

**how to
live a
virtuous
life**

God's Plan for Young Women

Cathe Laurie

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How to Live a Virtuous Life: God's Plan for Young Women

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Introduction

You may be single, you may be dating, you may be looking to start a relationship, or you may not be interested at this point in your life. But this message is for all girls and young women.

Before we get started, you might be asking, “Cathe, what qualifies you to speak to young women? You didn’t raise any girls.” It’s true—I didn’t. I raised two boys. As I was thinking about that, I thought, “What would I have said to a daughter? How would I have raised her?” Girls are very different than boys. I know this because I am one. I have had a different experience raising boys than my own experience growing up as a girl. But I know that long ago, a woman named Bathsheba had a son named Solomon. And she taught him the important qualities to look for in a virtuous wife (see Proverbs 31). If Bathsheba could do that, then I too can say something about what it means to be a virtuous woman—the woman that God has designed us to be.

God Has a Plan for You

I was raised in a Christian home. I had always heard the story of Jesus and the stories of the saints, but I never knew and understood that God loved me so much. I came to learn that I was important to Him and that He had a plan for my life as an individual. Knowing this totally changed my thinking about God and who He was. It made Him precious to me.

And you are precious to Him. The majority of women today have no clue that God has a plan for their lives. They are taking life as it comes. It’s almost like they are drifting down the lazy old river, sprawled out on their back, on a raft, basking in the sun with their eyes closed, with no idea where that river is leading. But it will end up at Niagara Falls if you don’t pay attention and are not aware of what is going on around you.

Where are you in life? Are you on that lazy old river drifting down toward certain destruction? Or are you safely on the shore? Are you on the banks in a dry place and a place of security and stability? Or are you just cruising through life heading for trouble? How seriously do you want to know God’s plan for you? He has a specific plan and purpose for your life. It is more important than what you wear, where you go, who your friends are, or if you have a boyfriend. It is more important than whether you go to college and get a degree or not, or if you are a homemaker or a professional in the workplace. I know these are things that can occupy your thoughts,

but let me tell you this: there is something so important that it deserves spending your entire life to pursue. That is discovering God's best in your life.

I attended two events in a short span of time—one was a funeral and the other was a birthday party—for two women whose lives were so completely different. Both of them were gorgeous. Both of them had incredible potential, popularity, and beauty. Yet they chose different paths. One of the women ended up with a life that was nothing more than a wreck. There were only a handful of people at her memorial service. And the minister who led the service was hard pressed to find anything of eternal value to say about her. The other woman celebrated her 80th birthday. As she looked back on her life, she said, "I couldn't feel richer if I was covered head to toe in diamonds and furs as I look out at my life today."

I want you to be like the woman on her 80th birthday, who feels like she is covered from the top of her head to the soles of her feet in diamonds and furs because of all that God has done in her life. I want you to be the woman who wants God's best. The most important thing about life is that you put God first.

Put God First in Your Life

You may be thinking, "Not this again. Someone telling me how I need to have a devotional life, make prayer a priority, and know the Bible." But it is the truth.

We all want to know the "interesting stuff" about a virtuous woman. What does she wear? Where does she go? Who are her friends? Whom does she date? And all of those little details. But that is sort of like trying to paint a portrait and you are focusing on one eyelash. When God is forming you into the beauty that He wants you to be, He is going to start with the big areas of your life. He wants to get the proportions right. Like an artist, He wants to make sure that your head suits your body and posture. And how you are positioned is also important as He sculpts away at the image that He wants you to become. The big areas of your life, the boundaries of your life, will be determined by whether or not you are putting God first.

I want to tell you that the first step in discovering the beauty of God's best is not what you wear or how you look or what activities you like, but what you do with the foundation of your life. Set your course in the direction that God wants you to go.

Years ago, as I was preparing to speak to a group of young women, I asked my oldest son, Christopher, “What is the most important quality for a young girl to have?” I was really blessed to hear him say, “Tell them only Jesus satisfies. Not a perfect figure. Not a perfect face. Not a career. Not the coolest car. Only Jesus satisfies.” Then He looked me right in the eye and said, “You need to tell them to get their confidence and security and perspective in life from their commitment to the Lord.”

I remember him saying that some girls are so shallow. They are constantly trying to be popular and pretty. They are getting advice and tips from trendy sources—ever changing to suit the circle of friends that they have. They are insecure in their relationships and they lack substance. There is nothing under the surface. There is this pretty face but there is nothing going on behind it.

That is not what you want. You want your life to be like the planets that revolve around the sun. You want Christ at the center of your universe and the course for your life to be determined by God Himself.

Christopher went on to say, “You know what, Mom? There are so many pretty girls out there. There are pretty girls everywhere you look. But what makes a girl especially attractive is when there is an inner radiance that is sort of shining through. Her eyes and her manner of speech and her behavior. That is an irresistible quality. That is what makes a woman the most attractive.”

That is exactly what Peter wrote in his first letter: “What matters is not your outer appearance—the styling of your hair, the jewelry you wear, the cut of your clothes—but your inner disposition. Cultivate inner beauty, the gentle, gracious kind that God delights in. . . . You’ll be true daughters of Sarah if you do the same, unanxious and unintimidated” (1 Peter 3:3–6 MSG). I love those words, *unanxious* and *unintimidated*. *Unanxious* is a peaceful quality. If you are unanxious, you are at rest. God has a timing in your life and there is no anxiety about it. *Unintimidated* means you are undaunted by the pressures that are going to come at you from all directions—the pressures of your best friends or your boyfriend or the culture in which we live. You will be the kind of a person who has the solid foundation of knowing where you are going in life, knowing who you are, and knowing what God wants to do for you. You are determined to discover that at any cost.

Know God's Perspective

It is easy to compare ourselves with the images we see on magazine covers, but God's Word gives us another standard of measurement. He does not want us to compare ourselves with the world but to set before ourselves the godly examples of the women in Scripture and the godly role models that He has placed in our lives.

Who is your role model? Whom are you looking to as the ideal woman? When I think about Sarah in the Bible, I know she wasn't perfect, because the Scripture (thankfully) records that fact. There were times that she blew it. And we will too. I have. You will. We are going to have our problems; we are going to slip up and make mistakes. But the difference in your life (like Sarah's) is that when you stumble and fall, you are going to get up again and get back on course. You will have determined that God is the center of your universe and you will find your way back on track. Sarah did that.

This doesn't mean you have to be plain and unattractive. We are not going to be so spiritual that we never dress fashionably or fix our hair or care about those things. If you read the Scriptures carefully, Sarah was an older woman but Abraham had to chase the guys off because she was so attractive. Don't write off the externals completely. There is a place for that. There is a balance to it all.

The other day I heard someone say, "Strong is the new pretty." I'd like to change it up and say, "Virtue is the new pretty." Girls are so blasted with different definitions of what *pretty* looks like. How would you define *pretty*? Is pretty the color pink? The right size body? The perfect shade of lipstick? It is possible for a girl to pursue all of this and still feel unsure, unwanted.

What does virtue look like? Is it a soft-focus photograph of a girl in a field twirling, arms outstretched, face photoshopped to perfection? I challenge you to take a walk through the pages of the Bible and study the diversity of virtuous women. I guarantee the stories are about as countercultural as you can get. Some were naturally athletic, outspoken, fearless, devout, hardworking, and thoughtful. Others were social outcasts, mess-ups, rejected, tormented, and desperate. But they were all loved and significant. And it is love that transformed them into life givers, kingdom builders.

What we need in the midst of the crazy, mind-numbing messages being thrown at us is to know the love of a heavenly Father. A love which teaches

us a new way to see ourselves as pretty. To have a perspective that is shaped and informed by the Word of God.

I know sometimes Christian girls will come to church and think it is all about the inner qualities. The outer qualities are important too. They are just not as important. The most important thing is cultivating the inner qualities. What the apostle Peter was essentially saying is, “Don’t depend on those outer things to determine who you are, but get that confidence from who you are—and who you are becoming—in Christ.”

It Is a Matter of Priorities

When I said to seek first God’s will, maybe you thought, “I do seek God’s will.” Let me ask you this: How is your devotional life? How was your quiet time this past week? Did you carve out any time at all for the Lord in your life? I don’t mean going to church or Bible study with friends. Did you take the time and actually sit and read His Word and apply it to your life? Did you pray and say, “Lord, help me to live Your Word as You want me to”? You might say, “Cathe, it was a really busy week and I had a tough time. I had exams and this or that. And I have a job. When I get off of work, I am exhausted.”

I used to be an avid cyclist. Once upon a time, a sixty-mile ride climbing steep hills was fun. One summer, my friend Shelley and I rode our bikes through the mountain stages following the Tour de France. We saw spectacular beauty and experienced adventures of a lifetime. But I didn’t just start out riding like that. I began slowly, tentatively, one day at a time, one mile after another—a rhythmic repetition, turning over the pedals. Leading up to that summer, we trained hard, putting in hundreds of miles a week.

I vividly remember the joy of riding compared to the way I feel about it now. These days, it can be pretty discouraging. After twenty miles, I find myself thinking, “Are we there yet?” What happened to the fun? I know the answer: I have to do it more than twice a year! I need to do it with consistency. I need to go at it persistently, instead of making excuses. I need to stop procrastinating, stop saying to myself, “I’ll do it again . . . when my schedule frees up.”

We settle for so much less. God wants to speak directly into your life through the Bible. You may settle for a ride on the sidewalk around your

neighborhood block—but God wants to take you to the mountains of France!

God never intended for His Word to be just for the elite, smarty-pants scholar types. It's more than a book of gilt-edged pages for us to hold on Sunday mornings. He is shouting from the rooftops to the average girl, "Hey, you! Come on, dive into these pages. I want to speak to you! I wrote it for you! All for you!"

And when you feel tired and sore, the way I felt after day one on my bike again, don't give up. God wants to stretch you. He wants to do some amazing things in your life! But you've got to get back on the bike. Psalm 119:15–16 says, "I will study your commandments and reflect on your ways. I will delight in your decrees and not forget your word" (NLT).

You know what? Life is busy. We all can fill our schedules from morning until night with a lot of other things. But if you will put God first in your life, He will make room for all of those other things that are important for you to get to.

There is a story of Queen Elizabeth who had a mission for one of her subjects. She went to this man and asked him to do something for her. He said to her, "I would love to do this for you, but I am too busy with my affairs. I have a business to run and I don't have time to do this thing you are asking me to do." Her answer to him was, "Sir, if you will take care of my business, I will take care of yours." She had the power to do that.

Jesus has the power to do that in your life too. If you will put Him first in your life—make that time, make Him a priority—He will take care of all of those things.

Know Your Secret Source of Strength

How do we do this practically? Every day we are faced with choices. How we spend our time. How we spend our money. What we wear. Where we go. Who we spend time with. What we watch. All of those choices. You determine what it is you are going to do. You are being blasted with advertising. You cannot escape it. You cannot get away from it. Even in the grocery store, you are bombarded with advertising images—pressure to buy or do. Even when you are not looking for it, it is in your face. It is hard enough to decide what brand of toothpaste to buy. Then you come up to the checkout stand and you are faced with all of the magazines.

I went to the dentist and I was flipping through *InStyle* magazine and saw an article about this gorgeous celebrity. The title of the article promised to reveal “the secret source of her strength.” I wondered what that was. So I read that she had this very sad life as a child and had a lot of struggles and difficulties. She had been in one abusive relationship and she had been married several times. And it turns out that the secret source of her strength was psychotherapy. But this is what she said about psychotherapy: “It hasn’t kept me from making major mistakes.” She still thinks that trying to have a private life and a fulfilling home life has been her biggest obstacle.

I wanted to just say, “Oh! I could tell you where the secret source of strength is.” I would take her right back to the woman at the well who had been married all of those times and was looking for something to quench the thirst inside of her. She couldn’t find it. She was looking and looking. Jesus came to her and said, “Those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again” (John 4:14 NLT). God’s Word tells us where the secret source of strength is.

Romans 12:1–2 tells us, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

We want to know what that perfect will of God is in our lives. In order to do that, we have to do what we are encouraged here by Paul to do. That is to present our bodies to Him. Bring ourselves to Him. Bring everything that we are. It doesn’t just say to bring your mind and your spirit. He says to bring your body to Him. Everything that you do with your life, all that you see, think, feel, touch, and choose—bring it all to Him.

Don’t Be Conformed to This World

In other words, “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good” (Romans 12:2 PHI). There is so much pressure in the world on girls today to have premarital sex. The number one message the world seems to communicate is to experiment sexually. There is pressure to experiment further than what is natural, and to flaunt your body, to major on the externals.

God tells us things that are completely different. He tells us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (see Romans 12:2). If I could tell you one thing to get a grip on, it is your mind. As women, we are so emotional. We are really good at being sensitive. We are really good at feeling and being intuitive. But we can be completely negligent at times about what we do with our minds. God is telling us that we need to renew our minds in His Word. We need to think about, more than feel, our decisions. Let's think about what God wants us to be doing. And let's get our information from Him.

Do you remember the first temptation in the Garden? Satan came to Eve in the form of a serpent who was very tricky and sly. His temptation was to get her to think differently about God and about His Word. He didn't come up to her like the guy with the red suit and pitchfork. He came to her very subtly and questioned God's Word. He said, "Do you know, Eve, that if you were to do what God said you shouldn't, you would be just like God?" (see Genesis 3:1-5). Not only did he question God's Word, but he questioned God's truthfulness and His integrity in saying, "The real issue with all of these rules God has given you in your life is that you might have misunderstood them." If Satan can't get you to think you misunderstood something God said, then he is going to tell you, "God doesn't really care about you; He is holding back something good." He got Eve to contemplate that. He attacked her mind.

In 2 Corinthians 11:3, Paul writes, "I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (NIV). Why is it that Paul is afraid their minds would be led astray? Why is the mind so important? It is within your mind that you reason, you decide, you contemplate, you fantasize, and you dream. That is why it is so important, as the Scripture says, to "gird up the loins of your mind" (1 Peter 1:13). Get a firm grip on what it is you are allowing yourself to think about. It is in your mind that the battle is fought and the spiritual warfare rages on. With your mind you can reach back into your past. You can revisit memories, hurtful things, prideful things. With the mind you can reach and dream far into your future. You can speculate. You can plot and plan. The enemy wants you to just think and contemplate what it would be like to do that thing you know you shouldn't do. To go to that place you know you shouldn't go or be that person you know you shouldn't be. Just toying with it in your imagination is often the first step the devil uses to get us to stumble and fall. He says, "I know you won't do this, but just think about it."

Have you heard a salesperson in the store try that with you? You go in and see this darling outfit. You have no money to shop. You know you shouldn't be there. You say you can't afford it. "But this is really cute." Then they say, "Money is not an obstacle. We have this special charge account. You don't have to pay for it for a while. All you have to do is fill out this application. And if you shop today, your first purchase is 10% off!"

If you allow the enemy to take over areas of your mind, imagination, and fantasies, it is often not long afterward that you find yourself stumbling. You have given him a foothold in your life.

We should follow the example that Jesus set for us in the wilderness when He said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4). Scripture can help us so much in the battle over our minds.

Renew Your Mind

Scripture tells us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. How do we do that? By filling our minds with the things of God. Fill your mind with truth. We know that the only place we can find absolute truth is in the Scripture. As you fill your mind with truth, you are building up a lie detector in which you can test all the garbage coming in—the things people tell you, the stuff you read, the stuff you hear, and the stuff you see.

As Philippians 4:8 says, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." We don't need to study all of the garbage out there in the world to understand it better and know that it is false. There are people who can differentiate between counterfeit and true money, because they've never handled the counterfeit money. They have only handled the truth. So when the counterfeit comes in, they are able to spot it immediately. As we fill our minds with the things of Christ, we are going to be able to recognize the counterfeits. Think on the true things. Fill yourselves so full of the truth that you will know better.

That is going to apply in so many areas. Not just in how I should live purely, but the whole atmosphere that we live in. With all of the world news, I have found myself being bombarded with so much depressing and sad information and suffering. A while back, I found myself having this sense of anxiety and short temperedness. My mind was constantly

being filled with negative stuff. Immediately, I recognized that I was able to turn my thoughts to the Lord and realize I can't do much about these situations. But I can pray about them. Whenever I come up against something that I am feeling powerless in, I know that I can turn to the One who has all of the power in the world to keep things under control in my life. The truth of God's Word will apply in every area of your life as you turn yourself and your mind over to Him.

What is it that God's Word has to say? I want to tell you a little bit about what it means to live a pure and holy life. First, I want you to know it is God's plan, if you are not married yet, that you would remain sexually pure and would abstain from sex. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about that. This is probably one of the most unpopular of all of the Christian teachings. I have heard nonbelievers say, "If it weren't for that one commandment, I could buy the whole thing. But I can't give up this one area in my life." For some people this is such a struggle. Scripture teaches that principle and there are no loopholes here. No getting around it. No exceptions to the rule. Not even if you are in love or you are engaged or you are planning on getting married. None of that. Scripture says total abstinence. It is God's will for the single life. God says in Ephesians 5:3, "Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people" (NLT).

Some people say, "Christians are so hung up about sex. What is the big deal? Sex is natural. There is nothing to be ashamed of." I am not ashamed of sex. I am not ashamed to say that sex is good. God planned it, prepared it, and it was His idea in the first place.

If you are talking about sex as God planned it—in marriage between a man and a wife—it is beautiful. Not only does God bless it, but He encourages it. As wives and husbands, we are told that we should get on with the program, all the time and as much as you like. There are no limitations. But before marriage, God says don't do it.

Whom do we trust here to know what's best? Do we trust the Creator of the universe, the One who made us, the One who designed the activity in the first place? Or do we trust these other people who are saying sex is a lot of fun and being careless with it doesn't do any harm? I would rather trust the Creator and Lord of my life. I will bank on what He says over others any day.

Don't Believe the Devil's Lies

Some think we shouldn't be ashamed if sex comes out of the bedroom and into the open. That it should be celebrated indiscriminately with whomever, whenever, and wherever. But if that is supposed to be the thing that helps us get over all our sexual hang-ups, why is our culture inundated with all kinds of therapy programs and people dealing with the most unbelievable sexual addictions? They have been sadly misled. That line of thinking is completely wrong.

Pornography is at a staggering rate. There is more sex going on in TV, in movies, and in America today than there has ever been. If that is supposed to be freeing us, it isn't. There are people out there that are absolutely warped, dependent, and addicted to pornography like never before. The whole argument about taking it out from the bedroom and celebrating it publicly to supposedly "get over the hang-ups" is completely wrong. The statistics don't back it up.

As a matter of fact, Christianity is one of the only, if not the only, great world religions that celebrates the body—telling us that the body is good. And not only is the body good but holy, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Our bodies will one day be resurrected. They will be renewed bodies in Heaven. The body is meant to be sacred and holy. That is part of our faith and part of the doctrine of Christianity. It is not like some of the Eastern religions that tell you to suppress the body, deny the body, and starve the body. That is not Christianity. We want to lay hold of the body as it is intended to be in Christ.

Most of the greatest poetry about love has been written by Christians. Sex is nothing to be embarrassed of, in its proper place. But the state of sex today has a lot to be ashamed of. I know it is hard to live a sexually pure life. We have a sinful nature. We have a devil who is never asleep and never takes time off. He is quick to tempt us and he is sly about tempting us. We have the world pressuring us and telling us that indiscriminate sex is natural and expected, and that to resist those desires is abnormal. But that is simply a lie according to Scripture.

God designed it. That doesn't mean all sexual acts are pure in any situation. It does mean that within the context of marriage it is good. We all have human desires. We all eat. Do we take the desires for food to the craziest extremes? Do we celebrate food, overeat, and overindulge? Some people do, and that is also perverting a natural God-given desire. God has a plan

and a purpose and a boundary for our sexual desires, in the same way that we have a boundary around the foods we eat—when we eat and how much we eat. It is possible to live a pure life in an impure world.

A wise woman once said to her daughters, “I trust you. I just don’t trust your flesh.” That is the truth. Young girls need to know this: Don’t go with what your heart is telling you; go with what your head knows is true. And what you know is true is what the Scripture says. Within our bodies dwells a sinful nature. We are prone to wander, as the old hymn says: “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.”¹ We need to ask God to help us, and not just once. You may feel like you have victory in that area and you are strong and invincible. You say, “I can put myself in whatever situation because I know who I am and I can resist.” Don’t be so foolish as to think you are not vulnerable. The Scripture says, “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

God Is Quick to Forgive

I know there are some reading these words who have fallen and have stumbled in this area. God’s forgiveness extends to each and every one of you. We all stumble at times. But when we stumble, we know that He is quick to pick us up and set us back on course. If you have fallen in this area, please know that there is forgiveness for you. If you are single, from this moment on, you can commit yourself, with God’s help, to total abstinence.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Scripture teaches us that “it is good for a man not to touch a woman”. I would like to reverse that around and say it is good for a woman not to touch a man. That is, for unmarried people to have no sexual physical contact. The old Hassidic Jews took this literally: unless you were married you didn’t touch. When they danced, they clutched opposite sides of a handkerchief. They were not to touch one another. I wouldn’t go that far. I think what Paul is saying here is to avoid any touching that is going to lead to sexual activity. The type of touching that lights a fire of sexual desire will burn you. Make no mistake about it. You will ignite a fire that will destroy you.

Consider all the destructive aspects of premarital sex: abortions and teenage pregnancies—pregnancies that often lead to poverty and, worst of all, spiritual and emotional damage. Let me tell you what the Scripture says

¹ “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing” by Robert Robinson. 1757.

is absolutely true: “Can a man scoop a flame into his lap and not have his clothes catch on fire?” (Proverbs 6:27 NLT). No, he cannot.

Don’t Get Burned

My youngest son, Jonathan, went down to Mexico once. He bought these bottle-rocket fireworks and brought them back. He hadn’t told me about them. He was walking across the street to a park to light them off, so he had them in his pocket. Mind you, these were not lit and there were no matches in his pocket. But, for some reason, the circumstances and environment were just right because all of a sudden he heard this incredible hissing sound. Somehow the friction of his pant pocket, the heat of the day, and the dryness of the weather were such that the bottle rocket lit. He didn’t have the time to get them out of his pocket fast enough before those pants literally ignited in a ball of flames. He had second-degree burns on the side of his leg. Thank God they weren’t third-degree burns.

Girls, you have a combustible nature. If you are between the ages of twelve and thirty, you are in the peak of prime potential—when female bodies are biologically programmed to be at their premium state for producing children and having sex. If you are there, and you are not married, what are you going to do about that? You have to put up safety guards, because if you get in the right situation—or in this case, the wrong situation—that fire can light faster than you have any idea it could.

So what does Paul mean when he says don’t touch? How far is too far? Let me give you a broad principle and you can apply it to your life. If what you are doing lights a fire, if it gets your sexual feelings aroused, it is too far. You have lit the fire and things can get out of control so quickly. When it gets to that point, once that fire is lit, your body is programmed to keep going. It is like dominoes that start falling. It is almost impossible to put the brakes on. Only you know when this happens. Don’t put yourself in that place.

You know the old sign from Smokey the Bear, “Only you can prevent forest fires.” That is the truth. I can tell you all about the danger. I can give you the information. I can encourage you. But only you can make that final decision. You must wait for the Lord. And you must wait for the right guy. Wait until you are married. Then go for it; have all the fun you want.

Your next question might be, when exactly does that spark ignite? I think you know when it happens for you better than anybody else. You know

what it takes to get that started. But let me tell you something about guys. It's a whole lot easier and a whole lot faster for them. Boys know that sometimes all it takes is an image, just a look. For guys it can happen visually. Mostly, for girls it is more physical, the act of touching or caressing. For guys it can happen with just seeing. You know that old Sunday school hymn, "Be careful little eyes what you see, be careful little feet where you go." It is a good warning for us all. We need to be on guard against not only what would cause us to fall into that state of lust but what might make somebody else fall into that state.

Look in a Mirror

As a mother who has raised two boys, I want to go out there and say to some girls, "What are you doing by wearing that? Why would you do that to these guys?" Don't send out those false signals. Remember that you don't want to stumble guys out there. You don't want to behave, dress, or act in such a way that would cause them to lust. As a young woman before God, you are responsible to dress and act modestly.

Before you leave the house, take a good look in the mirror. Run it by your mom. Run it by your friends—somebody you respect and trust. Even to this day, as I am getting ready to run out the door, Greg will give me some little word of advice and I'll listen to him. There are times, as women, when we aren't aware of how we might be appearing to somebody else.

I don't want to get on a big long list of what to wear, or not wear, because I realize that the principles of Scripture about modesty and chastity are timeless. But social morals and what is acceptable and discreet in one generation can completely change in another. In the Victorian Era, it would have been a total scandal if I dressed the way I do today. Things do change. Those of you who are moms, try to be a little understanding about your daughters in this. But girls, the principles are there. Respect your parents and friends who might be guiding you and leading you in a godly way. Keep those things in consideration as you make decisions about what you are wearing. Consider the occasion. Consider where you are going. What is appropriate on the beach is usually not appropriate in another setting. Also consider the company with which you are going. If you are staying in with your girlfriends, or having a slumber party, what you wear

there is going to be completely different than what you are wearing when you are around guys.

Consider your figure as well. You might think, “She is wearing the same outfit that I am. How come I am getting in trouble and getting those looks?” Perhaps you are blessed with an incredible figure. You were curvy from the day you were five years old. You have to be careful what you put on your body. I might be able to get away with wearing a fitted shirt, but for you it might be much more revealing. Be wise about these things. See-through and low cut blouses can show cleavage when you bend over, and then you could be enticing men. Don’t send out those signals. Watch out for those super low cut pants as well. When you sit down, or when you bend over, those low cut items get even lower. Make sure they are not sliding down too far.

You may have discovered a long time ago how to use your looks to attract men. A lot of girls learn at a very early age how satisfying it can be to jerk a guy around and control him using her feminine wiles. You know exactly what you are doing. Don’t be tempted to use that as a means to feel in control. It is not pleasing to God. It is not kind to others. By and large it is not going to get you ahead in life. It is not going to make you any better of a person or any happier of a person to wield that kind of control. Scripture even warns us about seductresses, “For she has been the ruin of many; many men have been her victims. Her house is the road to the grave. Her bedroom is the den of death” (Proverbs 7:26–27 NLT). Make up your mind ahead of time and plan not to fall in these areas.

Don’t Wait for One of These Days

Long ago, before I met Greg, when I was in high school, there was a time in my life when I was struggling. I had stopped going to church, stopped reading my Bible, and lost contact with Christian friends. I slowly turned my focus away from that and found myself struggling and stumbling. I was hanging around with my older sister and her friends. They were not a good influence in my life. After a period of time, I realized how unhappy I was in doing that. But the saddest part of it all wasn’t that I wasn’t happy. I couldn’t seem to get my act together enough, to get the strength enough, to turn around and change—to get to a point where I would say, “I am not going to do this anymore,” and go back to what I know is true. It even got to the point where someone came up to witness to me and I said, “Don’t bother. I have tried the Jesus thing. It doesn’t last. You grow out of it.” I was that far down the road. I had cut myself off from the things of the Lord. Even though I knew I wasn’t happy deep down inside, I wasn’t at the point yet where I could do anything about it.

I will never forget that it was on my birthday, when my friend, who was not a Christian, and I went down to Laguna Beach. We were sitting on the beach and just got to talking. In the distance I could see these people walking, carrying books that are very distinct. I looked at them and it brought back to my mind those years that I had walked with the Lord. I remembered that time in my life when I had a sense of peace and direction and I was fulfilled. I started talking out loud to her, not thinking anything. I talked about the fact that I had felt so clean, so completely pure and loved, that God loved me so much as an individual. As I was sharing these things with her, I said, "One of these days I am going to get back to where I was then because I was really happy." I wasn't expecting a response from her. She spoke up. She looked at me and said, "What are you waiting for?"

As I had talked, I hadn't realized the impact that it was having on her life. She turned to me and said, "Tell me what you did? How did you know that God loved you? How did you know you were forgiven? What did you do?" I was flabbergasted because I had been witnessing to her. I was totally backslidden. But just sharing what it was to be a Christian woman was impacting her life. She had never heard that before. As I told her, I remember praying. I said a really simple prayer. She looked at me and said, "Can we pray right now?" All of a sudden I realized it is not "one of these days." It is right now. Did I want it? I looked at her and said, "Let's pray right now." I can't remember what we prayed. All I remember is that after we prayed we both looked at each other and wept. We could not believe how different we felt on the inside.

From that moment on she and I became best friends. It was like iron sharpening iron. We encouraged each other. We grew together. We went to church together. We witnessed together. Scripture says, "Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up. . . . Two people can resist an attack that would defeat one person alone. A rope made of three cords is hard to break" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, 12 GNT).

I am wondering if you are in the place of having let things slip. Maybe at one time you had committed your life to the Lord but you have gradually gotten away from it. It wasn't a conscious decision I had made to walk away from the things of God. It was in my heart that I was prone to wander. As I neglected doing the right things, I found myself in a place where it became easier and easier to do the wrong thing. Then one day I woke up, and I found myself in a place of total separation from Him. My Bible was still on my dresser where I never read it, but I had moved. God hadn't moved.

I am talking to those who have never heard these truths before but also to those who have heard them but let them slip. It is time to say, “Lord, I want to know what Your plan for my life is. I need Your forgiveness. I have fallen. I am so dirty. I need a good washing. Please pick me up and set me on a straight course. Be the center of my universe one more time. I don’t want to be a wandering star out there in the darkness. I want to be focused on You. I want to look to You for my values, principles, direction. Take me back, Lord.”

There might be someone reading this that has sensed a real need to discover what God means when He says He has a plan for your life. I can only tell you what I know the Bible says clearly: the greatest One in all the universe came and emptied Himself for our sakes and was given a name that is above every name. Only if we follow Him faithfully will we share in joy and life and glory that are unimaginable. The question I have is, are you living in a way that will shine ever brighter unto that perfect day (see Proverbs 4:18), or will what you do appear like a vapor of smoke, only to vanish away (see James 4:14)?

To learn more about what it means to follow Jesus Christ and live a pure life, visit KnowGod.org.