


# The Father's Honor

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A Biblical Study of Service  
to Encourage Women



*"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me;  
and where I am, there shall  
my servant also be;  
if anyone serves Me  
the Father will honor him "*

*John 12:26*

NANCY CUNNINGHAM

As Jesus Christ prepared to send the disciples for the first time throughout Israel with His message, He included in their instructions this admonition: “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8). This six-word summary of grace explains the financial policy of the publications and audio ministries of Basic Training. All audio materials and publications are provided **without charge** to anyone who requests them. For a catalog of available materials write:



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*“Endure hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 2:3)*

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Before you begin any study of the Word of God, take a few moments to make sure that you are in fellowship with God, filled with the Holy Spirit. Comprehension, like everything else in the Christian life, is a gift that can be appropriated only by faith. The Bible clearly lays out three requirements that must be met before we can expect to understand God's Word. All three require nothing from us but faith.

1. *We must be believers in Jesus Christ* (John 3:16).  
It is impossible for unbelievers to understand the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Jesus declared to the leading religious leader of His day that apart from spiritual birth man is blind to the things of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit ... You must be born again" (John 3:6).
2. *We must be filled with the Spirit* (1 Corinthians 2:12).  
Only the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God. As believers we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but when we sin, we break fellowship with God and cease to function in the power of the Spirit. When we confess our sins, God is always faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). The moment we confess, we are restored to fellowship and are again under the control of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, able to learn. Restoration to fellowship with God provides us with the power to walk in obedience to God's Word (Rom. 6:4; 7:6; 1 John 1:7).
3. *We must approach in faith* (Hebrews 11:6).  
Only when we approach in humility, with child-like faith, will the Word of God make sense to us (Matt. 18:4; Heb. 11:3). Where we find Scripture at odds with our ideas or our desires, we must submit to the authority of the Word. Intimacy, understanding, and power are reserved for those who are willing to do God's will (John 7:17).

# Encouragement from Nancy



By God's grace, I have had the privilege over the years of traveling to remote areas of the world to minister with my husband. Our travels take us to homes and villages that the average tourist will never see. In those places, there is one thing that always catches my attention—the humble service of the women. Women who rise early, stay up late, labor, toil, sweat, and smile all for the welfare of their families. There is seldom a thank you or a blessing given for what they do, and yet they continue to give day after day, year after year. Long after I return home, their example encourages me when I am weary and strengthens me when I am tired.

I have often wondered if these women even realize the eternal value of their service when performed out of love for Jesus Christ. I wonder if they even know **The Father's Honor** that awaits them when they see Him face-to-face. For when we serve others in the Body of Christ, we serve Jesus Christ Himself. The world honors beauty, fame, and fortune. But God's ways are not the same as man's ways, and God's thoughts are so much higher than man's thoughts (Isa. 55:8–9). God does not look at the outer appearance of a man or a woman. God looks at the heart, and God honors the heart that serves Him out of love for His Son!

I write this small book to encourage Christian women. For the better we understand our life from the pages of Scripture, the better equipped we are to serve Him. In learning what God's Word says about the believer's service, I pray that women reading this might gain strength from knowing there is Someone who sees every act of kindness and every good deed. There is Someone who cares. That Someone is the Lord Himself, who, in eternity, will richly reward their service and bestow on them **The Father's Honor**.





# Introduction



When studying service, it is important to remember that our service does not earn us salvation. Eternal life comes only as a grace gift from our Lord through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is by faith alone in the work of Christ that we receive the gift of salvation.

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*

Ephesians 2:8–9

It is also important to remember that our Lord created us for the purpose of good works. We are not saved to serve ourselves, neither are we saved to just sit back and enjoy thinking about eternity. We are saved with the Lord’s intention that we serve Him through serving others in the Body of Christ. Good works is His divine plan and purpose for us.

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”*

Ephesians 2:10

How do we walk in good works? We are neither strong nor humble enough in our own selves. We must serve and perform our good works in the same way we receive salvation—by grace and through faith. By grace through faith means that we depend on the Lord for our very life and existence. The fact that we are spiritually and physically able to serve is a gift from God. We must never forget that it is He who enables us for the task! For the Father is not pleased with what we do in ourselves, but what we do through Him.

*“As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord [by grace, through faith], so walk in Him.”*

Colossians 2:6

John 3:16 tells us that God, the Heavenly Father, sent His one and only Son into this world to die for you and me. It was out of His love for the

world, and every soul in it, that Jesus came. Love is the greatest motivator in the world. Our service to God should be an overflow of our love for Him and what He has done for us. We do not serve to be blessed; we are already blessed with all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). We do not serve to find favor with God. He is pleased with us because we are in Christ. When we daily recall the wonderful riches God has given us in Jesus Christ, the result is a heart ready to serve others in love. We reflect our love for God by showing love to others!

*“Let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God  
an acceptable service with reverence and awe.”*

Hebrews 12:28b

In all things, Jesus Christ is our example to follow. We should desire to be like Him, to reflect Him in all areas of our life. He is our example of forgiveness, discipline, love, strength, compassion, and truth! He is also our example of sacrificial service. Isn't it awesome to think that the Creator and the Sustainer of the entire universe came to this world as a humble servant? He came to serve the very ones He created!

*“Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but  
to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

Matthew 20:28

When Jesus Christ stooped down and girded Himself to wash the disciple's feet, He was teaching His disciples—and us—to follow in His humble example of service to others.

*“If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet,  
you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave  
you an example that you should do as I did to you.”*

John 13:14–15

We must remember that Christ's service here on Earth was not limited to foot washing. He was constantly caring for the physical and spiritual needs of others, constantly ministering, and expressing love to those around Him. Let us diligently follow His example!

If the most important person in our life is self, then we will find it difficult and burdensome to serve God and care for others. But Jesus Christ asks us not to live for self. Instead, He asks us to daily die to self and be made alive in Him. Therefore, to be an effective servant, we must



daily die to our own needs and desires and live in service to the One who died for us. The Apostle Paul calls this “our reasonable service of worship.”

*“I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual [or reasonable] service of worship.”*

Romans 12:1

Everywhere in the world you find that women desire to be beautiful. It is a nice thing to look attractive for our husbands and family. However, God is not impressed with the outward beauty of a woman. Rather, He is looking to develop in her an inner beauty that adorns her life, her person, and her ministry. This is the kind of inner beauty that shines through even when the hair turns gray, the face becomes wrinkled, and the form is stooped. Timothy tells us that this inner beauty is what we as women should strive for, and it is found not in cosmetics and clothes, but in our good works. It is our love and service to Christ that makes us beautiful from the inside out and adorns our life.

*“Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as proper for women making a claim to godliness.”*

1 Timothy 2:9–10





## CHAPTER ONE

### *Our Forerunners in the Faith*



The Bible is full of wonderful truths, commands, and promises to live our life by. In addition, we have exciting stories of the great believers who have lived before us as our forerunners in the faith. First Corinthians 10:11 tells us that the Lord has recorded these stories for our instruction that we might follow in their example. One such example is found in a little band of women who ministered to the physical needs of Jesus Christ while He was here on Earth. From this story, we see once again the great value that the Lord placed on the humble service of the woman.

*“Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.”*

Luke 8:1–3

Mark 15:41 tells us that these same women *“used to follow Him and minister to Him.”*

These women came to Jesus with sickness and physical needs. Some were healed of their infirmity, and some were not. But each one found in Jesus Christ a Lord they wanted to follow, support, and serve. Think for a minute about their ministry. Why would Jesus Christ, who is God in the flesh, need them to minister to Him? Here, we have the divine Creator of the world being ministered to by a little band of women. They were giving of their own substance, using human, though God-given, resources to support the Son of God. Philippians 2:6–7 says:

*“... although He [Christ Jesus] existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking on the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men.”*

This means Christ did not use His divine powers and privileges to serve Himself, but rather laid aside these powers to live the life of an ordinary man. Therefore, He was subject to the basic needs of life. He became hungry, thirsty, and tired. His clothes became dirty and worn. He welcomed a warm place to lay His head in the dark of night.

*“The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”*

Matthew 8:20

These women saw the physical needs that Christ and the apostles had, and they set out to fill these needs. Regardless of their own circumstances, they died to self to be made alive in service to the physical needs of their Lord and Savior. They gave financial support, they gathered and cooked the food, drew water, and washed and mended the clothes.

These kinds of everyday tasks are not very exciting in themselves and can become tiresome and routine. But when they are done in service to Christ, what joy and purpose they can bring to a woman's life! If Jesus Christ were alive today, we would all be eager to serve His needs because of what He has done for us. We don't have Christ in the flesh with us today, but the Church is called His Body. We have His Body with us today in the form of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We minister to Him by ministering to those around us.

*“For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something drink; I was a stranger and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me ... truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.”*

Matthew 25:35–36, 40

This is not all we know about the ministry of this little band of women. Matthew 27:55 and 56 tells us that these same women were looking on at the crucifixion of Christ. They had willingly followed their Lord even up

to His place of death. Verse 61 tells us that at least two of the women were at the tomb when Christ was buried, and saw the tomb sealed with a large rock. In Matthew 28, we find that these same two— *“Mary Magdalene and the other Mary”*—came to the grave on Sunday morning. The account in Luke 27 and 28 tells us they came with spices and perfumes for the body. They were still serving their Lord even when they thought His body lay lifeless and still. As they arrived at the tomb where Christ was buried, a severe earthquake occurred and then an amazing thing happened! An angel of the Lord appeared to the women and said in Matthew 28:5–7:

*“Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.”*

Then the women departed quickly with fear and joy and ran to find the disciples. But before finding the disciples, they were greeted by the **resurrected** Jesus Christ! They took hold of his feet and worshipped Him, and He said to them in verse 10:

*“Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they shall see Me.”*

All through Christ’s ministry, he was training and preparing the apostles to carry on with the ministry after He had departed. Isn’t it wonderful that He gave these faithful women the privilege of being the first to see Him in His resurrected body? For centuries, believers had looked with anticipation to the time when Messiah would come, and for centuries after His death, we know only by faith in His resurrection. But on this glorious Sunday morning, God honored these servant women with the privilege of being the first to know of the death, burial, **and resurrection** of Jesus Christ! Not only did they see Him first-hand, but He also entrusted them with a message for the other disciples. They were to “go and tell” that He was indeed risen from the dead. He was alive! These women stand throughout eternity as an encouragement to us of the high value Jesus Christ places on our service to Him and to His Body!





## CHAPTER TWO

### *A Prophet's Reward*



We have seen that serving others in the Body of Christ is equal to serving Christ Himself. In the Bible, there are many examples of women who ministered to travelers and prophets through hospitality. To open up your home to a missionary, a pastor, or simply another Christian who is traveling through may seem like an insignificant thing, but in God's eyes, it is worthy of great reward. As a matter of fact, Scripture says that even to give a child a cold drink of water is worthy of great reward! How many times do mothers do that in a day? Our Heavenly Father is so gracious and kind to show gratitude for even the simplest acts of kindness done in the power of His Spirit. Matthew 10:41–42 makes this principle clear to us:

*“He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet **shall receive a prophet’s reward**; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man **shall receive a righteous man’s reward**. And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward.”*

This verse should encourage us to keep pressing on in the service even when we are tired and weary, even when we think no one notices or cares what we do. When we realize the Heavenly Father sees, cares, and rewards, we should gain strength to carry on with joy!

The above principle is amplified for us in the life of Elisha and the Shunammite woman of 2 Kings chapter 4. Verse 8 tells us that the prophet Elisha often passed by her home, and she prepared a meal for him, but her hospitality did not end there. She perceived that he was a prophet of God and wanted to do more for him. We are told of her plan to minister to Elisha in verses 9–11:

*“She said to her husband, ‘Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God passing by us continually. Please, let us make a little walled upper chamber and let us set a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; and it shall be, when he comes to us, that he can turn in there.’ One day he came there and turned in to the upper chamber and rested.”*

The woman had carefully considered what a prophet would need to be comfortable during his stay in her home, and thoughtfully provided those needs. This is not all we know of this woman’s service. Elisha was so encouraged by her hospitality that he asked if there was anything she needed. She replied that she was without a child and her husband was old. In biblical times, it was a very shameful and disheartening thing for a woman to be childless. Out of appreciation for the woman’s service, Elisha promised her that in one year’s time, she would embrace a son. The Lord was faithful to shine His grace on this woman and fulfill the promise that Elisha the prophet had made, for indeed, in one year’s time the woman had given birth to a healthy son!

Because of her kind hospitality, the Lord graciously filled her great need in time, and promised her a **prophet’s reward** in eternity. The Lord did even more for her. As the son grew older, there was a time when he fell very sick and even died. The woman immediately sought the prophet Elisha and told him of the trouble. He quickly went to the child and, through God’s miraculous power, breathed new life into the child.

Second Kings 8:1–6 gives us the end of this woman’s story: A famine came to her land and, for seven years, she had to live in a foreign country according to Elisha’s instructions. At the end of seven years, she went to the king to ask to have her home and land restored to her. By God’s perfect plan, it just so happened that when she went to the king, he was visiting with Elisha’s servant Gehazi. Gehazi had been telling the king about the woman’s hospitality and the miraculous story of her son. And so, the king showed compassion and gratitude to the woman and restored *“all that was hers and all the produce of the field from the day that she left the land even until now”* (2 Kings 8:6). God’s grace has a unique system of arithmetic: when we give, He multiplies. This woman gave a small, little room to Elisha but was given back her whole house and the produce of her land. Her story is a fulfillment of the words of Christ when He said:



*“Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times as much in this time and in the age to come, eternal life.”*

Luke 18:29–30

When my husband and I travel to foreign countries, we are often received into Christian homes with great love and hospitality. The women there are diligent to provide a comfortable place to rest, fix our meals, draw our water, and wash our clothes. We are always so humbled by their service to us. But this service provides more than food and a place to sleep. By having our physical needs taken care of, we can invest our time in study and prayer and are better able to concentrate on the teaching ministry that we came to do. We praise God for the wonderful servants He has provided for us in many places of the world. We carry these precious servants in our hearts long after we have returned home. I am thankful to know that the Lord takes note of their hospitality and gives to them **a prophet’s reward!**





## CHAPTER THREE

### *Abounding Deeds of Kindness*



In Acts 9, we have an amazing story of the woman named Tabitha (in the Greek, Dorcas). This woman was from the town of Joppa. In Scripture, we find that the Holy Spirit has summarized Tabitha's life in one sentence:

*“... this woman was **abounding with deeds of kindness**  
and charity which she continually did.”*

Acts 9:36

What a wonderful tribute the Bible gives to this woman! For centuries, Christian women have been encouraged to serve others by the example in Scripture of an everyday woman named Tabitha. Tabitha was a woman of love and compassion. She demonstrated these qualities by providing clothing for poor, lonely widows. Tabitha must have worked hour after hour and day after day with needle and thread in hand. Imagine the sore fingers, the aching back, and long days. Tabitha's work was sewing, but her ministry was encouragement! The widows were encouraged not only by her gifts but by her care for them. Her love for Christ overflowed in her life as she felt compassion for those without the basic need of clothing. In Proverbs 31, we are given characteristics of a virtuous woman. Verse 20 tells us that a woman of virtue or excellence “*extends her hands to the poor, and she stretches out her hands to the needy*”—a thing that Christ Himself was also eager to do!

However, God did much more through Tabitha's life than just provide clothing for the needy. He had a wonderful plan to use her life, and her death, to bring many to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord decided to take Tabitha's life, and when she died, the widows were in great grief as their friend and provider, Tabitha, was no longer with them. The disciples heard that the Apostle Peter was near and so they sent for him. When Peter came to her dead body, he immediately sent everyone out of the room and ...

*“... knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, “Tabitha, arise.” And she opened her eyes and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.”*

Acts 9:40–42

The Lord used Tabitha’s life and death to bring others into the kingdom of God. We see from her a principle that should encourage us onto greater acts of kindness and charity. For when we serve others in the Body of Christ, the unbelieving world will see our love. Like Tabitha, our service to God may be the very thing that causes others to come to know Him.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### *The Word of the Woman*



In John 4, we have a story from the life of Jesus Christ that will encourage us to share the Gospel with our family and friends. The story is the Lord's encounter with a Samaritan woman. The Lord is traveling through Samaria and sends His disciples into the nearby village to find some food. As He is waiting for them, a Samaritan woman comes in the middle of the day to draw water from the well. It was not the custom for women living in a hot, dry land such as Israel to draw water in the middle of the day. This woman was probably an outcast amongst the other women of the village because of her sordid past. Therefore, she only approached the well when she was certain others would not be present.

Jesus kindly asked the woman if she would draw some water for Him to drink. Jesus Christ was a Jew and, historically, the Jewish people would not mingle with Samaritans. But Christ accepted all people and so He purposely struck up a conversation with the woman. Jesus desired that this woman come to know Him as her personal Savior (Messiah) and so He told her things about herself that a stranger couldn't possibly have known. For this woman had had five husbands and was living with a man who was not her husband.

Through the conversation that took place between the woman and Jesus Christ, she came to believe that He was a prophet and then said to Him, *"I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us"* (John 4:25). Jesus answered her in the next verse by saying, *"I who speak to you am He."*

At this point, the woman left her water pot and went running back into the city and said to the men, *"Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?"* (John 4:29). This woman had herself just believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and already she was telling others to come and see Him as well! Her faith was used to begin a revival among the people of her city as we see in verse 39–42:

*“From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, ‘He told me all the things that I have done.’ So when the Samaritans came to Jesus they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. Many more believed because of His word; and they were saying to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.’”*

This story in John 4 should encourage us to be eager to tell others what Christ has done for us. Often times, I think we hesitate to share the Gospel because of various excuses. We might think it is only for the pastor or evangelist to do. We may feel that we don't know enough about the Bible and are afraid we won't be able to answer tough questions that may arise. Or we may think that we aren't "good enough" to share such spiritual news. But think about the witness of this woman: She was not a "preacher;" she had never been to Bible college or seminary; she didn't even know anything about the Bible. She certainly couldn't share with people what a wonderful life she had lived. She could do one thing: She could tell others what Christ had done for her! She didn't have training, credentials, or authority, but this woman did have an amazing courage and a desire to share with others a simple message of faith. This message was used by God in powerful ways as many in that city believed because of the testimony of this outcast woman.

God desires to use pastors and evangelists to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ and bring others into the kingdom of God. He also desires to use each and every one of us for this same magnificent purpose. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you have a story to tell of what He has done for you. Who do you know that you can share this Good News with? Who do you know that might enter the kingdom of God because of your word? Go and tell!

*“Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”*

Daniel 12:3



## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Devoted to Prayer*



One of the greatest and yet most often overlooked areas of service is the ministry of prayer. We will never know until eternity the effect that our prayers have had in our life and in the lives of others. Many a wayward child or lost soul has entered the kingdom of God as a result of the faithful and consistent prayers of a woman who loved them—a woman who would not rest until God had heard and answered her prayer! Many pastors, missionaries, and husbands have been upheld, strengthened, delivered, and protected through the unseen prayer ministry of a woman devoted to Christ and His perfect plan!

The book of Acts tells us that many Christians in the early church suffered persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ. We also find several times in the Book of Acts that the early Christians were **devoted to prayer** and fasting. Acts 1:14 tells us that among those who fervently prayed with the apostles were *“the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus.”*

In Acts 12:2–3, we find that Herod the king:

*“... had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.”*

Not one word is said about the church praying for James to be delivered from Herod’s evil plan. By way of contrast, Acts 12:5 gives us a different story in the case of the Apostle Peter. It tells us that:

*“Peter was kept in prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.”*

What was the result of those fervent prayers? Acts 12 continues to describe to us the exciting story of God’s answer to the faithful and diligent prayers that the church was sending up for Peter. Herod, with his misused

authority and evil power, was defeated by the humble Christians who overcame him through the greater power of prayer. The King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ, heard, answered, and miraculously delivered Peter from prison and the edge of the sword. Peter would be free a while longer to minister, teach, and serve the very Christians who prayed into the night for his safety. These early Christians teach us that there is great power and victory in prayer. We as women should be devoted to it!

It is important to remember the ingredients of an effective and victorious prayer life. The first ingredient of effective prayer is to have a soul that is pleasing to God. David tells us in Psalm 66:18, *“if I regard wickedness [hide sin] in my heart, the Lord will not hear.”* Therefore, it is important before we pray to examine our own souls to see whether we have unconfessed sin hiding there. If we confess our sins to God, then He will faithfully forgive our sin and cleanse our soul from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Only then can we have a soul that has free access to God’s throne in prayer.

Another ingredient of effective prayer is praying according to God’s perfect will. We learn God’s will by learning His Word. Therefore, we find that effective prayer comes along with study of the Word of God. We cannot ask God for things that are not part of His will for ourselves and others and expect Him to grant our prayer. The Apostle John teaches us this in 1 John 5:14–15 when he says:

*“This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.”*

The final ingredient to effective prayer is an attitude of thanksgiving. We are told in Colossians 4:2, *“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.”* We need to begin our prayers with thanksgiving for the wonderful things God has done for us and, above all, for the gift of eternal life through His Son. Only then should we bring our prayers, petitions, and needs before His throne of grace!

Often women are frustrated that the constant responsibility and burden of running a home keeps them from service to God. The cooking, cleaning, and caring that comes with a family can be a consuming task that leaves



little, or no time or energy left to serve outside the home. Especially when the children are young and need constant care, a mother can come to feel unimportant in God's plan because she cannot serve in the church. But our home is our greatest mission field and our family our greatest ministry. Remember that a Christ-centered family is a blessing from God. Surely, He knows and understands what a difficult task it is and the amount of time it takes. Our perfect Heavenly Father does not leave anyone out of His plan. There is opportunity for all to serve. Even when the demands of a busy home surround us, we can find the time to pray! Effective prayer does not have to be done in the quiet of a room all by yourself.

Fervent and effective prayer can be done anyplace and anytime if we are just filled with the Spirit and **devoted to prayer**. When we hang the laundry out to dry, we can pray. When we wait for the rice to boil, we can pray. As we wake in the night to nurse a small infant, what a great time to pray for that very baby's soul and future. Even then we can pray! First Thessalonians 5:17 tells us to *"pray without ceasing!"* As we go through the routine duties of home, husband, and family, the Word of God encourages us to use it as a time to be **devoted to prayer**. We will not know until eternity what spiritual battles we may have won by turning our ordinary daily tasks into a time to serve in prayer!

Younger women are not the only ones who are often frustrated by their position in life. Often, the older woman who has lived a busy and productive life, later finds herself a widow with the children grown. She feels as if there is no longer any purpose for her to live. Once again, the Word of God comes to our rescue and shows us that there is a purpose and service for every soul left on Earth, no matter what their age, health, or status in life. For Timothy speaks directly to the older widows in 1 Timothy 5:5 when he says:

*"Now she who is a widow indeed and has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day."*

Prayer is a special area of ministry for the older widow. Since she is not burdened by the care of a husband and children, she can easily devote her time and attention on prayer for others in the Body of Christ. She may not be of a strong body, or in good health, but she can be a mighty warrior for the cause of Christ if she fixes her hope on God and continues in prayer both night and day! She can fill her seemingly "empty life" with a valuable

ministry if she is **devoted to prayer**.

One such widow lived in Israel during the time of Christ's birth. We find in the pages of Scripture the story of Anna who, to this day, should encourage us all to be fervent in the ministry of prayer. Luke 2:36–37 gives us the background of her life:

*“And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.”*

At the time of Christ's birth, it would be typical for a woman to be wed around the age of 15 or 16. If this were the case with Anna, then she would have lost her husband around the age of 22. At this young age, she found herself a widow and wondering what to do with the rest of her life. Anna is a tremendous example of a woman who single-mindedly devoted herself to Christ. For she chose to live in the Temple and even to the age of 84 was *“serving night and day with fastings and prayers.”* She didn't allow a tough situation in her life to sidetrack her from God's service, rather she turned it into an opportunity to serve in the greatest devotion possible!

We see God's pleasure for Anna's life in verse 38, for He allowed her to live long enough to be in the Temple when Joseph and Mary brought in the little baby Jesus to offer a sacrifice. Like Simeon, Anna had been waiting and praying for the Messiah to come to Israel, and she recognized this little baby as the One God had sent to redeem her and her people. When she saw the baby Jesus in the Temple, she immediately gave thanks to God. Then, the scope of her ministry was expanded as she spread the Good News to others that the Messiah had been born! Luke 2:38 tells us that Anna:

*“... continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.”*

What a joy it would have been for this woman who had served so faithfully for 60 years or more to be allowed by God to see the newborn Messiah. She could die in peace, knowing that Messiah had come. We may

not see in this life all the ways that God has worked to answer our prayers. Surely, we will see some of them. But let us be diligent to uphold one another before the throne of God's grace. Let us not ever think or say, "well, all I can do is pray." For prayer is a powerful and effective ministry for any believer, for any widow, for any woman. Let us—as women in service to God—at all times and in all places be **devoted to prayer!**





## CHAPTER SIX

### *A Cheerful Giver*



As we grow in our understanding and love for God, our desire to please Him should grow as well. We should come to the point in our life where we love the things that God loves. We find in Scripture that God loves a **cheerful giver**! The Apostle Paul encourages us in our giving in 2 Corinthians 9:6–8:

*“Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for **God loves a cheerful giver**. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.”*

The Word of God teaches us that we are all to be givers to God! None of us should use our poverty as an excuse not to give. In this passage, Paul likens our life to the planting of a field. If a farmer sows a field very sparingly with just a few seeds of corn, then that farmer will reap sparingly and only have a few ears of corn for his family. That is a fact of life! But if a farmer sows his field bountifully with much seed, then he will reap bountifully, and his harvest will bring great increase. So it is in the spiritual realm: When we graciously and selflessly give to the needs of others, to the running of the church and mission work, then we are sowing bountifully, and God will bring a bountiful spiritual harvest from our giving!

These principles are exemplified for us in a little widow lady who lived in the time of Christ. Her meager offering to the Lord became an example to all of bountiful giving. She—by her life, her faith, and her offering—proved the verses we just looked at to be absolutely true! Her story is recorded in Luke 21:1–4:

*“And He [Jesus] looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.”*”

The Lord Jesus Christ was there to see the seemingly great offering of the rich. He also saw the poor widow’s small gift. But when the Son of God compared the two offerings, He said the widow’s two small coins was the greatest offering of all! For God is not concerned with the amount that we give; instead, He looks intently at the attitude of our heart. The rich gave out of their excess, but the widow woman gave out of her poverty. This shows her concern was to give out of a love for God, even if it meant going without herself. This is what God calls a **cheerful giver**. This is what God loves. Jesus Christ honored the offering of the poor widow that day and she went home with the joy of His approval in her heart. She was a **cheerful giver**!



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *A Suitable Helper*



We have looked at many ways the Christian woman can serve in and out of the church. But I have purposely saved the best for last! Because our service to God begins with our service to those we are closest to, our service begins with our husband and family. When we look in Scripture at service in the home, we are looking at how God’s Word relates to the everyday activities of our life. God is not an ordinary God, but He is interested in our ordinary life!

The biblical account of the creation of the world, the man, and the woman is well known throughout the Christian world. In the story of creation from Genesis 1–3, we find that the woman was created for a very specific and necessary purpose. She was created by God because Adam—as perfect as He was when God first created him—still had a need! He had a need for companionship and love. Genesis 2:18 tells us, *“It is not good for the man to be alone; [God] I will make him a helper suitable for him.”* The Lord placed Adam in a perfect garden to live in and gave him a work to do there. But Adam needed a companion to share the burden and load of that work. So, God took from Adam’s side a rib, and out of that rib, he fashioned a beautiful woman. She was taken from Adam’s side so that she could be at his side helping, loving, serving, and sharing the joys, pressures, and pains of life. Eve was the fulfillment of Adam’s needs!

Eve was uniquely designed by God for one man—Adam. Genesis 2:22 tells us the way Eve was created for Adam:

*“The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which  
He had taken from the man, and brought  
her to the man.”*

God has just as wonderfully and uniquely formed each and every one of us as we see in Psalm 139:13–14:

*“For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well.”*

Just as Eve was created to fill a need in Adam, so we are created to be a **suitable helper** for the husband God has given us to. And when we help and serve our husbands, when we love, honor, and encourage them, we are serving the God who created us for that purpose!

So, we see that the first role God designed for the woman was that of helper. “Suitable helper” does not imply, however, that the woman is secondary or inferior. A better understanding of the word “*helper*” would be “one who comes alongside, encourages, comforts, strengthens, shares the load, and gets involved in the same task so as to lighten the burden.” A helper is well-described as a partner in a team. The “ministry of suitable helper” will be different for each woman, as it will depend upon the individual needs of her husband.

This principle of teamwork is also seen in the New King James Version of 2 Corinthians 6:14. Here, Paul uses the term “*yoke*” regarding the marriage relationship. A yoke is used to tie two oxen together to distribute the weight and lighten the load. When the man and woman work together “in the fields of the Lord,” what an effective team they can be!

There is another reason why the word “*helper*” should not be looked at as secondary and inferior. Several times in Scripture, God is said to be our Helper, and He certainly isn’t inferior to us! Instead, He is willing and anxious to come alongside us to encourage, comfort, strengthen, and share the load. When is the Lord available to be our Helper? Always! Consider the words of David in Psalm 46:1, “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*” As women, we should pattern our help to our husbands after this divine example.

The Holy Spirit is also called our “*Helper*” in John 14:16. When Jesus was preparing the disciples for His departure from this earth, he promised that they would not be left alone. He would ask the Father to send them the Holy Spirit to be their Helper and Comforter. Therefore, we as women should consider this purpose of **suitable helper** to be very important indeed and should gain strength to continue on, knowing it fulfills the purpose God created us for.



Many women today are resentful that they are told by God to submit to their husbands. They are unwilling to be a helper to their husband, but instead want to pursue their own life and desires. A proper understanding of submission from the Word of God is extremely important for women today. Once again, we are not told to submit to our husbands because we are second rate or incapable in God's sight. We know that spiritually the man and woman share the same spiritual assets that are given to us in Christ. This is made clear to in Galatians 3:26, 28:

*“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus ... there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, **there is neither male nor female;** for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

Our submission to our husbands, then, is not because we are less in God's plan. It comes as part of God's order for the human race. First Corinthians 11:3 helps us to understand this:

*“But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.”*

God does everything with order and authority. This verse says that God is the Head of Christ, but we know that God the Father and Jesus Christ, along with the Holy Spirit, are equal parts of the Trinity. One is not any greater than the other. God the Father is the Author of the plan of salvation, and Jesus Christ as the Son of God submitted to that plan to become our Savior! Aren't we glad that Jesus Christ did not resent and rebel against the headship of God the Father? And so, it is in a family. The man is given the honor of reflecting the character of Christ in His leadership role, and the woman is given the honor of reflecting the character of Christ in her submissive role. In this way, there is peace and order in the home. When the man leads in love and the woman submits to that leadership with respect, then God's order is followed, and the family is blessed!

There is another valuable area of the woman's service in the home: that of raising and teaching the children. A woman has a tremendous responsibility and privilege when she is blessed with a child. That responsibility begins with meeting the physical and emotional needs of the baby. In time, as the baby begins to grow, we become biblically responsible

for the spiritual needs of that child. The Bible commands us as parents to be the ones who share the love and plan of God with our children. In Deuteronomy 6:5–7, the Lord makes it very clear how important it is for us as parents to teach our children about Him:

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. **You shall teach them diligently** to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.”*

This passage should encourage us as women to use everyday situations in life as a time to teach our children how to love and know the Lord. When the sun comes up each day, it is a time to remind them of His faithfulness. When we sit down to a meal and pray, it is a time to teach them of His provision. When we put them to bed at night, it is a time to pray with them, thanking the Heavenly Father for His care over us. And all the time in between—as opportunity arises—we are to teach them the love, commands, and promises of God. We are promised in Proverbs 22:6 that when we properly teach our children the ways of the Lord, then they will follow those ways as they grow older:

*“Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.”*

When we understand the very important role God gives us to serve in the home, then we can look at our husband, our children, and our family in a new way. We can be encouraged and committed to be a **suitable helper** and thus fulfill God’s ministry for us in the home!



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *The Good Part*



We have explored some of the many areas of service that are available to women as servants of the Most High God. What encouragement the Word of God gives to us to let our love for Christ be displayed through service to Him and His Body! Every day our Lord gives us an opportunity to lay our own life and selfish desires aside in order to serve and strengthen our brothers and sisters in Christ. But as with many good things, there are dangers involved in service when we do not keep the proper balance.

Our own personal relationship with Jesus Christ must be the priority in our life, and our service to God comes as a result of this personal walk with His Son. If we get the two turned around, we will find we are serving for the wrong reasons, and the result is bitterness rather than blessing. The Bible teaches us the dangers involved in service in the story of two sisters named Mary and Martha. Their story is found in Luke 10:38–42:

*“Now as they were traveling along, He [Jesus] entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, ‘Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.’ But the Lord answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen **the good part**, which shall not be taken away from her.’”*

It is an admirable thing that Martha wanted to serve the Lord with great hospitality while He was visiting her home. However, Martha had fallen into a common failure in the area of service. Jesus Christ had many spiritual treasures to share with these two sisters, but only Mary was

listening. She was seated at the Lord's feet, symbolizing her desire to learn and receive truth from Him. Martha was not quite so interested in what the Lord could do for her spiritual condition; She was more concerned with what she could do for the Lord. Martha had put her service to Christ before her relationship with Him. Because of this, her service turned into a source of bitterness because she was not receiving the help or recognition she desired. The Lord was gracious to Martha in her failure. He calmly, but sternly, pointed out to her that learning at the Lord's feet comes before service. Mary chose the better of the two; she chose "**the good part!**"

When we become involved in areas of service, it is very important to not let them take priority in our spiritual life. For if we are so busy serving that we have no time for personal study of God's Word, then we are too busy! We have become a distracted Martha, rather than a worshipping Mary.

We must also be alert to the danger of seeking self-glory and attention from others when we serve. We are told in 1 Corinthians 10:31 that "*whether then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*" not for the glory of self! If we feel bitter or discouraged because others are not recognizing our service, then we are serving for self-glory rather than God's glory.

Another common danger in serving is to compare our Christian life and service to that of other believers. Perhaps we look at others and become judgmental and arrogant because we think they are not as involved in service as we are, therefore, they are not as great. All judgment is reserved for God the Father; He is the only one who sees and understands everything involved in our life and in the lives of others. Or perhaps we look at others who are busily serving the Lord, or in a place of prominence in the church, and we feel like we shrink in comparison to them. We feel our life is not worth much to God. This, too, is a wrong attitude, for the Lord has different works for each of us to do and all are worthwhile and valuable in His purpose! We are all members of the Body of Christ, and all members are necessary and needed for the Body to function properly.

When we serve, our motivation should be from the love of Christ compelling us. We strive for the glory of Christ and His glory alone!



## CHAPTER NINE

### *Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus*



We have looked at many women in Scripture who are our forerunners in the faith. Women who have lived a life of love, faith, and service and are now recorded for all eternity as our examples to follow. As we look back at their lives, let us be encouraged to follow in their footsteps. But even greater still is the example of Jesus Christ who willingly endured and suffered all things because of His great love for us. We should daily fix our eyes on Him so that we won't grow weary and give up in our Christian life. For He wants us to run a faithful race to the very end!

*“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”*

Hebrews 12:1–3

In our life of service to God, let us always remember that He is a God Who knows each of our thoughts, hears every word we speak, and notices every act of kindness and service to Him, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem. He is the God who draws us to Him in grace, strengthens us for His purpose, and then rewards us for fulfilling that same purpose. What a gracious and merciful God! What a loving Lord and Savior we serve! Let us be encouraged to be diligent in our service to Him by the words of Hebrews 6:10–12:

*“For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”*

Keep pressing on to know and serve Him who died for you! Rest assured that your true spiritual service will gain you an eternal honor from the Heavenly Father for the glory of His Beloved Son!

