lead, and love you. To develop security, give your heart and emotions to the Lord. Debby remembers a specific time in her life when she pictured herself before the Lord. In her mind's eye she imagined His loving, kind, Father's face. She pictured herself bringing her broken, lonely heart to her heavenly Father after yet another love bubble had been burst. Debby specifically gave the Lord her love life that day. She prayed:

"Father, my heart is fragile and delicate and easily broken. I have tried to find one who will cherish me, without Your view. My heart has been broken and my emotions bruised. I ask You to take and guard my heart. I will choose not to entertain thoughts and emotions of love which cause me to give my heart away too readily. I will come quickly to You when I start feeling like I am in love. Please hold the key to my heart and emotions until a day I can give it to the man You have prepared for me."

Debby has often said what a difficult turning point this was for her. She wanted to trust the Lord with this precious area of her life, but had nagging feelings that she might never again have the giddy, delightful feelings of love. As she dated, she spent time in prayer before and after dates to make sure her heart and emotions were still in the Father's hands. Many times she feared she would never feel those "heart leaps of love," but instead would just marry one of the "nice" guys she had dated.

One day, as she was praying, she realized she had come to

really care for a man named Bill in a special way. They had been dating for several months and the temptations to let her emotions run wild were very real. Instead, she wrote this in her journal:

"I feel as though I really care for Bill in a deep way. You know what is best for me, Father. I have given my heart to You and my emotions, too. I will wait for a clearer indication that he is my knight in shining armor, than just how I feel. You will not allow my heart to be broken again if I leave it with You. I trust You to keep me calm and waiting on Your best timing."

A formula she wrote in her prayer journal to help her keep perspective was this: *With Jesus first and my boyfriend second, I will have lasting peace and security.*

All this may sound like a good idea, but how do you begin? To build security into your life, spend time in God's Word. Proverbs 1:33 says to listen to God and live securely. As you do, you will find out what God is really like—what His character is—not just what you think or have heard He is like. You will be surprised at how differently He sees you than what you have thought. Read through the Psalms and write down the many promises He has made to you if you are a believer. Psalm 16:11 (KJV) says, "Thou wilt show me the path of life [married or not]; in Thy presence is fulness of joy [His presence, not marriage, brings joy]; in Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (What more could a girl ask for?)

By spending time in God's Word, you will also learn what God thinks of you. In First Peter 2:4, God says you are choice and precious to Him. He calls you precious, honored, loved,

and His redeemed one in Isaiah 43:1-6. Isaiah 43:7 says you were created for His glory. You are very special to God—so special that He has plans for you: "plans for [your] welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11b).

The New Testament is also full of God's thoughts of you. You are accepted (Rom. 15:7); you are not condemned (Rom. 8:1); and you are His child (John 1:12). (By the way, the female child of a King is a *princess*. Act like the valuable princess you are, and plan to be treated as royalty.) You also are the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:17). He is your adequacy (2 Cor. 3:5) and He leads you in His triumph (2 Cor. 2:14). His love letter to you, the Bible, is full of all the wonderful things He says about you.

Do not allow insecurity to motivate you to maneuver or manipulate your relationships. Instead of hunting for a husband or boyfriend, concentrate on becoming a woman of excellence (Ruth 3:11). As a Young Lady of Security, wait for your heavenly Father to bring about His perfect plans for you.

Learning to sit still,
Resting in His will,
Confident to abide,
With Him by my side,
Resisting manipulation,
Waiting only for His stipulations.
JMK



Look at the things most important to you, the things on which you spend the most of your time and energy (e.g., appearance, money, career, family, friendships, dates). If these were taken away, how would you be affected? Security is basing one's life on that which cannot be taken away. Are you building your life on what makes you secure or insecure?

Do you find yourself manipulating for friendships with guys? Proverbs 4:23 exhorts you to watch over your heart. Write out ways you can respond when the temptation to "scheme" for a date comes your way.

Meditate on Colossians 3:1-3. How could these verses help you the next time you feel insecure and want to take future matters into your own hands?

What can a Young Lady in Waiting do with her feelings

while she waits? List them from Psalm 37:3-7.

In your journal confess any times you sought to manipulate a person or situation. Seek to put your security in your King and ask His Holy Spirit for help.

How would having your security in the Lord and not in whom you are dating affect you if the dating relationship ended? Could you be grateful for a friendship even without the promise of a future? Being secure in God's forever love (see Heb. 13:5) allows a woman to build relationships for friendship, not merely romance for a future.

CHAPTER 8

Young Lady of Contentment



You have just returned home from a great single's retreat where you once again surrendered your frustrations as a single in exchange for God's peace and contentment. As you listen to your answering machine, you hear a certain voice. The most sought-after bachelor you know asks you for a date next weekend. Do you remain calm and give your expectations to the Lord? Or do you jump back in your car and head to the mall to register your china and look at some wedding gowns? Would the prospect of a date with the most eligible bachelor in town cause you to experience the "Pre-romantic Stress Disorder"? Or would you surrender your expectations to Jesus?

For a single woman to experience genuine contentment while soloing in a "couples' world," she must avoid the ditches of discontentment. She needs to learn the mystery of contentment and its power over the restless torture of desire.

The Torture of Desire

It has been said that suffering is having what you do not want (singleness), and wanting what you do not have (a husband). As a single woman, you would probably scream "Amen" to such a description of suffering. You know what it is like to get up each day knowing that you do not have what you want—a husband. How do you cope with such a longing?

Longing for what you do not have is a universal condition. It is not limited to singles. It is true that the longing for a husband can be satisfied on your wedding day, but that longing is soon replaced by desires and expectations about the marriage relationship that may not be satisfied in a thousand lifetimes. If you are presently discontent as a single woman, you can count on being dissatisfied as a married woman.

The mystery of contentment often seems to escape the understanding of the single woman. She assumes that her circumstances justify her condition and give her permission to remain dissatisfied with her life assignment. Not having learned how to lay down the terrible burden of always wanting life to be on her terms, she continues to struggle with the torture of her desires. The restlessness caused by her desire for what she does not have makes waiting seem an impossible task. In fact, to the discontented woman, the word *wait* probably compares to a "cuss" word in her mind. A Young Lady in Waiting finds her capacity to wait for God's best to be rooted in contentment.

The Capacity to Wait

Circumstantially, Ruth had the perfect excuse to be discontented. Widowed at a young age, her circumstances provided the perfect breeding ground for self-pity and

bitterness. In fact, her mother-in-law changed her own name from Naomi (pleasant) to Mara (bitter) to signify her discontentment. Yet Ruth chose to cling to the God of Israel, whom she found to be trustworthy even in difficult circumstances.

Contentedly facing each day's task, Ruth received the attention and blessing of the most eligible bachelor in town. Then Naomi told her that Boaz was a candidate for being their kinsman-redeemer (see the levirate law in Deuteronomy 25:5-10). This simply meant that the Mosaic Law allowed Boaz, as the closest kin, to redeem the childless widow and keep the family name alive. The law could even require that Boaz marry Ruth. Can you imagine finding the most eligible bachelor and saying to him, "The law requires you to marry me before my thirtieth birthday?"

Naomi instructs Ruth to approach Boaz and ask him if he would be their kinsman-redeemer. This episode is covered in chapter 3 of the Book of Ruth. Boaz's response to Ruth's request is precious. "And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character" (Ruth 3:11 NIV). Can you imagine any man saying to you, "I will do for you all you ask"? His willingness was directly related to the character he had noticed in her responses to life and God.

Ruth returns home with the good news. Naomi, however, does not immediately respond by taking her daughter-in-law to the mall to look for a wedding gown. An anxious and discontented woman would think that a willing and interested bachelor is enough motivation for ordering wedding invitations. But for the Young Lady of Contentment, this would

be inappropriate behavior.

Noami's response to Boaz's willingness may have put a damper on most single women's racing heartbeat. "Then Naomi said, 'Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today'" (Ruth 3:18 NIV). Who has to *wait?* The woman must wait. Who is the one who will not rest? The man, Boaz, will not rest.

Wait

Such an assignment is not to cause suffering, but prevent it. Women experience so much needless pain when they run ahead of God's format. Naomi knew that there may exist an even closer kinsman who would qualify to redeem her and Ruth. (In fact, there was a kinsman closer than Boaz whom she did not know about, but he would be disqualified by a former pledge.) Naomi did not want Ruth's heart to race ahead into disappointment in case the circumstances did not go as assumed.

Ditches of Discontentment

Being single can be difficult enough for a woman, but the heartbreak from being "led on" by a man can dangerously lead to a ditch of discontentment. Some women are so emotionally scarred from falling into such a ditch that it literally takes them years to recover and rediscover the capacity to trust any male in their life.

Why some males are unaware of their capacity to defraud is

still a mystery. “And that no man transgress and defraud his brother [sister] in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things…” (1 Thess. 4:6). To defraud is to excite physical or emotional desires that cannot be righteously fulfilled. Since many men do not realize how their actions defraud their sisters in Christ, single women need to be aware of common situations where a guy might lead a woman on. When aware of such techniques, a single woman can avoid unnecessary heartbreak and more effectively keep a rein on her emotions.

One way a guy may lead a woman on is by the unwise things he may say or do. A wonderful single guy started a letter one day with the words *Dear Sunshine*. When asked who this “Dear Sunshine” was, he said it was his nickname for a girl at college. He came up with this affectionate nickname for her one evening while they stood on a hill overlooking the school as the sun was setting. When asked if they were dating he replied, “Oh, no, we are just friends and there isn’t any future for our relationship.” He was encouraged to stop calling her Sunshine because it would defraud her emotionally. But, like many men, he had a hard time understanding that calling her Sunshine might cause her to dream about being the “sunshine” in his future after they graduate.

A second way a man might defraud a woman is by ascribing to an unwritten code that has been distributed by Hollywood and swallowed by most of Christianity: friendships with the opposite sex must be romantic and must not establish any emotional boundaries. What Hollywood advocates is like body surfing on the crest of an emotional wave. To establish boundaries seems like an attack on love. Ironically, limits protect real love and leave no room for painful defrauding.

Ken and Jackie established some specific guidelines for their dating relationship in the areas of leadership, communication, and purity. Classmates (even Christians) thought their goals and guidelines would prevent their friendship from blossoming and surviving. Contrary to popular opinion, they have been building on those guidelines for the past 20 years—and romance thrives in their relationship.

In a McDonald's commercial, a guy presented clear guidelines for him and his date. Just before the couple gets to the car, the guy makes one last remark, "I want you to realize that this is just a date, not a commitment and not a proposal." The girl just smiles and continues toward the car, enroute to McDonald's and a movie. Now, you may feel his style is just too honest, but such clear communication prevents much misunderstanding between a man's actions and a woman's interpretation of his behavior.

Another way a guy may defraud a woman is by emphasizing the future potential of the relationship rather than focusing on the present opportunities for the friendship to grow. This way of defrauding incites feelings in a woman that cannot be properly fulfilled at that time. This creates emotional turmoil for many women, making it difficult to wait with contentment. Postpone talk of a future together, marriage, or what kind of home you want, until engagement. Do not encourage talk of things that "might be," but rather encourage words and actions that develop the present friendship.

The Eleventh Commandment

Keeping in mind these common ways that women can be

defrauded by men, realize that a single woman can sabotage her own contentment by defrauding herself. A single woman can defraud herself as effectively as can her male counterpart. Protect your contentment by adopting this "Eleventh Commandment": Thou shalt not defraud thyself.

Women defraud themselves by confusing ministry with matrimony. A guy tries to help a girl grow spiritually, and she sees his care and interest as leading inevitably to marriage. Another guy and girl work on a ministry team together and their spiritual intimacy is confused in her mind with romantic intentions.

Misread intentions between males and females put them on a collision course. The crash can be avoided if the Young Lady of Contentment would keep in mind that her emotions must be submitted to the facts: ministering together is a privilege as a believer, not an automatic marriage opportunity. Daily, throughout the world, women's hearts are broken because they allow their emotions to run ahead of commitments. Women, young and old, seem to resist controlling their emotions. As a result, they end up emotional cripples, angry at the men who failed to live up to their emotional fantasies.

A most innocent gesture can produce the most elaborate fantasy. A man sends a single woman a thank-you card for her vital help in some project or ministry. What is her response to this kind gesture? She laminates the card, anticipates a future with him, and allows her expectations to run rampant.

Counselors are constantly helping men and women properly interpret their relationships. Nancy had been in counseling for more than a year because her heart had been broken and her emotions devastated through defrauding. She

told her counselor how she had deceived herself in her relationships with men.

As a new Christian, Nancy joined a large Singles Ministry where she became very attentive to the various needs of the Singles Director. She did all the special things that a "mom" often does for her son, or a woman does for her boyfriend. Not only did she attend to his practical needs, but she also was an inspiration to him as she grew by leaps and bounds in the Lord. She unselfishly gave him every spare moment she had, helping him with the many needs he had as the leader of such a huge singles group. If he needed someone to counsel a woman, he always called on her. If a speaker needed a ride to the airport, he called on her. She was a 24-hour crisis line at his disposal. To the undiscerning eye, it all seemed innocent—a very dedicated new Christian enthusiastically serving her singles director. But the lack of discretion on the part of the minister, coupled with her own spiritual immaturity, made a deadly combination. She confused ministry with matrimony and defrauded herself.

After a Christmas trip together where they shared many deep emotions, she went to Israel for a month. When she returned, he greeted her with the shocking news that he had become engaged while she was away. Did he ask the woman who had worked faithfully by his side to share his life and ministry? No. He proposed to a sweet, but less-involved member of the singles group. Needless to say, this devastated Nancy. This is not an isolated incident. The number of single women defrauding themselves seems to have grown to epidemic proportions.

To heed the Eleventh Commandment, you must

consciously resist doing another good deed for a man in your life until you know the motive behind your "unselfish" gesture. How many gifts have you already given to some guy in your life because you sensed that the relationship had future dating potential? How many ministries have you participated in because of the chance to be seen by him? How many times have you volunteered to help a brother when you knew you would not be so willing to help a sister in Christ?

The easiest way to break the Eleventh Commandment is to play the "surrogate wife or mother" in relation to a brother in Christ. You pick a worthy recipient of your time and attention, then you tend to any special needs you find out about in the guise of unselfish giving. There are single women who wash the guy's clothes and clean his apartment, but haven't even been on their first date with him. You might as well wash his car also. What this single woman does not know is that doing good deeds for a man does not win his love. Why? Most of the time, he is used to a woman waiting on him. Remember good ol' mom?

A dedicated Christian should do good deeds, but when you limit your service to the men in your group, it will ultimately backfire. You can end up feeling bruised by your own self-defrauding when you realize the man has taken your special gestures of service for granted.

One summer, as a member of a traveling drama team, a single woman gave herself unselfishly to a particular guy in the group. For ten weeks, during every free minute, she helped him study to pass his ordination exam, which required pages of memorization. At first, all the help she gave him really impressed the other team members. But as time went on, it

became obvious to everyone, except him, that her feelings for him had changed from sisterly love to romantic affection. Was anyone to blame for the pain that came at the end of the summer? If both had more discernment, maybe they could have acted more wisely in their friendship so she would not have been defrauded.

When the tour was over and everyone went their own way, he gave her a hearty hug and big "thank you"—and off he went to his ordination, which was followed by his marriage to a girl from back home. What happened to the one left behind with the big "thank you"? She learned a hard lesson, but she was emotionally devastated. She carelessly allowed herself to give her heart away. She gave hours to someone in the hope of reciprocation, but she ended up empty-handed with only a painful memory of giving so much and getting so little. Her motive was wrong. She defrauded herself through unchecked emotions.

Prenuptial Fantasies

An important method of limiting your own self-defrauding is through daily discipline Over "prenuptial fantasies." Such fantasies may provide you an escape from monotonous reality, but these moments are dangerous. They will aggravate your struggle for contentment because they are not innocent daydreams, but an attack on your godly contentment. You may be so used to daily fantasies that you might not even realize when you begin daydreaming again about your prince.

Often a single woman's struggle with contentment can be traced back to her fantasies more than to her frustrating

circumstances. Just think for a moment about three words from Second Corinthians 10:5 (KJV): “Casting down imaginations.” Fantasizing about a future with a guy you have been watching in Sunday school or at work is nothing more than your very active imagination. What should you do when you start daydreaming about a guy you’ve never dated or even formally met? You must take your thoughts to Jesus and leave them in His capable hands. This daily discipline of taking your fantasies to Jesus is the foundation for your future as a contented woman, whether you are married or single. Right now they are just prenuptial fantasies, but when you are married, those fantasies about other men could continue.

Lack of discipline in the area of “casting down imaginations” may result in self-defrauding and needless discontentment. Sally did not develop this discipline and was hurt needlessly. She went as a counselor to a national youth convention and met a sharp Christian guy from her home state. They enjoyed chatting between seminars and after she returned home, he began calling her long distance. After each phone call she would dream and talk to her friends about their potential together. She thought about his being younger, but refused to let her fantasy be spoiled by something as insignificant as age. She allowed the fantasy to move into vivid living color after every long distance phone call. Then her dreams turned into a nightmare. During one of their delightful conversations, he asked her a favor. “Would you mind if I come and visit you during spring break?” That sounded exciting to her, but then he asked the second part of his favor. “Would you mind if I bring two friends?” She assumed he meant two guys he had been discipling, but to her surprise their names were not Bill and John but Sarah and Becky. After

she picked herself up off the floor, she very politely told him that such a plan would not work. When she hung up the phone she felt angry and betrayed that he apparently wanted to use her home (three blocks from the beach) as a vacation spot. Maybe the guy was insensitive to her, but her hurt was multiplied because she had chosen to spend the preceding days and nights daydreaming about their potential relationship. Her pain and anger could have been reduced if she had exercised some discipline in relation to prenuptial fantasizing about this guy.

Friends too often participate in the development of one's prenuptial fantasies. After only one date with a wonderful man, a girl will share the details of the evening and her friends will not only share her joy, but also foster excessive imaginings by asking questions like, "Do you think this is the one? Could this be the Boaz you have been waiting so long for?" We not only need the discipline of monitoring our own fantasies, but we also need friends who will remind us not to run ahead of God's timing. Such monitoring of our emotions and accountability between friends is so helpful for the Christian single woman.

Spiritual Monitor

When a friend excitedly calls to tell you about the evening she has just spent with a special man, you often know before she gets two paragraphs into her telling of the evening where she is going—fantasy land. As she begins to tell how he is a friend from her past who recently became a Christian and is suddenly back in her life, be careful. As she rattles on at 100 miles an hour, it would be easy to say, "Maybe your Boaz is

finally here"—but don't.

Remember wise Naomi and avoid defrauding your friend. By enthusiastically building false hope in a situation that could be here today but gone before her next paycheck, you can easily help a friend to defraud herself. To help her monitor her reactions, point out that one long distance phone call from a male friend is not reason enough to take him home to meet her parents. Encourage your friend, instead, to wait until she sees how the friendship develops.

Your monitoring may not be appreciated at first, but the fruit of such counsel will be sweet. This is not to suggest that you cannot share a friend's joy about a wonderful date with a godly man. But a gift greater than simply sharing her joy is to encourage your friend not to run ahead of the relationship through prenuptial fantasies. Many tears have been shed over relationships that never materialized except in one's dreams.

At a girls' night out, a single woman shared how she used to resent spiritual monitoring from her mom in relation to her fantasies. She used to dread her mother's calm and reserved response to her dramatic presentation of the date she had with the man of her dreams. Her mom, a vivacious woman, seemed so restrained and even a little cynical when responding to her daughter's "bubbly babbling" about Mr. Right. How could such an outgoing, positive, and uplifting mom be so reserved when responding to the dreamy-eyed chatter about the arrival of the man worth waiting for? Did her mom have information of which the daughter was unaware? Had she hired a detective to follow the man of her daughter's dreams and find incriminating information? Of course not! This mom, like Naomi, was extremely wise in monitoring her own response so her daughter

would not get excited and distracted by a prospect who might never become a reality.

How refreshing to hear about a wise mom who helped her daughter not to deceive (defraud) herself. Too often moms innocently focus on the famine their daughters face in relation to dating. Instead of encouraging her daughter to use her free time for Jesus (i.e., to be a Young Lady of Diligence), mom and daughter analyze and re-analyze her dateless state and head for the mall to soothe the emptiness. Not everyone has been blessed with a "spiritual monitor" in a mother, but we can learn from this one's example and we can be spiritual monitors to the single women in our lives.

How can you begin to be a spiritual monitor? The next time a friend is bubbling over with joy after a date with a wonderful guy, pray for your capacity to share her joy; then pray for the courage to speak the truth about surrendering her dreams to the Lord and not running ahead of Him in her expectations. The spiritual monitor knows the importance of surrendering her own expectations to the only One who can be trusted with her desires and dreams. She can encourage others to surrender their own prenuptial fantasies in exchange for the truth in Psalm 62:5 (KJV): "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him."

Did you expect to be married by now? Or did you expect to be married forever, and now you are divorced? These expectations mean that you need God's tender loving care and the encouragement of a spiritual monitor who will regularly remind you not to run ahead of the Lord in your relationships with men.

Two women took the challenge to be spiritual monitors to

their dearest friend, who was dating Mr. Wonderful. These friends had to consistently resist fanning the fire of their friend's enthusiasm. They monitored their responses and limited their reactions to what was reality and not hopeful fantasy. Because this single woman had waited quite a long time for her Boaz, it would have been easy for her to run with the simplest amount of attention received. But since her best friends monitored their lips and resisted chatting incessantly about them being the perfect couple, she was free to respond properly to her boyfriend. Unmonitored chatting can lead to major defrauding.

Ironically, the same close friends who help to accelerate the prenuptial fantasy may be the ones who must comfort the lone lovebird when Mr. Right asks another girl out and no more history is to be made with him. Her disappointment will be in direct proportion to the degree that she and her friends responded prematurely to a relationship that will last only in her memory. The next time a friend shares the details of an exciting evening with such a hunk of a guy, don't overreact. Instead, say to her, "I am thrilled that you had a great time. I am so glad you shared your excitement with me. Now do yourself a favor and before you close your eyes to dream tonight, prayerfully commit Mr. Wonderful to Jesus." You will be a true friend and a spiritual monitor for her.

Thousands of needless tears,
Produced by careless cheers,
Assuming that Boaz is finally here,
When the arrival of her prince is not
even near…

If you do not have a spiritual monitor in a close friend, then ask the Lord to help you find such a friend.

The Mystery of Contentment

Whether married or single, in prison or shopping at the mall, the key to your enjoying this moment deals with your inner contentment. When your happiness in life is based on "your terms," it is a terrible limitation that will result in a hollow gladness. Singleness does not produce lack of contentment any more than marriage provides contentment. Lack of contentment is the result of the terrible burden of wanting life on your terms.

Married women complain about their lack of contentment as often as single women do, if not more. Both groups of women need to develop the quality of contentment. Paul the apostle, while living in a dark, damp dungeon, wrote of the mystery of contentment that does not depend on circumstances. He described the secret as a "learning process" to which he willingly submitted rather that resisting the conditions.

Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in ***whatever*** *circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who*

strengthens me (Philippians 4:11-13).

Whether married or single, one must learn that it is Jesus who strengthens you to walk in the most dismal or delightful of circumstances. True contentment is learned. You are not born with it and you cannot buy it at one of Kmart's blue-light specials. Your classroom for learning is your daily life. Every shattered dream or unfulfilled expectation serves as a perfect opportunity to learn contentment. These circumstances are your classroom assignments for learning the mystery of contentment. Learning contentment will require complete dependence upon Jesus, for difficult circumstances without the strength of Jesus can rob you of potential contentment. Do not be deceived into thinking you do not need Jesus' strength to face the good circumstances as well as the bad. When the sun is shining with no clouds in sight, you may assume that you can securely bask in the sunshine without any prospect of rain; however, this full feeling can easily breed a tendency to ignore Jesus. *"Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?'"* (Prov. 30:9a NIV).

Stop Arguing With the Umpire

Do you now see the incompatibility of anxiety-filled singleness and contented godliness? Are you ready to rid yourself of the ditches of discontentment that have robbed you of so much peace and joy?

Defrauding by a man, a friend, or even oneself, will aggravate your lack of contentment; however, the source of

your lack is not defrauding or even frustrating circumstances. Your lack of contentment is because of *pride*. Pride can be described as an excessively high opinion of what one deserves. When a single's life is not moving in the direction she wants (husband, career, children, house, etc.) the arguing often begins. With whom is the single woman arguing? It is none other than the umpire, the arbitrator: Jesus. "Let the peace of Christ rule [arbitrate, umpire] in your hearts…" (Col. 3:15).

The struggle with the Umpire is not limited to the single women up to bat! Every woman who has descended from Eve must learn to trust the call of her heavenly Umpire. The trouble from the beginning was a woman not listening to the Umpire, but reaching out for a life on "her terms." Why would a woman argue with such an all-wise Umpire? "Pride only breeds quarrels" (Prov. 13:10a NIV).

Consider a very poignant verse that brilliantly reveals the war in all of us. "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? *You want something but don't get it…"* (James 4:1-2 NIV). Honestly face any struggle you may have with your pride-driven desire to have life on your terms. Exchange your pride for Jesus' strength so you may accept whatever assignment the Umpire has for you from this moment forward. Dating is not a reward or a prize for living for Jesus. A Friday night without a date is often a night of "being spared" by an all-wise Umpire.

My soul finds rest in God alone…
(Psalm 62:1 NIV).



Becoming a Lady of Contentment

Do you have a spiritual monitor? Are you a spiritual monitor? (Read Proverbs 28:23 and Hebrews 3:13.) Are you intimidated by the prospect of this role in a friend's life? Why?

Review the methods of defrauding by a guy and by yourself. (Read First Thessalonians 4:6.)

A contented woman has the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing life on her terms. Are you a contented woman? (Read Judges 21:25, Luke 1:38, and Matthew 26:39.)

Pride is an excessively high opinion of what one deserves. Do you struggle with pride's control of your desires? (Read

Proverbs 13:10, 16:18, 29:23; Jeremiah 5:3; and James 4:1-2.)

Does toe-tapping, nail-biting, “I’m a quarter past 30 years old” thinking rob you of contentment? What limits God from acting on your behalf? (Read Matthew 6:27, Isaiah 30:18, and 64:4.)

CHAPTER 9

Young Lady of Conviction



On the eve of her wedding day, Cindy, a Young Lady of Conviction, wrote the following poem to her bridegroom:

Dear Sweetheart,

For many years I sought to find my Most perfect mate, But all that ever resulted from my search were shattered dreams, a broken heart and what seemed to be an endless wait. I wanted to find God's very best, But first He had to teach me that in His loving hands, I must solely rest.

So, one evening I prayed "God, just as you put Adam to sleep until the perfect one for him, he was ready to meet; so put me and my desires to sleep until I

too am ready to know the one you have chosen for me."

From that time forward God gave me a peace. And although others came into my life, God protected my heart and spared me from more strife. Then when God knew that in His hands I had placed my heart, He brought you into my life and I was history from the start.

My dear friends who know me well perhaps see tomorrow as a miraculous day. For they have known me and all my picky ways. Once while in the dorm, A.M. came into my room and asked me just exactly what I was looking for in a man. I ran to my diary and pulled out a list of 30 qualities I was looking for and on which I would insist.

As I read each trait one by one, dear A.M. looked at me, she was very stunned. After pondering the list she said with a nod, "Well, Cindy, looks like you'll have to marry God." Well, God you are not, but my heaven on earth you are. God heard my prayers and answered them

In the most perfect way with you.

I have no unanswered questions,
no doubts, no
hesitations, no reservations.

You are my Prince Charming, my
knight in shining armor,
my gift from the sea, my gift from God.

CINDY JORDAN FELDEWERTH

Does it seem too unrealistic for today's woman to set her sights on a knight in shining armor? Was Cindy just an idealist who got lucky and found a man that satisfied her list of "30 traits"? A single friend (a modern Ruth) wrote a letter in which she admitted that her high ideals often made her feel like the Lone Ranger. She said, "So often I meet women who don't want to go the deeper, more radical route of separation from our culture in seeking after God's standards." Do we lower our standards because we seem out of step with all our peers? Does the woman in Proverbs 31 seem obsolete? Maybe for the "cosmopolitan" woman she is obsolete, but not for the Young Lady of Conviction. God has the best in hand for those who seek Him.

Ruth's choice to wait for God's best resulted in her union with a Boaz rather than a Bozo. Ruth not only married a man who was a "pillar of strength" (Boaz), but she also was blessed by the privilege of bearing a son (Obed) who would be part of

the lineage of Jesus Christ. Ruth's wise choices resulted in her experiencing God's overwhelming goodness.

Damaged Goods

Ruth did not allow the past influences of a heathen culture to keep her from setting new standards and making wise choices for her life that would honor God. Ruth could have allowed herself to remain within a destructive family cycle that moved against God's standards. She could have given up on a godly lifestyle by assuming she was doomed as "damaged goods." But she didn't. She chose, instead, to break her family's sin cycle and establish a new godly cycle.

After becoming a Christian, Jackie found herself ashamed of her lack of a proper upbringing. She says this:

"I knew I had been forgiven for the past, but I often wrestled with the feelings of being damaged goods. I found myself envying other girls who were from godly homes and great heritages, spiritually. Whenever I would be introduced to a wonderful Christian guy, I would immediately think, 'I'm not good enough.'

"This was exactly how I felt when I first met my husband. He had asked Jesus to take control of his life at the young age of eleven. He went to church faithfully; he never smoked, drank, or fooled around sexually. His high standards were very intimidating to me. Throughout the years of our friendship, I knew he would never date me because of my imperfect past and ungodly family. Was I in for a surprise! As I continued to

make choices to break the ungodly influences of my past, the Lord was working on bringing Ken and me together as a team for His glory. Like David I thought, 'Who am I, O Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?'" (2 Sam. 7:18b NIV).

Ungodly cycles can be broken. Your destiny is not something that is left to chance or fate; it is the product of wise choices.

Destiny—Chance or Choice?

Do you think your ideals and standards are too high? Do you feel the pressure to compromise and settle for the generic version of life? Ruth lived in an era that was exactly like modern America. Judges 21:25 describes the era in which she lived: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." We too live in a culture where it seems that no one fears God and people just "do their own thing."

You, like Ruth, will be greatly affected by your choices. Ruth's wise choices allowed her to break a godless family cycle and begin a new cycle that the Word of God triumphantly records. God has not changed—and neither have men. The high standards in God's Word are not irrelevant, but completely applicable to finding God's best for your life. Choices, guided by your convictions rather than by chance, determine your destiny. How wise have your decisions been in the past in regard to relating to and dating men? Have you made some poor choices that you can see were the result of

your own lack of proper convictions in the areas of love, sex, and dating? Your present choices will affect the rest of your life in this delicate area that is often a collision course—male/female relating.

You cannot make good choices without proper, biblical convictions. Don't carelessly leave your dating/relating standards to chance. Too much depends on your decisions in this area. A stanza from the song "Guard Your Heart" by Jon Mohr captures this warning:

The human heart is easily swayed
And often betrayed
At the hand of emotion.
We dare not leave the outcome
to chance;
We must choose in advance
Or live in agony
Such needless tragedy.

From the beginning of time, God has shown His own people exactly what course they should take to avoid needless tragedy. A passage of Scripture that clearly states the reality of our own choices of happiness or misery is Deuteronomy 30:15-20. Remember that the media, music, literature, teachers, and peers often oppose the godly choices that you might want to make.

Standard-Bearer

May we go back to the basics for just a moment? What is a conviction and how does one develop biblical convictions? A conviction is a standard that serves as a springboard for your choices. Consider where your standards, in the area of relating and dating, originated. Are your standards based more on Hollywood's terms of love and romance, or have you allowed God's Holy Word to shape your perspective?

The Young Lady of Conviction gives the Lord permission to renew her mind on a daily basis. She spends time searching the Word of God for standards that will guide her safely to God's best. She has made a significant choice as a godly woman. She has surrendered her mind to a new persuasion: God's perspective on love and romance. The convictions that she establishes, based on the Word, allow her to resist being squeezed into the mold of this world. She is a non-conformist in a biblical sense, as in Romans 12:2 (NIV) which says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." Notice the words test and approve; your convictions (whether Hollywood-based or Bible-based) gauge your ability to "test and approve" the relationships you've had or will have.

If you want to live by God's standards for love, sex, and dating, you must prepare yourself for the inevitable resistance that "standard-bearers" face. When you live by your convictions, many of your friends will consider you unrealistic. Some of your girlfriends may even think you are stubbornly opinionated. Facing such opposition from the people you love is not easy, but the Lord will give you the grace to refuse to compromise. A true standard-bearer wants to be a vanguard in

a movement. Through Jesus' strength, you can stand firm, unwavering, as you wait for His best. The woman without the high ideals that the Word of God sets forth, leaves her choices to chance. She will tend to end up with a Bozo rather than a Boaz because she cannot measure accurately the man behind the "makeup."

Since most biblical convictions are in opposition to all the propaganda from Hollywood, relatively few, even among Christians, hold to these standards. This harsh reality is revealed throughout the Word. James 4:4-5 (Phillips) says, "You are like unfaithful wives, never realizing that to be the world's lover means becoming the enemy of God! Anyone who chooses to be the world's friend is thereby making himself God's enemy. Or do you think what the scriptures have to say about this is a mere formality?"

When you pass up dates with certain guys because you know they do not measure up to God's standards, then you have taken seriously your commitment not to oppose God. If your friends pressure and oppose you, ask the Lord for the strength to be more concerned with being His friend and not His enemy through compromising standards.

In America, government agencies regulate the standards of the food that you consume on a daily basis. For example, meat is subject to federal regulation of its grade, weight, and quality. How much more significant than ground beef (even prime rib) is the man with whom you hope to share the rest of your life? Such consideration and evaluation cannot be obtained through a glance or chance encounter at the "meet" counter. A lifelong relationship demands the highest standards of regulation. There are men breathing on this planet today who can handle

such scrutiny and be found "worth waiting for."

Avoiding Bozos

What is a Bozo? A Bozo is a guy whose outward appearance is a façade. It is hard to discern who he really is because of the "makeup and costume" he wears. What he appears to be physically, socially, and even spiritually is just a performance. A Bozo is a counterfeit of a Boaz.

It is possible to avoid such a clown. Your standards and convictions will help you recognize the difference. The remainder of this chapter will accentuate the genuine Boaz. Concentrating on the real thing will make the Bozos more apparent.

Before any girl accepts her first date, she should have established in her heart and mind a biblical alternative to Hollywood's dating style. As a prerequisite to every date, you should examine your motive (elaborated in the chapter on contentment). Are you going out with this guy because you haven't had a date in years? Are you going out with someone who may not really be a Christian because you think a date—even with a Bozo—is better than no date at all? Many women spend time with guys who do not really care for them. They would rather waste an evening with a Bozo than face another lonely night in a dateless condition. Some women even give up their biblical convictions in order to get a date with a certain guy. Do you feel as though you allow your dating schedule to determine your personal worth? Many single women are prisoners of the world's dating syndrome. They equate their self-worth with how many dates they had last month.

Have you dated more Bozos than Boazes? If your answer is yes, you may need to develop higher ideals. A very attractive and popular high school girl was challenged to develop a list of biblical dating standards and to put them into practice. She carried a copy of those standards in her wallet for five years. Thus she dated more Boazes than Bozos because her convictions helped her clearly see the type of guys with whom she was relating and ultimately dating. Do you carry God's standards for dating in your heart as well as in your wallet?

One Auburn University graduate left school with not only a diploma but also a very specific list of the qualities she was looking for in a future mate. See if her list contains any of the qualities you are looking for in Mr. Right:

- Spirit-controlled Christian (Eph. 5:18).
- Jesus is #1 in his life, not just an ornament (Mark 12:30).
- Broken; understands how to rely totally upon Jesus (Phil. 4:13).
- Ministry-minded; wherever he is, he is available (1 Cor. 4:2 NIV).
- Motivator; man of vision, concerned about lost souls (Rom. 10:14).
- Sensitive spirit; in tune to the needs of others (Gal.

6:2).

- Understands the awesome responsibility of a husband to his wife (Eph. 5:25-31).

- Humble enough to be a disciple (teachable) and able to disciple others (Matt. 28:19-20).

- Man of prayer; he knows the key to success is his private time with God (Col. 4:2).

- Family man; he desires to have children and raise them properly for God's glory (Prov. 22:6).

Clear standards for dating and relating will guard you against compromise and making wrong choices out of sudden emotion rather than a God-directed will. These guidelines for your dating friendships will keep God as your focus rather than allowing the guy to become the focus (idol). Clear standards coupled with accountability to a sister in Christ will help you walk in the convictions you establish. To guard you against haphazard meetings or just the "WF's" (weird feelings) in your heart, you need standards for which you will be accountable.

A disclaimer that we would like to include at this point is not to simplify the reason so many women are attracted to Bozos. The issue of standards is most relevant, but may seem simplistic. We acknowledge that some women find it difficult to raise their standards and change their patterns because they are still entangled with the past. Unresolved conflicts with a

father, a brother, or an ex-boyfriend may overshadow and control the attraction to Bozos. In this case we suggest a possible date fast, a period of time during which you refrain from accepting another date until you can sort out some of the unresolved conflicts from the past. This method has been used by many single women who have been entangled with old dating patterns. During the "date fast," they find time to search for new ways of relating and dating biblically.

If you have already spent time with the Lord establishing dating/relating standards, then you will receive affirmation through the following material. If you have been letting your dating routine be controlled by chance rather than biblical choice, consider not accepting another date until you have nailed down your convictions. Too much is at stake.

Once you have set dating standards and understand the significance of a constant motive check, (daily bringing the flutters in your heart to the Lord), you are ready to consider other guidelines for successful dating and relating.

Wedding Day Chains

"Here comes the bride all dressed in…chains!" Hey, wasn't that supposed to be "all dressed in white"? The last word in the chorus was changed to "chains," not because the bride is marrying a member of a motorcycle gang, but because she made the unwise choice of marrying an unbeliever. The chains symbolize what she has to look forward to as a believer married to an unbeliever. The Word of God speaks clearly about a partnership with an unbeliever. A common verse used for this conviction is Second Corinthians 6:14-17, but you find a more

poignant message for the one who wavers in this conviction in Joshua:

But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, then you may be sure that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the Lord your God has given you (Joshua 23:12-13 NIV).

One would be foolish to disobey God in the area of marrying an unbeliever.

When a single woman experiences a prolonged period of datelessness, loneliness tempts her to compromise her conviction concerning dating a growing Christian. Her dateless state may pressure her to surrender to the temptation of dating an unbeliever. She may justify such a date in the guise of being a witness for Jesus. Many single women have been trapped emotionally with an unbeliever when it all began with "missionary dating." Ponder this: Every unbelieving marriage partner arrived as an unbeliever on the first date. As trite as it may seem, every date is a potential mate. Avoid dating an unbeliever.

Many women want so desperately to date that the only qualification they have for the guy is that he goes to church. Every Sunday, churches have people attending to appease God or to satisfy a religious urge. You must set a higher standard and resist dating a guy who is not growing in his

intimacy with Christ.

The Man-Worth-Waiting-For

How would you describe the ideal man? A group of sharp women were asked to describe a "Man-Worth-Waiting-For," and all of them immediately replied: spiritual leader. One woman expounded on this quality in her unique way: "I want a guy who enjoys talking about Jesus in such a way that it reveals his obvious, bursting love for Him." Too many guys want to talk about Jesus for 60 seconds and their car or job or latest toy for the rest of the evening. One woman shared a verse that she thought his life should reflect, "Psalm 73:25: "Whom have I in heaven but You [the Lord]? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth." Do such spiritual men exist? Yes, but they are exceptions and not the rule. Their appearance requires waiting on the part of the recipient.

Before considering the specific qualities found in a Boaz, one should deal with certain physical stereotypes. Whether you have been looking for a guy who is a bronzed, blue-eyed blonde ("B.B.B.") or is tall, dark, and handsome ("T.D.H."), you need to surrender your desires to the Lord. Everyone has certain preferences. But such a mind-set needs to be given to Jesus. Too many single women have missed wonderful treasures in godly guys because the treasure was not encased in a B.B.B. or T.D.H. The Lord will probably not require you to date a guy who repulses you physically. But you need to be open to guys who do not fit your desired stereotype. Too often a guy may satisfy your eyesight, but leave your heart empty and still longing. Remember, after a few years, that

bronzed, blue-eyed blonde can be transformed into a pale, bald guy with bifocals on those gorgeous eyes.

A famous actress told a Christian psychologist that her five husbands had all been attractive outside (they were all B.B.B's or T.D.H.'s), but rotten on the inside. How many women, after the honeymoon is over, feel like they married a stranger? How many newlyweds are disillusioned by their mate's behavior within a few months of marriage? Most marriage counseling problems have their roots in personality problems—not physiques.

The Book of Ruth gives not only the story of a Young Lady in Waiting, but also the profile of a Knight in Shining Armor. From the first mention of this man Boaz, you begin to notice special qualities that distinguish a Boaz from a Bozo.

You want to marry someone for the qualities he possesses now, not for the qualities you hope he will develop. The most common mistake made by marriage partners is marrying someone they intend to change. Since it is nearly impossible to change a person, you will want to set standards of dating, or of building friendships, with men who are characterized by the qualities below. A single woman can sidestep a lifetime of tragedy by seriously considering these characteristics in a prospective steady date.

Puts the needs of others ahead of his own. This man accepts people just the way they are, loving others even when his love is not returned. He will continue to love someone because of his commitment to that person, not because of how he feels.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with

humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others (Philippians 2:3-4).

Rejoices in his relationship with Christ. You don't have to ask this man if he is a Christian. His joy in the Lord is evident in his life.

These things I have spoken to you, so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full (John 15:11).

Maintains proper relationships. This man seeks a good relationship with everyone—from his friends to his parents. He listens to differing perspectives without feeling threatened. He has the strength to back off from a fight. He works to forgive wrongs done to him and seeks to make his own offenses right. He will not hold a grudge.

Pursue peace with all men… (Hebrews 12:14).

Refuses to jump ahead of God's timing. He is not so eager to be something, do something, or have something that he cannot wait on God's timing. He chooses against impulsiveness so he may be in the exact center of God's will.

Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him… (Psalm 37:7).

Seeks to meet the practical needs of others. He is not so self-absorbed that he cannot make time for the needy. He is

interested in the welfare of others and is willing to give his time, money, and energy for their benefit.

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted… (Ephesians 4:32).

Stands for what is right. He hates anything contrary to God's holy character. He is known as a man of integrity by those with whom he works.

There will be…glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good… (Romans 2:9-10).

Follows through on his God-given responsibilities. He uses the talents God has given him and realizes that "he + Jesus = adequacy for any God-given job." He is neither overconfident nor absorbed with feelings of inferiority. He is not a dreamer, wishing for more ability, but a diligent steward of the talents he has been given. This man is dependable and stays with even a difficult task until it is completed.

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2 NIV).

Understands the importance of feelings and emotions. Some women may find themselves attracted to a demanding man, assuming that his dominance will be their security. Other women may marry a doormat they can dominate, but inevitably end up despising the man's weakness. A gentle man is the best of both; he takes the initiative to lead but tempers it with gentle

responses toward the other's feelings.

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Colossians 3:12).

Flees temptations to compromise. This man refuses to be in situations that are sensual, immoral, or impure. He does not entertain friendships that lead to drunkenness or carousing. He avoids talk that could cause strife or jealousy. This man does not allow a temper to control him or anger to destroy him.

Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit (Proverbs 25:28).

These qualities are not unrealistic ideals. When a man follows Jesus, the Holy Spirit works these into his life. In fact, you can read this list again and match the fruit of the Spirit with the appropriate characteristic. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-23).

None of the men you date will have all these qualities perfected. All of us are at differing levels of maturity. A man of God is one who works toward being conformed to the character of Christ. But be careful when a quality of God's Spirit is completely missing in a man's life and he is unwilling to deal with it before marriage. Realize that if character is absent before the wedding ceremony, it will be missing after the wedding ceremony and cause considerable problems during marriage.

Was Boaz, Ruth's knight, the last man of godly character, or was he just one of many? We are convinced that God still grooms Boazes for His daughters today. This does not mean a guy has to be perfect in order for you to go out with him. It does mean that he needs to be growing in Christlikeness by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit before you start to date him.

Do you want to marry a knight in shining armor? Then set your standards high. To be married to a man who loves the Lord and wants to serve Him is one of life's highest privileges. It is worth whatever wait, whatever cost. Nail down your convictions and refuse to compromise by dating men who are not controlled by God's Holy Spirit. These standards will stand guard over the castle of your heart. Proverbs 4:23 (NIV) says, "Above *all else, guard your heart,* for it is the well-spring of life."



Becoming a Young Lady of Conviction

Write out your convictions for the kind of guys you will date and the Scripture where you found those qualities. Why did you select these particular convictions?

What is the problem with just dating guys who are good,

but who are not Christians? What is the difference between a good man who goes to church and a growing Christian man? What difference would it make in marriage?

If the wait becomes hard and you meet someone who loves you, but has a glaring character flaw, what do you sacrifice if you marry him? Look through each of the characteristics found in the Man-Worth-Waiting-For section and determine what would be lost in your marriage if that quality was missing in your husband and the father of your children.

Put a check beside each of the following characteristics that *you* can change in your husband after marriage:

- ☐ Unwillingness to communicate (Prov. 14:10)
- ☐ Dominating ego (Rom. 12:3)
- ☐ Bad temper (James 1:19-20)
- ☐ Argumentative tendencies (Prov. 20:3)

❑ Difficulty in apologizing (Eph.4:32)

❑ Bad language (Eph. 5:4)

❑ Unwillingness to be involved with church (Heb. 10:24-25)

❑ Inability to keep a job (1 Tim. 5:8)

❑ Jealousy (1 Cor. 13:4)

❑ Self-centeredness (2 Cor. 5:15)

❑ Depression (2 Cor. 4:16)

❑ Unwillingness to give (2 Cor. 9:7)

❑ Always “going with the guys” (1 Cor. 15:33)

❑ Wandering eyes (1 Thess. 4:2-7)

❑ Lying (Eph. 4:25)

❑ Immaturity (Eph. 4:15)

❑ Workaholic tendencies (1 Tim. 6:7-11)

What does the Bible say about these qualities in reference to godliness?

CHAPTER 10

Young Lady of Patience



Janis and Linda were long-time friends and roommates. Inside their hall closet hung two sizes of every color bridesmaid's dress imaginable. "Well," they would say, with a laugh, "we have been bridesmaids at the weddings of many friends, but we are still here, holding out for the man God has for each of us!" Linda often added, "One thing I do know, when I walk down that aisle in white I want 'Great Is Thy Faithfulness' to be the procession song."

Although their ability to joke in the midst of their prolonged singleness is admirable, one has to wonder how an older woman can be patient when there appears to be no end to the waiting in sight. Waiting isn't easy when you are young, and it can be terribly hard as you get older.

God demonstrated His faithfulness in a special way to these two close single friends who chose to wait for His best, whether they married or not. He allowed each of their princes to appear within weeks of each other. Linda and Janis rejoiced in the faithfulness of God as they planned their weddings and

then participated in each other's wedding ceremony. They witnessed God's faithfulness in marriage as in singleness because they waited on His perfect timing for their future.

Was the wait easy? No. Was the wait worth it? Many years of marriage and six children later, the two friends answer with a resounding, "Praise God. Yes, the wait was worth it!"

Take courage, single friend. You are not alone in your wait; neither are you alone in the feelings and struggles you encounter. Many godly women have waited and won. Many women have lost hope and compromised. Wait patiently and win triumphantly the future your Father has planned for you. It will always be designed with you in mind and is worth being patient to discover.

Ruth was a wonderful example of a Young Lady of Patience. Ruth did not allow her circumstances or lack of male companionship to cause her to be impatient. Instead she concentrated on developing companionship with her heavenly Father and chose to let Him bring a husband to her if He saw fit. Concern over the ticking of her "biological clock" did not make her fearful of the future. Instead she concentrated on being a lady of character, not on getting a man. She took one day at a time, knowing that God was not bound by circumstances nor her age. She used the wait to become the woman God wanted her to be. At the end of this personal preparation, God chose to provide her with a husband. In Ruth 4:13, we see the end to their love story. "So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife…."

Why Is Waiting So Hard?

If God is faithful, why is it so easy to lose patience? Why is it so hard to wait? Why is it easier to settle for less than God's best? Fear is a huge hindrance to waiting. You may fear that your biological clock is ticking away and God has not noticed. You may fear, with every wedding you attend, that soon you will no longer have any single friends. You might feel that you better marry this "okay fella" who just proposed because he's pretty good and you fear you may not find another. Or possibly you fear loneliness and a lifetime of eating by yourself and of going to a church filled with people, only to sit alone.

Fear is an internal pressure. There are external pressures as well. Society pushes single women to grab for marriage because of a male shortage. Your parents want grandchildren and your cousins want to know, "What's wrong with you?" You feel like you don't fit in with the youth any longer but you can't very well go to the young marrieds' functions at church (where your friends now attend). If that isn't enough, a knowledge of statistics on singleness can finish you off:

"Marriage patterns in the United States revealed: white college educated women born in the mid-50's who are still single at thirty have a 20% chance of marrying. By the age of 35, the odds drop to 5%. Forty year olds are more likely to be killed by a terrorist than the minuscule 2.6% probability of tying the knot."[1]

How encouraging! The world is attacking a single woman's confidence as the enemy discourages her hopes through fear. These pressures often provoke single women to take more initiative rather than patiently wait for God's best.

Consequences of Impatience

There are grave consequences for the single woman who does not choose to develop patience and wait on God's timing. Society is full of heartbreaking examples. Some end in divorce; others end in an emotional separation that causes the husband and wife to merely live under the same roof. Some leave precious children damaged by the insecurity and fear that an unhealthy marriage produces. The personal loneliness and hurt that these lifestyles bring is an anguish that is indescribable. God did not intend a woman to have to live like that.

Impatience to find a man can cause a woman to argue about her "right" to date a man who is not godly, maybe not even a Christian. In Joshua 23:12-14 the Lord warns His people not to marry unbelievers. God knows that an ungodly husband will end up being "snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes…" (Josh. 23:13 NIV). Many young women argue that they are just dating, not marrying an unbeliever. But think about this—in our society, does anyone ever marry someone he or she never dated? Every date is a potential mate.

Marriage to a non-Christian brings pain to the believing wife. As women, we long to be known and loved for all we are. A man who is spiritually dead can never know the very intimate spiritual part of you that is your heart. He would be blind to much of what you would try to share with him. He could never know and understand you fully.

Be careful when you begin to think that you are "in love" and you "just can't live without him." Think again. Think of the loneliness you will feel when your husband will not attend church with you. Think of the angry bickering that may take place between the two of you because he can never

understand the depths of your spiritual awareness and, consequently, your convictions.

If you do not think about this now, you may one day think, "Before, I couldn't live without him; now I can hardly live with him." Second Corinthians 6:14-15 is very clear: "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?"

Please consider a greater consequence than being unhappily married to a man who does not know your Lord. Will you be able to handle the pain of watching your children live with possible rejection by their father, day in and day out? Will you think it is worth the cost when you are the only one who gets up on Sunday mornings to take your dear children to church? Will it be worth the compromise when your children look up at you and ask why daddy doesn't love Jesus? They could even reject the Lord for eternity and live a miserable, ill-chosen lifestyle because of the choice you made to marry a wonderful, but lost, man. Children will often follow their father's example—good or bad. Exodus 34:7 gives a warning you cannot ignore: "…He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations." You are not just marrying a husband, but choosing a father for your children.

When you marry, you do not choose blessings or curses for you alone; you choose for the generations after you. If you choose to wait patiently for your knight in shining armor, you will be blessed by the heritage that a prince brings. If you

choose to run eagerly ahead of God's plan and marry a man with no conscience toward God, you will reap the life's course he follows, but not alone. Your children's and grandchildren's lives will be directly affected by the man you marry. Consider the following Scriptures:

All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you will obey the Lord your God (Deuteronomy 28:2).

But it shall come about, if you do not obey the Lord your God…all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you (Deuteronomy 28:15).

God warned His people in Deuteronomy of the long-term effect of their choices.

Today other countries may not take our children, but there are many bondages in our wicked generation that could hold them.

Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, while your eyes look on and yearn for them continually; but there will be nothing you can do (Deuteronomy 28:32).

Have you seen the yearning eyes of a mother as she sees her son on drugs or her daughter living on the streets? There is nothing she can do but look on in pain.

Deuteronomy 28:2, 15, and 32 show that God has always desired to bless His people, but He will not force them to do

what is best. In His Word He has often warned us to wait, to be careful, and to trust Him. He will not make us wait. His heart of love begs us to listen and obey so He may bless us and the dear ones who will one day look to and follow us. The words He gave to the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 30:15-20 show the love and concern He has for the choices you make.

...So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him... (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

You must choose to wait patiently for God's best. If you have seen patterns in your life that show a lack of patience, commit yourself right now to waiting for God's best.

You may pray something like this:

Lord, You are my sovereign God. You know all about me and love me more than anyone else ever could. You know how I feel, what I need, and what my future is. I confess that I have taken matters into my own hands. I confess to being afraid of totally trusting You. Today I commit myself to focus on You and Your love for me. Today I commit to look to You for my future—not to my outward circumstances. Thank You for knowing how weak I feel, but being strong for me and in me. I love You. I choose to trust You.

You may have to repeat this prayer, or one like it, many times when you feel afraid. But Psalm 103:13-14 assures us that He understands and has compassion on us:

Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust (Psalm 103:13-14).

Developing Patience

Kimmy expressed that her focus was set and patience began in a real way in her life when, during her late twenties, she surrendered her life to Jesus. She said, "I remember telling the Lord, 'I don't care if I ever get married, I just want to love You, please You, and know You.' From that time I had a new peace and power. I got involved by ministering to the youth in my church and found joy in serving others. One girl told me her mother thought I was absolutely crazy, being as old as I was, to spend my time with the youth instead of trying to find a husband."

Kimmy served the Lord faithfully and contentedly alone until years later when Lynn recognized her as the lady God had for him. They were soon married because they had patiently used their waiting time to get ready. Kimmy said, "God didn't supply all my wants when I was single. He changed my wants and supplied all my needs, better than I could have imagined."

One older single woman struggling to be a Lady in Waiting cried out to the Lord as to why He was delaying the coming of her knight. She searched her heart, thinking there must be something horribly amiss in her life for God to spend so many extra years developing her into a princess suitable for her knight-to-be. Her self-image began to suffer as she mentally blamed herself for the delays. Tenderly, the Father gave her a

verse she could cling to: "Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness" (Ps. 37:3b).

She didn't really understand all that it meant, but chose to believe she was being all she should be before the Lord. As she began to dwell upon the positive things the Lord said about her in His Word, like "The King's daughter is all glorious within" (Ps. 45:13a), she was able to reject negative, condemning thoughts and feelings, and choose to be the woman He wanted her to be as a single.

Little did she know that God needed those days to perfect her Boaz. We, as women, are not the only ones who need the days of waiting in order to be perfected for a future life-mate. Her knight had not been a Christian long and in his spiritual immaturity would not have been a proper spiritual leader. He needed time to be founded in the Word and to experience complete freedom over the sins of his past.

When the two of them were finally introduced, she understood why she had to wait. While she cultivated faithfulness before God, her knight had been slaying a few dragons and shining his armor. God did not leave her waiting any longer than necessary. She desired a knight, but patiently waited on God's timing. The two of them now glorify God in a ministry to drug and alcohol abusers.

Wait patiently. Perhaps you are giving God time to prepare, not yourself, but your beloved. Let your heavenly Father accomplish His work thoroughly while your single man is undistracted. Issues settled in a person's life while single limit unnecessary stress and difficulty later in a marriage. Psalm 37:7 says, "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him…." Wait not for a man or a preconceived perfect future, but for Him. Verses

3, 4, and 5 of Psalm 37 give some great action words for the Young Lady of Patience to follow in order to wait before Him.

Realizing that marriage is not a dream but real life can also help you to wait more patiently. Instead of merely being envious, get with a godly married woman and see the extra load she carries. Look at all she cannot do, instead of the fact that she has a man in her house. Understand that in reality, married life is not constant communication, daily roses, hugs and kisses, breakfast in bed, and sheer bliss. Marriage is every bit as much work as it is wonderful, even in God's way and time. It is good, but don't be deceived into mistaking it for Heaven.

Since no spouse is perfect, learning to live "as one" is not without its tears. Marriage alone is not a cure-all or answer to every heartfelt need. If you think it is, you had better just keep waiting, for that kind of marriage doesn't exist. Although there is a romantic inside every one of us, you must be realistic regarding marriage or the shock could be devastating.

"Another thing that helped me wait patiently." Kimmy wrote, "was a sense of humor. Laugh about 'always a bridesmaid but never a bride.' Joke about opening your own attendant shop because you have so many bridesmaid's dresses. Talk about being single with others in a fun way, not with a 'woe is me' attitude."

Find other single girls and plan activities. Don't just sit at home on Friday night. Go out to eat, or to the movies, and become involved working with children, young people, or senior adults. There are many things you can do to stay busy and keep from becoming impatient.

Developing patience is hard. Getting married ahead of God's timing is worse. God may not work according to your

time schedule, but He does have your best interests in mind. One single said, "As a teenager, I had my life all planned out. I would meet my husband at age 19, marry at 21, and start my family at 23. These were my plans, but evidently not God's plans for my life. I am 41 now, but enjoy a wonderful single life."

You don't know what tomorrow holds, but you do know who holds tomorrow. Say this with the psalmist:

O Lord, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty; nor do I involve myself in great matters, or in things too difficult for me. Surely I have composed and quieted my soul; like a weaned child rests against his mother, my soul is like a weaned child within me. O [substitute your name], hope in the Lord from this time forth and forever (Psalm 131).

The place of rest that the psalmist found was a result of the choice he made. This quietness of soul did not come naturally to him. He actively chose to take himself out of involvement and quiet his soul (his mind, will, and emotions). He chose to put his hope in God. Are you trying to involve yourself in matters that are too great for you? Can you see into a man's heart? Can you know the future? You know Someone who does know men's hearts and the future. Patiently rest against His chest. He will bring you the peace you need. This attitude of patience is not something that will just happen. By an act of your will you must choose to trust God regardless of what happens. Patiently wait for His best.

Every single woman must at some point come to grips with the fact that not all women will marry. Marriage is not a need,

though God chooses to let marriage meet some needs a woman may have. Marriage is not a right, though God chooses to plan marriage for the majority of women. Marriage does not complete a person, though women who properly marry find that marriage rounds out some of their weaknesses. If marriage were a need, right, or completion for women, then all godly women would marry. There are many examples of true, God-honoring women who had no earthly mate but were still Ladies of Patience.

One Lady in Waiting wrote this:

"I believe part of being a Lady of Patience is honestly facing the future. For me that was realizing that I might not ever get married.

"I could handle the thoughts of waiting on the Lord,' but to face the reality that it may not be His desire for me to marry was hard to cope with. As I read my Bible, I found Isaiah 54:5. The verse said I was already married to Him. He was my Husband! I was His bride. He wanted me to know Him, my Husband. He wanted me to see myself as His bride, to know His love for me. He wanted to be intimate with me. So I began my walk with my Husband, the Lord Jesus.

"I still desire to get married; in fact, many times I have longed for a husband and even cried for one. There have been times when I thought I had met 'the one for me,' then was terribly disappointed. But I always knew I could go back to my 'Husband' who understood my desire and my hurts. He would encourage me by showing me His love in even deeper ways."

Another single woman named Beverly developed the

following Bible study to calm the impatience of her heart.

BY BEVERLY SEWARD BRANDON

Why Do I Want to Get Married?	How Can God Meet Those Needs in My Life?
I want to be loved.	"…I have loved you with an everlasting love…" (Jer. 31:3).
I want someone to adore me.	The King has brought me into his chambers to adore me. My lover is outstanding among 10,000 (see Song of Sol. 1:4; 5:10).
I want someone to hold my hand.	"…I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isa. 41:10).
I want to be accepted and valued.	I am accepted in the Beloved (see Eph.1:6 KJV).
I want a "place," a nesting place that is my own to create and use.	We can rest in the shadow of the Almighty (see Ps. 91:1).

I want help in my days of trouble.	"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you…" (Ps. 50:15).
I want to share my life—the joys and the struggles—with one person (intimacy).	God will share with me the treasures of darkness and hidden riches (see Isa. 45:3).
I want a champion of my causes—one who is willing to fight for me.	"The Lord will fight for you…" (Exod. 14:14).
I want someone to meet my needs.	God is meeting all my needs (see Phil. 4:19).
I want intimacy.	The Lord is intimate with the upright (see Ps. 140:13).
I want someone to help me in my life.	There is no one like God who rides the heavens to help you (see Deut. 33:26).
I want to walk through life sustained and carried. I don't want the whole load of life.	Even to my old age, God will sustain me, carry me, and rescue me (see Isa. 46:4).
I want a companion for this life.	God invites us to humbly walk with Him (see Mic. 6:8).

I desire children.	God gives us spiritual children like the numberless grains of sand if we invest in lives (see Isa. 48:19).

Beverly's response to this study is: "The Lord, my Maker, is my Husband. Only He can meet the deepest needs of my heart. No man can ever come through for me fully. Only He can. He is what I long for. Only God is enough."

Regardless of what you see or what you feel, God is in full control of your situation. You, Young Lady in Waiting, can walk in victory by choosing to be patient in your wait.

Don't let your impatient longings rob you of the life God wants to bless you with as a single. Realize you do not need marriage for happiness or a full life. If you are holding onto marriage as a right, relinquish this right so it will not keep you from God's fullest blessings. God knows what is best for you. His timing is perfect and He will take care of His Young Lady of Patience.



Becoming a Lady of Patience

Write out the things that make you lose patience. Which of these cause your Sovereign God concern? Give these concerns to Him and ask Him to help you trust while you wait. "I will trust while I wait, for my God is never late" is a good motto.

Read Deuteronomy 28:1-48. Write on one side of a piece of paper the blessings God wanted the nation of Israel to have as His children. Write on the other side what He asked them to do. What does He require of you?

Read Deuteronomy 28:1-48 again. Write the curses that came from choosing to be disobedient to God. Confess any ways that you have chosen to disobey God's will for your life.

Read Deuteronomy 30 and write down all the tender ways God spoke to His children, trying to help them choose what was best. How can you commit today to remain true to your loving Father and patiently wait? Look at the way He understands how His children feel in verses 11-14.

Make Psalm 27 your prayer and commit it, or another passage, to memory to use on those hard days.

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Chapter 10: Young Lady of Patience

1. Eloise Salholz, "Too Late for Prince Charming?" *Newsweek, June* 2, 1986.

SUGGESTED READING

Eros Defiled by John White

Too Close, Too Soon by Talley/Reed

Passion and Purity by Elisabeth Elliot

Pursuit of God by A.W. Tozer

Finding God by Dr. Larry Crabb

Search for Significance by Robert McGee

Trusting God by Jerry Bridges

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