

## GOD'S WOMAN:

### Exemplary Conduct to Younger Women

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#### INTRODUCTION

After the death of her husband, Ruth deliberately chose a position as servant to her mother-in-law rather than stay with her own people and serve a false god (Ruth 1:16-17). God rewarded her for her sacrifice and courage by sending Christ through her lineage (Ruth 4:17, 22; Luke 3:32). To the physical eye, Esther, a lowly orphan girl, was chosen by Artaxerxes for her exceptional beauty and presence to fill the station as queen of the Persian Empire. However, it took Mordecai's powerfully honest words to show her the reality of her situation with shocking clarity. She was in a position to be used by God to save the lives of the entire Jewish nation, but if she refused to seize that opportunity, both she and her father's house might well be destroyed (Est. 4:13-14). These two examples seem dramatic, maybe even extreme, but consider that just as Ruth and Esther were charged with a responsibility inherent in their station, for an express purpose, each of us has also been given specific talents and a work to do. As good stewards in the Lord's kingdom, we should use our positions and our qualifications for the things that will matter eternally. Like Ruth and Esther, we must look for doors of opportunity and be willing to put the needs of others before our own. Could God have chosen more inspiring examples than these to teach us how He values such faith, boldness, and self sacrifice? The influence each of us has in the church should be for good, even if that outcome appears small. Like Esther, who was promoted by God (Psa. 75:6-7) to be in a particular status as queen "for such a time as this," the aged woman's goal should be to consider how to use the place she has been given to accomplish what is truly important. She understands, because of the purpose of God for her (Rom. 8:28-29), she should behave in a manner that becomes holiness. She should neither be a false accuser nor a slanderer, nor a slave to wine but a teacher of good things—one who helps foster such qualities in the younger women around her, not only by direct teaching, but also by the demonstration of exemplary conduct. **Every Christian woman has an obligation to mature spiritually in Christ and thereby contribute to the growth of the Lord's church while being a good example to others.**

#### UNDERSTANDING AND ATTAINING EXEMPLARY CONDUCT

What does it mean for aged women to have **exemplary conduct** toward younger women? Webster's Online Dictionary defines the word thus:

**1 a:** serving as a pattern **b:** deserving imitation: COMMENDABLE <his courage was exemplary>; *also:* deserving imitation because of excellence <they serve exemplary pastries — G. V. Higgins> ("exemplary." Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. 2010).

Are there those to whom we should look for guidance and encouragement? What encouragement do we get from the scriptures? In 1 Peter 3:1-2, we read how a dedicated wife

can set a good example for an unbelieving husband. “Undoubtedly, many men have been converted by this means. An unblemished life constitutes a powerful sermon, and it can be preached in eloquent silence” (Summers. SpiritualPerspectives.org. 2010). Along the same lines, reading about godly examples in Hebrews chapter 11 should give us great hope, but let us also examine a few follow-up passages to see how we should grow spiritually and thereby become examples to the flock.

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and **let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith**; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Heb. 12:1-3 KJV).

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, **to them who are the called according to his purpose**. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:28-29 KJV).

“...For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, **and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ...**” (2 Cor. 10:4-5 KJV).

These passages should lift our spirits and give us renewed hope every day we live! When we read of the struggles others have endured in order to obey God and see their ultimate victories, we have courage to continue our own race—our own fight to win the crown. Whether we strive to gain the crown through a race or a fight, we have the same spiritual goal. Our Heavenly Father gives us powerful spiritual weapons to use in our warfare (2 Cor. 10:4-5). What if we had no weapons with which to fight (Eph. 6:11-18)? Would there be any hope of winning? God has given us the things we need for our own spiritual growth in order to win the crown, while, serving as models to others. But we must first “put on” (verse 11) and “take up” (verse 13) the spiritual armor of God. There must be effort on our part. There is something for us to do. We must use the weapons God has given! We must use our hope in His precious promises (2 Pet. 1:4), and we must grow up into Christ in all things, using the positions He has given each one of us in the body (Eph. 4: 7, 11-15). We must also put a conscious effort into building in each other’s hearts. God has **not** created Christianity to be a solo religion (Eph. 4:16). He specifically tells us that He means for each member of the Body, great or small, to be important to every other member (1 Cor. 12:12-27). Our daily examples to one another can have an enormous impact!

### **PREPARING TO DO THE WORK WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN**

As faithful stewards, we must all consider the work we have been given to do, do the tasks at hand with all our might, and prepare our hearts for future tasks as Ezra did. “...For Ezra

had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:10 KJV). Notice that Ezra had first prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and then found a way to obey it. Thereby, he became one of the chief tools in the Lord’s hands to accomplish God’s will in the return of the Israelite captives. What if every young woman in the church actively studied at the feet of a godly, aged woman to *prepare* her heart for the day she hopes to have a husband and children? Might she do a better job of this great work? Likewise, for those of us who are older, can we always grow to be better examples and better teachers for the young ones to follow?

### CLEANSING THE INSIDE FIRST

Women should value every soul in the church, and our desire should be to learn to love the members of the body and to edify them, thereby winning the prize together. We should seek to excel in edifying, whether as women providing an example or as women who have been given the opportunity to teach one another and the children. Our priorities, and the things we delight in from day to day, may well have more of an impact than what we say to those close to us. **But notice that what we actually delight in will always come out of our mouths** (Matt. 12:34-35). Notice also how our inner joys influence others.

- If we *delight* in God's word and in teaching, our light will naturally shine.
- If we *delight* in loving our husbands and children the way God directs, our light will shine.
- If we *delight* in helping the poor and needy, our light will shine.
- If we *delight* in building in others' hearts (**edification** Rom. 15:2 KJV), our light will shine.
- If we *delight* in, and value, the Lord's body and our place in it, (Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 4:11-15; 1 Cor. 12:14-22) we will serve with all our might, and our light will naturally shine.
- If we *delight* in forgiveness (Matt. 6:12-15; Matt. 18:32-35; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:37; Luke 11:4; Luke 17:3-4; Eph. 4:32), our light will naturally shine.

Through these examples we can see that we can never hope to attain exemplary conduct without first putting our focus on cleansing our own hearts. The Pharisees had a great desire for the praise of men, but Christ’s comment about their actual conduct was revealing: “All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not” (Matt. 23:3). They were blind to the inner man, and had not focused first on their hearts but only upon outward actions. Christ’s solution for the Pharisees was for them to “...cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also” (Matt. 23:26). How can we best accomplish this necessary cleansing of our own hearts so that our actions automatically shine as an example to others?

### CLEANSING THE HEART

In order to be a shining example to others, we must be like Jesus and truly learn to hate evil (Heb. 1:8-9; Rom. 12:9) and understand the influence it can have on us. As we study our Bibles, let us consider searching for scriptures which talk about what influences our hearts and how that affect us. For example: “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that

bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither..." (Psa. 1:3 KJV). What about a tree planted by a toxic waste dump? Can it thrive? Or, what about one planted in the desert? "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33 KJV). "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life (Pro. 4:23 KJV). What about the things we expose ourselves to every day? Whether or not we intend to, we carry the consciousness of these experiences with us from that time on. When we truly learn to hate evil, we will not be willing to tolerate being around it (Prov. 4:14-15) but will begin to seek good. A constant diet of godly thoughts and influences is critical to our spiritual wellbeing. "But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psa. 1:2 KJV). The growth of our inner man requires that we have spiritual food, that we hate evil and love and follow righteousness (Pro. 21:21; 1 Tim. 6:11). Before we can avoid the evil and choose the good, we have to learn to discern the difference (Heb. 5:14). When our hearts are genuinely changed by this growth process, the beauty of our inner man will begin to radiate to those around through our words and conduct.

### KNOWING WHAT AND HOW TO TEACH

Following the examples of other godly women, and studying "what" to teach reveals a vast storehouse of "how" to teach. As we examine the requirements for an aged woman who should teach the young women, we see what that teaching should include. "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:3-5 KJV).

- **The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness...** Judging by the inner man, what is this older woman's first job? What does it mean to be holy? Holy means set apart for God's work. Remember how Belshazzar used the stolen vessels, which were set apart for God's work in the temple, at his own banquet (Dan. 5:2-28)? Daniel rebuked Belshazzar for his wickedness saying: "...the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:" (Dan. 5:23b KJV). The older woman's behavior must also be holy—set apart for God's service. She must have thoughts and actions which set her apart for God's work, and she must not defile herself with worldly pleasures. She may even be a literal servant of the church, like Phoebe (Rom. 16:1-2).
- **Not false accusers...** She must not be like Jezebel, who accused Naboth wrongly to take away his vineyard, or like Athaliah, who accused the faithful priests of treason when they crowned Joash. One short verse in the book of Jude gives us a shocking example of who accuses and who refrains from accusing. "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 9 KJV). Every woman is to guard against what comes out of her mouth as well as what goes into it.
- **Not given to much wine...** We know that the wise woman in Proverbs 31 had far too much good work to do and far too many important things to think about to allow herself to lose

any of her reasoning capacity, or to give herself over to pleasure instead of the Lord's work. Some may ask whether it is acceptable for a woman to take a little wine. When giving the qualifications for deacons, the apostle Paul also lists: "...not greedy of filthy lucre" (1 Tim. 3:8 KJV). By giving that qualification, was it Paul's intention to sanction a moderate desire for illicit money? No, it was not! Covetousness, to any degree, is idolatry. In a similar way, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body..." (Rom. 6:12 KJV) is certainly not approval for occasional sinning (Patton 115-116).

- **Teachers of good things...** Priscilla was actively teaching the lost and assisting others who taught wherever she went. Lois and Eunice taught Timothy the scriptures, even though his father was a Greek. Easily the poor could learn compassion and humility while watching Dorcas stitch what they needed (Acts 9:36).
- **That they may teach the young women**
  - ✓ **To be sober...** NT: 4994 *sophronizo* (so-fron-id'-zo); from NT: 4998; *to make of sound mind* (Strong. BibleSoft. 2006). Esther was taught by Mordecai to be of a sound mind and judgment regarding her responsibility to speak on behalf of the Jews. Jochebed was clearly of a sound mind in the faith she showed by saving Moses' life. Manoah did not just say, "Oh, wonderful, my wife is having a baby!" but "How shall I order the child?" Sober-mindedness is a vital concept which must be taught directly and by example. We must each consciously choose to cultivate a mind that is willing to consider our lives in a sober light and focus on the Lord's work rather than being frivolous or imprudent, unable to judge soundly or to think clearly or seriously.
  - ✓ **To love their husbands...** NT: 5362 *philandros* (fil'-an-dros); from NT: 5384 and NT: 435; *fond of man* (Strong. BibleSoft. 2006). Truly loving our husbands the way the Lord calls us to, in deed, and not just in tongue, involves only doing him good and never ill. (Compare Rom. 13:10 and Prov. 31:11-12.) "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor..." and "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." How can we do good for our husbands? How might we inadvertently do him evil? Doing him good according to God's plan also involves obedience to him, which is mentioned again later in this passage. Think of the inspiring example of Sarah's love for Abraham.
  - ✓ **To love their children...** NT: 5388 *philoteknos* (fil-ot'-ek-nos); from NT: 5384 and NT: 5043; *fond of one's children* (Strong. BibleSoft. 2006). Jochebed bravely hid Moses (Exod. 2:2) and Hannah dedicated Samuel to the service of the Temple (1 Sam. 1:11). Using discipline instead of permissiveness, Hannah, Sarah, Lois and Eunice loved their children, teaching spiritual truths as more important than secular education. We have to be amazed at the commendable preparation Lois and Eunice gave Timothy toward the **focus** of his life's work. Sarah was not about to let Ishmael ruin her one chance to form Isaac's heart, and God supported her resolve.
  - ✓ **To be discreet...** NT: 4998 *sophron* (so'-frone); from the base of NT: 4982 and that of NT: 5424; *safe (sound) in mind* (Strong. BibleSoft. 2006). Abigail discreetly handled her foolish husband's business with King David. The five wise virgins were discreet about

their business of not sharing oil. Even the Egyptian Pharaoh described Joseph as being discreet in Genesis 41:39 (Nave, Biblesoft, 1990).

- ✓ **Chaste...** NT: 52 *hagnos* (hag-nos'); from the same as NT: 40; properly, *clean*, (Strong. Biblesoft. 2006). Chaste has to do with where our thoughts lie as much as our actions. Ruth focused on taking care of Naomi when she was old and was well-known in the community as a virtuous woman (Ruth 3:11). Mary focused on serving the Lord and was rewarded by becoming the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:38). Chastity or purity should be reflected in the modest behavior and dress of women, young and old. Older women must practice and teach modesty to younger women.
- ✓ **Keepers at home...** NT: 3626 *oikourgos* (oy-koor-gos') or *oikouros* (oy-koo-ros'); from NT: 3624 and *ouros* (**a guard; be "ware"**); *a stayer at home...* (Strong. Biblesoft. 2006). Sarah guarded Isaac. This meaning is also in the sense of home care taker like the Proverbs 31 woman. Whether we are "keeping" houses or hearts, our focus determines what we reap eternally (Gal. 6:7-8).
- ✓ **Good...** NT: 18 *agathos* (ag-ath-os'); a primary word; *good* in any sense, often as a noun (Strong. Biblesoft. 2006). The aged Elisabeth was blessed in her patience (Luke 1:25) and Mary "found favor with God" (Luke 1:30). Jesus compares the heart to a tree, which bears certain kinds of fruit. **Good trees bear good fruit** (Matt. 7:17-20).
- ✓ **Obedient to their own husbands...** NT: 5293 *hupotasso* (hoop-ot-as'-so); from NT: 5259 and NT: 5021; *to subordinate*; reflexively, *to obey* (Strong. Biblesoft. 2006). Loving the husband also demands obedience according to God's plan, no matter the type of husband, whether he is wicked or good. Inspiring examples of such obedience are seen in Abigail and Sarah. Sarah called Abraham *Lord* (1 Pet. 3:6) while Abigail was faithful to a churlish fool (1 Sam. 25:3).
- ✓ **That the word of God be not blasphemed...** Do we want the word of God blasphemed by those in the world because of the way they see us behave toward our husbands? Is it not bad enough that those outside the body falsely accuse our good behavior without giving them just cause to do so (1 Pet. 3:16)?

### **KEEPING OUR PART OF THE COVENANT BECAUSE WE BELONG TO CHRIST**

Usually we assume the older women will have more experience, and therefore more wisdom, in loving their husbands and children and keeping a home. We also understand the aged women are commanded to teach the younger ones. However, this does not happen without effort or thought, for there are old women who remain foolish. No doubt the saddest commentary that can be made about an older woman is that "...she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim. 5:6 KJV). Are we living for ourselves or for God? Are we faithful to the covenant we made with our Father and Christ when we were baptized (2 Cor. 6:17-18)? Many sisters today claim to "put Christ and the church **first** in their lives," but that very statement suggests they have reserved a part of themselves, perhaps the balance of their lives, for their own pleasures. Have we truly repented of serving self to serve the living God (2 Cor.

5:15; Gal. 2:20)? Is everything we do for Him (Col. 3:17)? If we do not see everything we do as being for God, then we will automatically think "my time" and "God's time" and put our Christianity on the shelf when we come home from church every week. All our time is God's time. Every hour of every day belongs to Him once we become His child (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

### **BEING TRAINED AS GOD'S CHILD—HIS PURPOSE FOR OUR PLACE IN THE CHURCH**

The whole purpose of our existence is to be trained for whatever work the Lord has in store for us in eternity as we reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12). It could be argued that the whole point of a woman's life is to fill her place now in such a way as to allow her heart to be formed to make her as valuable as possible to Him eternally. The fact that we have a different job than the men have should not dismay us. Korah had a fine and honored position as one of the heads of the family to whom God had entrusted the care of the Ark of the Covenant in transit (Num. 16:9-10), but rather than being honored by the special position God had had given him, he wanted the highest profile job possible (Num. 16:3). He got himself into a bit of trouble for his ambition (Num. 16:19-21; 32-33)! Miriam and Aaron also had to learn that lesson (Num. 12:1-10). Look at the honored position Timothy's father had as head of the house. In reality, God honored Eunice and Lois because they did the work He gave them to do; they qualified themselves (2 Tim. 1:5). Woman's position in life may be subordinate, but her qualifications can be superior. Those qualifications are what our Heavenly Father values (1 Pet. 3:1-6).

### **DOING GOOD WORKS THAT OTHERS MAY FOLLOW**

Timothy, a maturing Christian, though young in age, was commanded to **show himself a pattern of good works** (Titus 2:7). What about us as Christian women? Consider specifically what kind of good works should be our focus. As members of the Body (1 Cor. 12:27-31), and as disciples of Jesus Christ, trying to be like Him (Matt. 10:25), are we preparing for what is important and eternal (Matt. 6:33; 2 Cor. 4:18)? Are we walking in such a way as to be a pattern of good works? As women, we should rejoice in the work God has given us, and do it with our whole heart, trusting Him to have the wisdom to put us in the situation for which we are best suited.

### **CONCLUSION**

If we prepare our hearts (the source of our thoughts—Pro. 23:7a; Matt. 9:4 KJV), for the work God has given us to do, what exemplary conduct should we be expected to demonstrate? As Christian women working toward a goal, we can easily see in the Scriptures real hope of winning the race or winning the fight to receive a crown of righteousness. Using the station or situation we are given in life as women, we find that we can grow spiritually toward the complete *man*. As we study examples of others who have run the race before us, we should gain great encouragement to continue our own race—our own fight. As we fulfill God's purpose for our lives, we will naturally show true exemplary conduct to younger women. **The theme of this lectureship has offered an excellent opportunity to build our personal studies**

on the framework of understanding spiritual growth, going beyond milk to meat, adding qualities of the heart of Christ to grow into the complete *man* while at the same time being good examples for younger women to follow.



## WORKS CITED

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