

WRITINGS OF ANNIE Z POONEN

by Annie Z. Poonen

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Annie Z. Poonen, compiled for study and devotional reading.

55 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 00.00. Poonen, Annie Z. - Library
2. 01.0.1. A Girls View Point
3. 01.01. CHAPTER 01 - CHILDHOOD DAYS
4. 01.02. CHAPTER 02 - NEW BEGINNINGS
5. 01.03. CHAPTER 03 - A HELPFUL GUIDE
6. 01.04. CHAPTER 04 - OVERCOMING BAD HABITS
7. 01.05. CHAPTER 05 - WALLS AND DOORS
8. 01.06. CHAPTER 06 - PROBLEMS OF HOSTEL LIFE
9. 01.07. CHAPTER 07 - FINISHING SCHOOL
10. 01.08. CHAPTER 08 - A NEW CAREER
11. 01.09. CHAPTER 09 - GROWING IN WISDOM
12. 01.10. CHAPTER 10 - LOOKING AHEAD
13. 01.11. CHAPTER 11 - RIVERS OF LIVING WATER
14. 01.12. CHAPTER 12 - A YOUNG MAN!
15. 01.13. CHAPTER 13 - A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN
16. 01.14. CHAPTER 14 - HEIRS TOGETHER
17. 01.15. CHAPTER 15 - THE BODY OF CHRIST
18. 01.16. CHAPTER 16 - LOOKING BACK
19. 02.01. GOD Made Mothers
20. 02.02. Copyright Info
21. 02.03. Table of Contents
22. 02.04. A PERSONAL LETTER THAT YOU MUST READ
23. 02.05. CHAPTER 01 - A FIRST-CLASS MOTHER
24. 02.06. CHAPTER 02 - KEEPING OUR CONSCIENCE SENSITIVE
25. 02.07. CHAPTER 03 - CHILDREN NEED GOD'S WORD AND PRAYER
26. 02.08. CHAPTER 04 - SPENDING TIME WITH OUR CHILDREN
27. 02.09. CHAPTER 05 - TEACHING OUR CHILDREN PRINCIPLES AND NOT RULES
28. 02.10. CHAPTER 06 - TEACHING OUR CHILDREN DISCIPLINED HABITS
29. 02.11. CHAPTER 07 - DISCIPLINING OUR CHILDREN
30. 02.12. CHAPTER 08 - ENCOURAGING OUR CHILDREN
31. 02.13. CHAPTER 09 - HAVE PATIENCE WITH ME
32. 02.14. CHAPTER 10 - A SPIRIT-FILLED HELPER
33. 02.15. CHAPTER 11 - SITTING AT THE FEET OF JESUS
34. 02.16. CHAPTER 12 - THE GENTLE WHISPER OF GOD
35. 02.17. CHAPTER 13 - REMEMBER LOTS WIFE
36. 02.18. CHAPTER 14 - A DOOR OF HOPE
37. 02.19. APPENDIX 01 - SOME ADVICE FOR EXPECTANT MOTHERS
38. 02.20. APPENDIX 02 - SOME ADVICE FOR NEW MOTHERS
39. 02.21. APPENDIX 03 - THE GROWING CHILD

40. 02.22. APPENDIX 04 - MILESTONES AND IMMUNOLOGY
41. 02.23. APPENDIX 05 - PHYSICAL DEFECTS AND OTHER TROUBLES
42. 02.24. APPENDIX 06 - ACCIDENTS AND DISEASES - PREVENTION AND CURE
43. 03.0.1. Women, Why Are You Weeping
44. 03.0.2. Copyright Info
45. 03.0.3. Table of Contents
46. 03.0.4. THIS BOOK AND YOU
47. 03.01. CHAPTER 01 - GOD IS YOUR FATHER
48. 03.02. CHAPTER 02 - GOD IS YOUR HUSBAND
49. 03.03. CHAPTER 03 - GOD WILL SAVE YOUR CHILDREN
50. 03.04. CHAPTER 04 - GOD WILL BE WITH YOU IN DEATH'S VALLEY
51. 03.05. CHAPTER 05 - GODS NAME WILL BE GLORIFIED WHEN YOU ARE PERSECUTED
52. 03.06. CHAPTER 06 - GOD WILL DELIVER YOU FROM WORLDLY SORROW
53. 03.07. CHAPTER 07 - GOD WILL DRAW YOU TO HIMSELF THROUGH GODLY SORROW
54. 03.08. CHAPTER 08 - GOD HAS A PLAN EVEN IN YOUR PHYSICAL PAIN
55. 03.09. CHAPTER 09 - GOD CARES FOR WEEPING WOMEN

00.00. Poonen, Annie Z. - Library

Poonen, Annie Z. - Library Poonen, Annie Z. - A Girls View Point Poonen, Annie Z. - GOD Made Mothers Poonen, Annie Z. - Women, Why Are You Weeping

01.0.1. A Girls View Point

A Girls View Point by Dr. Annie Zac Poonen

01.01. CHAPTER 01 - CHILDHOOD DAYS

CHAPTER 01 - CHILDHOOD DAYS

I really love the name my parents gave me - Krupa. It means "grace". It was prophetic. The story of my life is the story of God's amazing grace.

Daddy worked in the office of a private company. He earned a moderate salary. But he wasted most of his earnings on drink. He usually came back home late at night every day; and Mummy would accuse him of visiting other women and being unfaithful to her.

Mummy was working as a clerk in a government office. She had a decent salary. But she was always buying new sarees. So we had no savings at all. Mummy would, now and then, bring home ball-pens, envelopes and letter-pads that she had pilfered from her office.

We lived in a two-bedroom house and Daddy's parents lived with us.

Ours was an unhappy home in many ways. There were constant shoutings and beatings. Mummy bore the brunt of this, but we children got our share too. Often the domestic quarrels would involve Daddy's mother too - and Mummy was always the loser. But I wondered at times why Mummy screamed so loud that even the neighbours knew what was going on. That used to embarrass me. In order to punish Daddy, Mummy would not leave any of the good food for him or for his parents. She and we children ate up all the special dishes secretly in our bedroom! But I did not like the way Mummy treated Daddy. Sometimes they had such heated arguments late into the night that we could not even sleep properly.

One day, when I was about 12 years old, Mummy took me and my younger brother to see a lady whom she had met at a Christian prayer-meeting. When we met the lady, I was really embarrassed to see Mummy becoming very emotional and telling her all about our hardships at home, even though the lady was a total stranger. But I noticed something kind and soothing about the way that lady reacted to all this information.

I soon realised that Mummy had come to see her because she had wanted to put us both in an orphanage, to save us from the problems we faced with a drunken father. The lady was very kind and patient. She told Mummy that she did not know of any orphanage personally. But she gave Mummy some very good advice. She told Mummy first of all to forgive Daddy for all that he did to her and to have the hope that he would change one day. She also warned Mummy that although we children may be growing up with a difficult father, life in an orphanage would be much worse, for we would then be without even a mother's love! The lady spoke to me too. She told me to be obedient to my parents, and to respect and honour Daddy even if he had many imperfections. She told me that even Jesus, the Son of God, when He came to earth, had been submissive to His earthly parents, even though He Himself was sinless while His earthly parents were not.

She then prayed with all of us and we went away feeling very much better.

I had many questions as a growing girl. But Mummy was always busy with her office-work and her household duties and never seemed to have any time to talk with me. I also did not feel free to share my problems with her. So I grew up feeling quite lonely and with many unanswered questions. I decided then that if ever I got married and had children, I would spend a lot of time with each of them.

Mummy finally found a Christian hostel for girls in a hill-station, a few hundred miles away from our home. And she put me there.

01.02. CHAPTER 02 - NEW BEGINNINGS

CHAPTER 02 - NEW BEGINNINGS Life in the hostel was a new adjustment for me.

I was often sad and gloomy, thinking of my home. But I was also happy that I could go to school and be with other children, some of whom, like me, were from unhappy homes. The food was a simple, vegetarian diet, but it was good. On Sundays there would be some meat too.

Sometimes Mummy would send me a gift of a small amount of money with which I could buy something special. I bought a pair of high-heeled sandals once, which I cleaned every day and kept very carefully. I was so fussy about this that my friends would playfully kick it around to annoy me.

One night we had a special function in the hostel. We were shown a film on the life of Jesus. We had a Bible in our home, but I don't remember anyone ever reading it. It just accumulated dust on a book-shelf! But now I heard the stories of Jesus at the daily Bible-reading and prayer-times that we had in the hostel. However, I did not understand what Jesus had done for me personally. When I saw the film, it struck me forcefully, for the first time, how much Jesus loved me - that He should come to this wretched earth and die for my sins.

I thought of my own life then, of how I had often caused so much sorrow to my parents by my stubbornness. I was reminded too of my selfishness in being unwilling to share my things with my friends. I also thought of my lying, my stealing, my anger, and many other sins that I had committed that I am too ashamed to even mention - for all of which I now realised Jesus had died and borne my punishment.

I wept that night after the lights were out, and asked Jesus to forgive me and to make me His child. A flood of joy and peace suddenly came into my heart. I, who had never felt loved by anyone before, became aware of the love of my Saviour immediately. I knew that I was now His special child and that He would never cast me away. A deep security came into my heart - a heart that had always been unsure of the love of my parents. I realised then that I belonged to the Lord Jesus and that He was mine forever.

I don't know how this sense of security came to me, for no-one had taught me about such matters. But as I look back now, I can see how the Holy Spirit can make the things of Christ real even to a simple mind that has never studied the Bible. That was the turning point of my life. I wrote home about this experience and wanted my mother and all at home to share the same joy.

Very soon I entered into my teenage years. I was now thirteen years old.

During the school-holidays that summer I went home. But I discovered that hostel life was better than life at home - because in the hostel I could pray, keep my life in order, be disciplined, talk to my friends and attend meetings in the chapel. We were also taken out at times from the hostel to some park or beautiful spot on the hillside - and such picnics were a real treat that all of us looked forward to. Compared to all this, life at home was boring and uneventful. But I enjoyed playing with

my younger brother whom I missed when I was in the hostel.

During that visit to my home I made a startling discovery. A 17-year-old relative of mine, whom I had always considered as a brother, came to visit us, as he often used to do in the past. But this time I found, that whenever we were alone with each other, he would touch my body here and there and try to get close to me physically. He had never behaved like that before. No-one had ever told me anything about boy-girl relationships or about sexual matters. But I was alert enough to know that something was wrong in his behaviour. So I avoided him thereafter and he became very angry.

It was only the Lord who protected me from the plight of some of my hostel-mates, who I later discovered had been lured by their close relatives into sexual sin, at an age when they were innocent and ignorant. My relative's behaviour was another reason why I wanted to leave home and go back to the hostel. I realised that even a close relative could have an impure attitude.

01.03. CHAPTER 03 - A HELPFUL GUIDE

CHAPTER 03 - A HELPFUL GUIDE As a teenager I gradually realised that I was developing into a woman. All sorts of feelings were coming into my mind. I who wanted to be loved, found myself now desiring the love of some man!! I began to day-dream of some nice man who would love me. Such thoughts would run wild at times.

I saw that this fantasy world of mine was like a powerful giant in my life that was hindering my communion with Jesus. I found that I preferred fantasizing than talking to Jesus, Who was the only real Friend I had. I was not able to break free from this habit.

I noticed that some of the girls in the hostel had an abnormal attachment to each other and were very possessive of each other. I was embarrassed to see the way they expressed their affection for each other. They would go off by themselves into their rooms and lock the doors. I didn't know what they did there. But I later discovered that they were indulging in 'lesbianism' (homosexual behaviour) - something that God hated and had clearly forbidden in His Word (Romans 1:26-27). I avoided the company of those girls.

Most of the girls in the hostel had not given their lives to Jesus. They used to fight with each other and would not talk to each other for weeks. In the hostel, I saw that one of our teachers had a radiance on her face that was striking. I came to know that she was a committed Christian who loved the Lord Jesus. I shared some of my problems with her, since she seemed to be so understanding. She always gave me sound advice. I discovered that Jesus was the source of her strength and her wisdom. This teacher became my example for many years thereafter, even after I had left the hostel. I never realised, till much later, that she had affected my life so much and that I had imbibed so much of her spirit. Her example became the foundation for a lot of good in my life.

She spoke to us of simple things. When she taught us in the Science class about flowers, for example, she mentioned the lily as a flower that stood for purity. She said that our life on earth was like a lily that was alive and bright one day and gone the next. She told us about the rose that gave out its scent mostly at night - a picture of how we could be kind and radiant even when going through dark trials. The violet, she said, bloomed mostly in shady places - a picture of humility and lowliness. Many flowers, she told us, bloom where no one ever sees them. So we too must live to please God alone and not to impress people. Many flowers are trampled upon, but none of them retaliate. So we too should learn from them how to bear insults without holding grudges and be willing to forgive others quickly. Such lessons formed a deep impression on my young mind - and formed my character. This teacher was also our hostel-warden. She taught us how to take care of ourselves when we matured. She taught us how to be hygienically minded at all times, to bathe regularly, being especially careful to wash the parts of our body that had become dirty and where we perspired the most. She taught us that the days of our monthly cycle were not to be considered as a sickness, but a normal part of the wonderful way that our Creator had made our bodies. She taught us to take everything in our stride in a natural way and to exercise, by walking or playing games, to keep our bodies fit. She said we should be slim and smart, not fat and sluggish! She

even joined us in our games.

She also taught us to keep our hair clean and free from lice - which was very common among the girls in the hostel. We had to keep our things tidily in our rooms and keep the surrounding premises clean. Our clothes had to be washed regularly and repaired when necessary.

She would often quote some wise words from the book of Proverbs in the Bible, and encouraged us to memorise verses from the Bible. We loved the singing classes and we learned many lovely songs of worship, that I used to sing to the Lord when I was alone. These choruses helped to lift my spirit, whenever I was discouraged. I learnt in those days the tremendous power that there is in praising God at all times. Our warden encouraged us to study regularly and not to leave all our studying to just before the exams. She told us not to be terrified of exams, but to study diligently, never to cheat and to leave the rest to God. She taught us a Bible verse that said that God would keep us in perfect peace, if our minds were set on Him (Psalms 26:3). Many would get unnecessarily stressed at examination time. But our warden helped us to be relaxed. In the history classes, our warden taught us not only about the kings who ruled India, but also about the missionaries who had sacrificed their lives and come to our land to make India a better place.

She told us about William Carey who was only a cobbler in England, but who came to India and sacrificed much in order to give the gospel to our countrymen. He underwent a lot of hardships in our land, but in the end did an amazing job of translating the Bible into many Indian languages. It was through this one man that many Indians got the Word of God in their mother-tongues.

Then she told us about Amy Carmichael who had come from Ireland and started a home for orphans in a place called Dohnavur in Tamilnadu. She had rescued little baby-girls who were thrown away by their parents and spent her life bringing up those girls to be God-fearing women.

She also told us about John Hyde (also known as "Praying Hyde") who came as a missionary to the Punjab, who brought many souls to Christ.

These stories challenged me more than the history-lessons on Ashoka and Shahjehan!!

I was so thankful that our warden took such pains with each of us. We spoke frankly with her on a variety of topics. I often used to wish that my mother had been like her.

One day the warden told me that she herself had been an orphan, brought up by Amy Carmichael in Dohnavur. She had then done her teacher training course and taken up this job in the hostel.

She was truly an impartial lady and loved us all very much.

She often encouraged me personally to develop disciplined habits in my life. She told me she had found great value in having a regular time of Bible reading and prayer every day - a quiet time daily with the Lord. She encouraged me to ask the Lord for help in overcoming the battles I faced - in the fantasy world of my thought-life, and the grudges that I had against some of my hostel-mates.

I had forgiven my father long ago. But now there were others whom I was gradually becoming bitter with. I realised that the battle against bitterness is one that we have to fight all through life - for people may harm us at any time. But God can give us grace to forgive them and to love them. That is the wonderful power there is in the gospel of Christ.

01.04. CHAPTER 04 - OVERCOMING BAD HABITS

CHAPTER 04 - OVERCOMING BAD HABITS

I realised that if my life were to change, my reading habits had to change first. I was in the habit of reading romantic novels, because they excited my imagination. But they added fuel to the flames in my heart and increased my longing to fantasize. To enable me to have a taste for healthier books, my warden-friend lent me some of the books she had in her own personal library. These books drew me to the Lord.

I asked the Lord then to take away my desire for the wrong type of books. Slowly I began to see a change in my outlook. I found some good books in the hostel-library about missionaries who had come to India and about heroes of the Christian faith through the ages. Slowly but surely I was able to bring my wandering thoughts into the captivity of the Lord and my world of fantasy began to drift away like a cloud. At last I was delivered from that wretched giant that had kept me captive for so long.

There was a TV in the hostel and the girls would often watch the movies that came on it. I too saw some of those movies. But I found that they brought back my fantasy-world once again. So I asked the Lord to deliver me from this habit altogether.

Looking for some distraction to overcome this temptation, I found a suitable corner in the corridor where I began to do some embroidery for my warden-friend. There was going to be a sale in our hostel and I could make some plastic baskets and other things like that. I developed an interest in stitching and knitting. I also learned to dress with some dignity, since I felt that my life had some worth at last. My wandering thoughts were slowly brought into captivity by the Lord, but it was a constant battle. Sometimes the girls would tell me of an interesting program on TV, and I would watch it. I did not want to appear to be a "holy person" who shut her eyes to all television. But I found on the whole, that many of the TV programmes only corrupted my mind. As I began to seek after God, I found myself becoming more sensitive to the needs of others - their inner spiritual needs. One girl who was very quiet came up to me one day and began to share her problems with me. Her mother had died and she had been sent to the hostel, so that her father could marry again. Her father had felt that he would not get a wife if he had the extra baggage of a daughter with him!! She showed me the burn-scars and the scars of many beatings that she had received from her father. She never wanted to go to her home again. At times her grandmother would come to see her, bringing her some sweets. But in her bitterness and hatred, she would never speak to her grandmother. I realised that her soul was more scarred than her body. She and I shared many of our thoughts with each other; and we began to pray together too. Very soon, she too found the Lord Jesus as her own Saviour. This really thrilled me that I had brought a soul to the Saviour. We then began to pray for our families and for other girls like us who were hurting inside.

There were some handicapped children in our hostel. Their mothers had taken some medicines when pregnant, to abort them, and had been unsuccessful. One such girl had no teeth. Another

was so retarded that she could not concentrate on her studies at all and was always put on kitchen duty. These retarded girls were mocked and ridiculed by the others. I thought how sad it was that these children had to suffer throughout their lives, because of the sins of their mothers. I could not find an answer to this mystery. But I felt that I could befriend them and bring some joy into their dark lives. I felt that God had placed me in that hostel for this very reason.

There were also girls in our hostel who had lost their mothers and who had been ill-treated by their step-mothers. Such girls hated all women, as a result. Some girls had been sexually abused by their fathers and now hated all men. There were others who always spoke rudely to everyone, because of some psychological "hang-over" from their past. And of course all of us girls had our own bad moods now and then. But our warden was patient with us. She spent time with us and talked with us and encouraged us. She helped many of us to turn to the Lord Jesus; and we found grace to overcome our angry outbursts and our bad moods.

01.05. CHAPTER 05 - WALLS AND DOORS

CHAPTER 05 - WALLS AND DOORS

I read one day in the Song of Solomon that a girl must be like a wall and not like a door (Song of Solomon 8:9). She must have modesty and a reserve where men are concerned, just like a wall, and not be wide open to them like a door.

Since ours was a girls' hostel with no contact with men at all, some girls had abnormal and 'wild' ideas about men in general. They would be nervous and giggle and act silly whenever they saw men at church or in the town. Our warden helped us to understand how to behave with men. She told us to talk naturally with them. She said it was dangerous only when we began to focus our attention on just one man. That, she said, should wait till we were considering marriage. She said it was wisest to talk with men about general matters and never about personal and private matters. To be "a wall" did not mean that we could not mingle with men in a natural way. It only meant that we should be sober and modest. Her advice enabled us to deal with men in a natural way and not run away from them, when we saw them! But there were some girls who considered themselves to be caged birds in the hostel. Like restless birds, they hated the restrictions that had been imposed on all of us for our good. They longed for 'freedom'. But I had discovered that the only true freedom was to be a child of God set free from all bondage by the Lord Jesus. All the rules in the hostel were for our good, to protect us from dangers that we were not aware of. Our warden once told us the story of a girl in the Bible called Dinah who wandered away from home and made a mess of her life and brought deep trouble for her family members also. I hadn't noticed that story before. But when she told us about it, I read the whole story in Genesis 34:1-31. I felt it was a strong warning given by God Himself to all young girls not to wander forth in an irresponsible way. Dinah's actions even started a war where many people were killed. She is indeed a warning to all girls who disobey their parents and go out in search of freedom. In the hostel most of us wore simple clothes. But that did not mean we were simple at heart. Many girls loved tight clothes and imitated the fashions of the actresses they had seen on TV, with their make-up and lipstick.

I did not want to be odd among them. But at the same time I did not want to dress like them. Then I saw clearly that a disciple of Jesus was a misfit in this world even among so-called "Christians". Many of the girls dressed only to make themselves attractive to men. It wasn't easy for me to decide what clothes I should wear. But I made a rule for myself that the clothes I wore should not make men stare at me. I could see the lustful way in which many boys stared at us whenever we went out as a group. I wanted to be a good testimony for the Lord in the way I dressed - without looking odd.

Submission to the authorities in the hostel was not enjoyable to any of us. Some girls rebelled and even went to the extent of doing sneaky things. Some of them were caught and got into a lot of trouble.

One girl used to boast about her boy-friends and was always ultra-modern in the way she dressed. One day, the warden noticed her looking sick and sent her to the doctor. It was then discovered that the girl had become pregnant!! She was asked to leave the hostel immediately and she had to go home in disgrace. I had always felt that something would go wrong with her, especially when I saw how she used to make herself prominent in the presence of men. The safest course I realised was to avoid being alone with men even if they were close relatives. The downward path to immorality is sudden and steep and one can fall even before one has time to think of stopping.

Some of the girls who were proud of their charm and their slim figures and who walked around like the film-stars they had seen on television, were the ones who got into trouble the most. Whenever we went to town by bus, the men used to pinch these girls here and there. I felt that they had asked for trouble by the way they dressed and walked!

I discovered a way to protect myself from these men, by covering the front of my body with a handbag whenever I was in a crowd - on the streets or in a bus. I tried my best whenever possible, to keep a safe distance from all such mischievous young men.

There were some occasions when a boy from town would follow after one of us girls repeatedly and even be bold enough to tell her that he loved her. We asked our warden what we should do in such cases.

She warned us not to infuriate such "Romeos" by hard words, because some of them could even harm us, if we spurned them in a rude way. There were cases, she told us, of young men who had thrown acid on the faces of the girls who had jilted them. But at the same time, she told us not to encourage any man in any way. We needed to be wise in dealing with such young men. The best thing to do was to ignore them, not look at them and say nothing at all in reply to their words.

She said that many of us were like innocent birds for whom Satan had laid out well-concealed traps. We were most vulnerable in our teens and early twenties. If a boy approached us with "words of love and affection", she told us not to take such words seriously or to get starry-eyed or to start dreaming about him and building castles in the air.

She warned us of young men who would threaten to commit suicide, if we refused to marry them. This she said, was just a clever tactic to pressurise a girl into a quick marriage. A wise girl would refuse to be moved by such threats. Those who yielded to such threats would end up as domestic slaves (and not as wives) to those boys. Such marriages usually end in divorce, when the boy finds another girl!! Such threats are usually made by boys who are uneducated, jobless and who are unable to support a family. The best way, she said, was to ask God to protect us from falling into such traps. The promise in Psalms 91:3 says: "God delivers us from the snare of the trapper". She asked us to claim that promise and to have as our ambition, seeking to please God and studying hard to have a career in life. She assured us that God was always watching over us and would provide us with the partner who was best for us, at the right time, if we honoured Him.

She told us that most boys would respect us if we kept a dignified and restrained attitude towards them. But even in such cases, she warned us to keep boys at a distance and not allow them to become intimate with us, lest we fall into sin or into a commitment to marry, in a moment of weakness. She told us not even to consider any boy as a prospective marriage partner until we were at least 20 years old, when we would be a little more mature, spiritually and emotionally, to

consider the matter soberly and wisely.

I was so thankful for all this good advice, because it kept me from doing anything foolish in my younger days.

01.06. CHAPTER 06 - PROBLEMS OF HOSTEL LIFE

CHAPTER 06 - PROBLEMS OF HOSTEL LIFE

All of us had several duties in the hostel, that we had to do in turns - gardening, helping in the kitchen and in the chapel, washing clothes and keeping the premises clean.

I used to complain about the food I got. But one day it dawned on me, like a revelation from heaven that it was wrong for a Christian to complain about anything. I realised that in fact I deserved nothing but Hell. Everything that I got that was better than Hell was the result of God's mercy. I realised that I must be prepared to eat anything that is set before me. I saw that even in matters of food, the Lord was testing me. I read in the gospels how Jesus fasted for 40 days and then defeated Satan.

Stealing was a very common practice in our hostel. I thought of my mother who used to pilfer small items from her office. I had then thought that that was not serious, because she was taking things from a government office and not from any individual. Now I knew that all stealing was wrong. I felt a compelling urge to write to Mummy and to tell her that all stealing was displeasing in God's sight. But I did not know whether Mummy could give up the habit, because I had seen that it was hard for older people to break with their bad habits once these habits had a grip on them. This put a healthy fear in me and I decided to get rid of my bad habits in my youth itself, lest I too end up like them.

Some girls were very selfish and greedy with food and other things that were meant to be shared by everybody. This caused a problem for all of us. Some girls were moody, and constantly occupied with themselves. They were full of self-pity and never finished telling us their sad stories. It was true that many of them had been abused in their homes. But I told them that there was no need for them to live perpetually in their past. They could shake off their past with God's help, if they wanted to, and Jesus could help them forget their past, forgive those who had wronged them and reach great spiritual heights. I encouraged them to find a cure for their problem by seeking to help others. This would set them free from being occupied with themselves alone all the time.

I would get discouraged if I didn't get a letter from home when I was expecting one. But sometimes the letters that came from home would discourage me even more, because the news from home was usually bad. The other thing that discouraged me was whenever I lost some small thing. I didn't know how to get over that. I asked the Lord to help me overcome my attachment to material things.

Some girls on the other hand, were so well off that they couldn't care less for their things or for the feelings of others.

I took part in whatever games were arranged in the hostel. I found that this was good for me. I saw that some girls who did not like any physical activity and did not even go for a walk became fat and got sick very often. I realised that our body being the temple of the Holy Spirit must be kept fit for

His use at all times. I also saw that many eating habits that some of my friends had were actually harmful to our bodies. Overeating made some of the girls really fat and sluggish and ugly.

I noticed a tendency in me to seek the company of the popular girls and to make them my best friends. But as I began to think of what Jesus would have done, I saw that I must befriend the sad and lonely ones, and those who were not smart or capable. I longed to tell them of the Lord, Who calls all the weary and heavy-laden to come to Him to find rest in their souls.

Though I am neither pretty nor fair-skinned, I learned very soon to accept myself as God had made me. I knew that He had made no mistake in the way He had created me in my mother's womb. I was also certain that He had made no mistake in allowing me to be born into the particular family I was born in to. I was taken up with the thought that Jesus loved me so much as to consider me worth dying for! I could never get over this glorious truth.

I thought of others in the hostel who were more unfortunate than me. There was a girl who had been blinded in one eye by an accident. Another one had a large hairy mole on her face. Others had scars on their faces and were unhealthy in many ways, because of the improper food they had received in their childhood.

Some others were scarred in their minds by the physical and sexual abuse they had suffered from a young age. I really felt sorry for them. How could such a girl tell her ugly secrets to the one who would one day be proposed to her in marriage? I wondered: Would he refuse her when he heard that or would he put her away after marrying her? I didn't find an answer for that. All I could tell these girls was that Jesus knew their every sorrow and would enable them to triumph over the consequences of all the evil that others had done to them.

I knew that Jesus had come to untie every knot that Satan had tied in our lives (1 John 3:8). There were orphan children in the hostel who had never experienced love from anyone and who could never get close to anyone. I told them about the Friend Whom I had come to know Who would never let us down. I told them that we had to learn to cast even the burden of our past into the Lord's hands and leave it with Him. He alone was able to wipe away every tear, heal every gaping wound and erase the memory of the past completely.

Another dangerous habit that I saw among some of the girls was their trying to make contact with Satanic powers. I saw some of them trying out palm-reading, getting their horoscopes read, going to fortune-tellers and believing what was written under the column, "What the Stars Foretell" in the newspapers. One or two of them even had ouija boards. I knew that these were wrong and warned them that they would unconsciously get in touch with Satan through all these practices and destroy themselves. I warned them that trying to get their problems solved through black magic and witchcraft would bring upon them greater problems than the ones they tried to solve. Our warden was like a mother to us. She once arranged for a married lady to talk to all of us about sex. This lady taught us, using charts, how boys and girls were different and how our bodies functioned. This information was useful for us, because although we were curious about sexual matters, we were afraid to ask anyone. It was good to learn from a mature person how a male and female cell united to form a wonderful new baby.

Although I was very young, I found that life in the hostel matured me spiritually - and that too, very quickly - because I had the opportunity to help many different types of girls that were in our hostel.

It was only years later that I saw the verse that says that God waters those who water others (Proverbs 11:25).

God certainly watered me in many wonderful ways in those days.

01.07. CHAPTER 07 - FINISHING SCHOOL

CHAPTER 07 - FINISHING SCHOOL

I wanted my parents also to know the Lord. I wanted my father to shoulder his domestic duties in a more responsible way. I wanted my parents to be happy together. I wanted my younger brother also to know the Lord. I did not know what I could do for all this. But I kept committing these matters daily to my Lord and left my anxieties with Him.

There was a chorus that we used to sing in the hostel:

"Little by little and day by day,

Little by little in every way

My Jesus is changing me..."

I saw it actually happening in my life. Little by little, the Lord took control of my anger and my moody nature and helped me to change.

I read books about being a disciple of Jesus and about being transformed into His likeness. Gradually that became my longing and my greatest desire - to become like Jesus.

I wrote down a list of all the qualities in my life that were not Christ-like and prayed about these regularly. I asked the Lord to change me and to replace my old, corrupt nature with His own nature. As time went on, the list of my weaknesses and my sins grew longer and longer! But I was happy and I trusted the Lord to do His part of changing me, as I did my part of surrendering everything to Him. I also started praying for others.

I read one day, in the Psalms, that a young girl could keep her way clean and her heart pure by paying close attention to God's Word (Psalms 119:9; Psalms 119:11). I was so encouraged by these promises I discovered in the Bible, that I decided to try and read the whole Bible through in one year. Our warden had given us a Bible-reading scheme, which if we followed would enable us to finish the whole Bible in a year. I started with this scheme and made it my goal to read through the Bible. But I could not complete it in a year. It took me much longer. But I did finish it finally!

I also applied myself to my studies in school, because I wanted to earn my own living ultimately and not be a burden on anyone else. The routine of life in the hostel helped me to organise my time and made me more systematic in many ways.

There was ample opportunity to help others in many ways too. Once I completed my Higher Secondary (Standard 12) examinations and passed by God's grace, I had to leave the hostel. That was indeed a sad day for me, because I had come to love the hostel and especially my warden who had been my guide for nearly 4 years. My Higher Secondary marks were just average.

I talked with my warden about my future and she suggested that I study to be a nurse. I followed her advice and applied to a number of nursing schools. But one after the other, I got "Rejection" letters from all the good nursing schools in South India. I was disappointed. But I knew the Lord loved me and would open the right door for me, even if it was not in a prestigious school.

One day I got a letter offering me a seat for B.Sc. (Nursing) in a School of Nursing in North India. That was far away from my home. I had to think much as to whether to accept the offer or not. The school was located in a strange place. I knew no-one there. The language was different from mine and I didn't know Hindi too well.

All thoughts of the future brought many fears and apprehensions into my mind. Then I thought of one of my favourite songs:

"All the way my Saviour leads me,

What have I to ask beside?

Can I doubt His tender mercy

Who through life has been my Guide!"

I sought the advice of my warden once again. She said that God had closed all other doors and opened this one. So perhaps He had something good in store for me there in North India. Little did I know then how prophetic those words would be! I wrote to the Nursing School and accepted their offer. At last my dreams of a career would materialise.

01.08. CHAPTER 08 - A NEW CAREER

CHAPTER 08 - A NEW CAREER My days in the Nursing School were very different from my schooldays.

I had a career ahead of me now. I met many different kinds of people. I was happy that there were some believers among the nurses who were members of a Nurses' Christian Union. I went for these meetings and we had many good times together singing, praying and listening to messages.

Some of the nursing students came from rich families and were very worldly. I could not afford many of the things they could. Thus I was protected from a lot of worldliness. What a blessing it was to come from an average middle-class home, where we had just enough for our earthly needs.

I enjoyed my studies. I had to learn Hindi and that was a challenge to me. I planned to graduate, study further and become a tutor. In my anatomy classes, I came to understand a little bit of the wonderful way in which God created our bodies. I also saw how we misuse and abuse our bodies in so many ways. I discovered how the medical profession itself was being misused by many doctors in the hospital, to make money rather than to alleviate the suffering of the poor. I was disillusioned, because I had always considered the medical profession to be a noble one.

I also came across patients who had misused drugs on themselves (drug-addicts) and who came to be rehabilitated. Even in that remote place, the devil had caused havoc in many lives through drugs and alcohol.

I knew it was wrong to do abortions and to kill unborn babies. Some doctors even practised "euthanasia". That was new word for me. I learnt that it refers to killing people through medical means by not giving them proper treatment when they are sick. This was usually done to old and sick people who were a burden to the family. I was horrified to discover that such things went on in hospitals. My eyes were opened in the hospital to the wickedness of the medical world. Most of the doctors felt that they belonged to some superior caste of society compared to us nurses! But when I saw the wrong things that the doctors did, I was glad that I was only a nurse who had to obey orders and not a doctor who gave orders! But I also hated the way some of the nurses themselves would shout at poor patients and bark out orders to their juniors. Some of those nurses were so proud that they treated all non-medical people as stupid and ignorant!! But sad to say, after a little while, I found myself behaving just like them. I had to repent and ask the Lord to help me to behave better with the patients. My ignorance of the language frustrated me and I often used that as an excuse for my rude behaviour. How subtle our human nature is - blaming something else rather than taking the blame ourselves. But I realised that as a Christian girl, I must speak respectfully and be patient with the sick, the weak and the elderly. I had to seek God for grace to bear with the screaming infant, and to console the bereaved mother. One sees death every day in a hospital and it is easy to become callous and hard to the sufferings of others. I prayed that the Lord would give me a heart of compassion. I had many opportunities to do good to others and

even to speak about the Lord to someone, occasionally.

There were defeats in my spiritual life too. There was no faithful warden to watch over my life here. It was easy to become indisciplined in my prayer-life. I slackened in my Bible-reading. It was more of a battle to be a true Christian here than in the Christian hostel where I had been earlier. But through those battles, I began to know the Lord personally.

There was a rich young man who was admitted as a patient in one of the rooms at one time. I began to like him and even wondered if he might ask me to marry him some day. I was so conceited. But he was soon discharged and I never saw him again. At times, when some handsome doctor would speak nicely to me or when I was assisting him in the operating theatre, I would imagine him as my future husband. Those were the daydreams I had!

Foolish me! My future was safe with Jesus. But I would often forget that. How unhappy I would have been if I had married that rich patient or that handsome doctor, neither of whom loved the Lord Whom I loved. Jesus was my Maker and my Husband until He Himself gave me an earthly husband, if that was His will. What was life worth without Him? If I ignored His laws, I might even end up as someone's second wife, like some women I had met.

I decided to let the Lord take care of my future. He had led me thus far and I could trust Him for the future too. He knew the longings of my heart. It was He Who had created those longings and He Himself would satisfy them in His own way and in His own time. I must wait. I must come to inward rest in this area of my life.

I saw how many of the nurses in the hostel had gone astray, deceived by the empty promises of some doctor or some para-medical worker. Many of them came to the Nursing School as innocent young girls and lost their virginity here. I was thankful for all that I had learnt of the Lord before I came here and that protected me. The Lord reminded me often of the decisions I had made to be true to Him. Even though I had greater freedom here than in my former hostel, I found that my conscience bound me to stay within the ways of the Lord.

I also learned to live frugally and not to waste money on too many clothes or on fancy clothes. I found that I could save a little money from the stipend I received each month, to give for the Lord's work. I could even spare a little occasionally to help one or two poor patients to buy medicines.

Sometimes one of the nurses would come and borrow money from me and never return it. I would keep on hoping, month after month, that she would return the money. But she wouldn't. The Lord taught me to forgive her and also to be wise in future with money, since my money was not mine but His. I had to learn to say "No" to people who were irresponsible.

Some would borrow my sarees and when they returned them, I saw that the sarees were torn. This disturbed me. I realised then how much I loved material things. The Lord taught me to judge myself in such matters.

I also learned to cope with loneliness and not to look inward and get dejected. I had met some old ladies who always griped and complained and went around giving advice to others who did not want their advice. They were so boring that people detested them. I did not want to end up like them.

I decided to find my joy in the Lord, and sought to be constantly fresh in my spiritual life. I always kept before my eyes the example of my old friend and guide - the warden - who had found contentment in doing the work God gave her. How fortunate I had been to have had an example like that in my younger days. I kept in touch with her and sought her advice frequently and she always had a word in season for me.

01.09. CHAPTER 09 - GROWING IN WISDOM

CHAPTER 09 - GROWING IN WISDOM I found a good Hindi-speaking church near the hospital.

It was a small congregation with some sincere Christians from the local area and the hospital. I disciplined myself to attend the meetings there regularly. By this time I had picked up enough Hindi to understand quite a bit of the sermons and even to sing some of the songs.

Although I still could not converse freely in Hindi, I found one or two good families in that church who bore with my poor language and who occasionally invited me over to their homes. I became a regular member of the church and found that I fitted in very well. Very soon I felt that I should obey the Lord in water-baptism.

I wrote home about my faith. But even Mummy ridiculed me. She wrote to me that she did not want me to become one of those "Hallelujah" types whom she despised. Many people in my hometown had had some bad experiences with pastors and Bible-women who went around visiting houses, praying long prayers, thrusting religion down people's throats and pressurising people to give them money for "God's work"!! I wished Mummy could see that I was different from them. I felt that only my life could speak to her and not my letters. My baptism was a great event for me. It was as exciting a day for me as the day when the Lord had brought me into His fold, some years earlier. But it also marked the beginning of a lot of persecution and opposition for me. I discovered that all who follow the Lord and live godly lives will suffer persecution.

I wanted to learn how to conduct myself with modesty and dignity as a child of God. I wanted the people with whom I worked to know that I belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ. The world and its attractions had very little interest for me, after my baptism.

I met a lot of good people in the church. I soon discovered in myself a desire to talk to men - even married men - both in the hospital and in the church. At times I found that I preferred to talk to men even more than to women. But I quickly sensed that this was wrong and the Lord warned me to be careful. I saw that it was wrong of me to come between a man and his wife when God had united them together. I decided then that I would never talk freely with any married man if I was not equally free with his wife as well. This decision kept me from many pitfalls. I think it saved me from causing misunderstandings in the homes of many others too. I was thankful for the faithful way in which the Holy Spirit warned me on such occasions to avoid embarrassing situations.

I wondered at times if all girls felt the way I did. These wrong affections would bring a temporary delight in me, but they always left a bad taste afterwards. I was also afraid that this would become another giant in my life that would destroy me. I asked the Lord one day to root out every habit in my life that He was not happy with.

I also found ways in which I could serve the Lord. I volunteered to teach the children in the Sunday school class, and to baby-sit for one or two families, when they needed to go out somewhere. I would also talk to some of the patients about the Lord. I discovered that it didn't take much to bring

joy to people. A smile was enough to lighten up a sick person's face and a kind word was like a healing balm.

I had to be wise though not to allow people to take advantage of me. I found that there were some patients who took advantage of the kind nurses and made them run around for them as their slaves.

I found that many nurses had a tendency to give advice to one and all. They would talk like experts and act like matrons to others, until people got disgusted with them and would avoid them. Seeing this, I avoided giving people advice, because I knew I was young and inexperienced. I discovered that what many people wanted was someone who would give them a listening ear and not someone who gave them advice. So I developed the habit of listening to the problems of people. Thus I made many friends in every ward in the hospital. The other problem I faced was with my fellow-nurses in the hostel. Most of them were interested only in gossiping and speaking evil of the hospital authorities. They would waste hours in such idle talk. It was very difficult for me to escape from them. But I would find some excuse and go away. I knew that I would have to give an account to the Lord one day for all my speech and for all the gossip I had given a listening ear to.

There were some nurses who were hypochondriacs. They were always imagining that they were sick and wanted the sympathy of others perpetually. I wondered how they would ever be able to get married and shoulder the responsibility of looking after a husband and children, if they were so occupied with themselves in their single days itself!!

These girls were so inconsiderate that they would thrust themselves on others without a thought of the inconvenience they were causing. I wondered at times if it was because they had seen so much sickness in the hospital that they imagined that they themselves had some of those diseases!!

One of the nurses however did get tuberculosis from a patient. She was very upset when she discovered how she had caught the disease. She was an unbeliever and was cursing the patient day and night. How different it is for us who are God's children. Nothing can happen to us without God's knowledge. And when we do get sick, thank God He can heal us too. Jesus is our Healer and our burden-bearer. He can heal us miraculously or lead us to a place where we can get the proper treatment for our sickness.

Some of my colleagues were movie-fans and always talked about their favourite movie-stars and sang movie songs in the hostel. I was thankful that I knew nothing of all this and thought of the hymn that said:

"Take my voice and let me sing,

Always only for my King..."

Some of them had ambitions to go to the Middle East countries where they had heard that other nurses had gone and made a lot of money and bought a lot of gold jewellery.

What did the Lord want me to do?

I wanted to help my family financially. But at the same time, I wanted to do the Lord's will too. I felt that if the Lord blessed the little that I had, it would be like the 5 loaves and 2 fishes that He had blessed on earth and fed 5000 people with.

I had heard of many believers who had gone abroad only to make money. I saw that money was a big snare. And any wealth amassed in a wrong way could become a curse for me and for my family.

I also thought of how my father drank at home and wasted all his money that way. We would have been a rich family, if it were not for his drinking habit. I saw that money was a sacred trust given to us by God and we were to use it wisely and frugally.

I was always busy and had very little spare time. And this was a very good thing. An idle mind is the devil's workshop. I tried to learn to sew and repair my own clothes in the little spare time I had, to keep myself occupied.

I loved my studies and my life was, generally speaking, a happy one. I had a sense of purpose and fulfilment in my life. I wanted to overcome all the setbacks of my childhood and put them behind me forever.

I found some good books in the church library. I saw an old copy of the biography of Madam Guyon there. I had never heard of her before. It was a big book and it took me many months to finish reading it, since I had very little time for reading. But it was one of the best books I ever read. It challenged me afresh to love the Lord with all my heart. It helped me in many different ways in my spiritual life - especially to understand the purpose of suffering and the way of the cross.

"To serve the Lord without any distraction" was now the motto I made for myself - and the inspiration of this motto drew me to follow the Lord.

01.10. CHAPTER 10 - LOOKING AHEAD

CHAPTER 10 - LOOKING AHEAD

After I had finished my nursing studies I stayed on and worked in the same area of North India, because I saw the need for Christian nurses there.

I got a job in a primary health centre. We used to go to the villages regularly. Those visits were tiresome, but enjoyable. I was busy - every single day. I loved the people and I loved to tell them about the Lord.

I was able to send some money home each month as a token of my gratitude to my parents. I could give a little money for the Lord's work in North India. And I also managed to save a little money for a rainy day - or for my wedding!

I did my own cooking, washed my own clothes and thus saved a lot on my personal expenses. Our nurses' uniform, which I wore most of the time, helped me not to worry about the latest fashions.

Daddy now tried to enter my life again. He had never bothered about me all these years. But now that I had graduated and was earning, he wanted me to go abroad and had started making enquiries with different families for my marriage. He wrote to me that he had stopped drinking - and Mumy confirmed this. That was an answer to my prayers.

I really loved Daddy. So I never wanted to hurt him. But I realised that having put my hand to the plough, if I looked back now, I would not be worthy of my Lord (Luke 9:62). I decided that no relative would ever be more important to me than Jesus Himself.

I started praying about my future. I wanted the Lord's guidance in the matter of my marriage. I remembered the verses I had read in the Bible like, "How can two walk together unless they are agreed? What fellowship has light with darkness.....Don't be unequally yoked with unbelievers..." etc., The meaning of those words from the Bible was very clear: A believer must never marry an unbeliever.

I was determined not to allow my marriage to be filled with quarrels like my mother's had been. The Lord would help me. I knew that the Bible taught that I should submit to my husband. But I was determined that I would never allow my children to suffer as I had suffered. But how could I get my parents to understand these important truths?

I decided that I would follow the Lord - one step at a time - at all costs.

I decided that I would rather remain single all my life than marry an unbeliever. I just did not want to be linked for my whole life with a person whom God had not chosen for me. And I was prepared to stand against both of my parents on this matter - graciously but firmly! My role models were not worldly women but the godly women I had read about in the Scriptures and in biographies - women like Sarah, Ruth and Priscilla in the Bible, and Susannah Wesley, Betty Stam and Elisabeth Elliot in recent times.

I had once taken some Bible studies for our nurses' prayer fellowship on women in the Bible and also shared with them the life-stories of these godly women. So the examples of these women were fresh in my mind.

Deborah was such a brave woman that God could use her, like He used Moses, to liberate the Israelites from their enemies. Esther was a girl who had taken a stand for God and become a blessing to the people of God in her generation.

Mary the mother of Jesus was an outstanding example of one who submitted to God, even when she faced the prospect of ridicule and misunderstanding. Martha and Mary had opened their home and their hearts to the Lord and experienced a mighty miracle in their home.

Lydia, Dorcas, Timothy's mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, were others whom I had set before my eyes.

I had also taken warning from the bad examples mentioned in the Bible, like Eve, Lot's wife, Job's wife, Moses' wife and Jezebel.

After some years had gone by and no suitable proposals came for me, I accepted the prospect of remaining single all my life. The longing for security was very strong in me, like it is in all young women. But I wanted to be happy in the Lord first of all and to please Him above all things. I wanted to be ready for His coming, without having disobeyed Him in this important step of marriage. I could always work as a nurse and support God's work in different places. There was a dignity about my life now and a sense of worth.

I had no more daydreams. I wanted to please the Lord alone - come what may. My boss was the medical superintendent of the whole hospital. I kept a dignified attitude with him and we got along fine. As I mentioned earlier, I saw how many nurses moved very freely with doctors - even with those who were married. Those nurses didn't seem to care that their foolish, flirtatious behaviour could wreck many a family. I never wanted to be guilty of such a sin.

We had a TV in our nurses hostel. But the emptiness of most of the TV programmes made me realise what a tremendous waste of time it was to watch them. A few programmes were informative and I would watch these occasionally. But I always lived in fear that I would get addicted to television and thus lose out spiritually. I realised later, that it was this fear, that had been instilled in me by my good friend the warden, that preserved me from such an addiction.

I found great joy in getting to know people in the church and helping some of them who came to the clinic. I loved those simple people and I felt they loved me too.

Thus the days grew into months and the months into years.

01.11. CHAPTER 11 - RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

CHAPTER 11 - RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

We once had a study on John Bunyan's "Pilgrims Progress" in the church. That brought a revival among many of us. We began to take our Christian lives more seriously thereafter. I wanted to be faithful in following Jesus - just like Christian in that story - until the end of my life.

We used to have special meetings in our church at times. I attended all such meetings, because I wanted to have a continuous revival in my life. On one such occasion I became especially aware of the dryness in my life. In addition, the long hot summers in North India used to depress me terribly. I now felt the need to seek the Lord in a fresh way. The Lord met with me and blessed me quite unexpectedly. One day when I was praying alone in my room, I suddenly felt waves of joy flow over my whole being and I began to utter strange syllables with my tongue. I realised then that Jesus had baptized me in His Holy Spirit and that what I was saying in prayer was in a language I could not understand. It was "the gift of tongues". I had heard people speak about this experience, but I never knew much about it.

I was overjoyed and thrilled.

I never realised that God had such a blessing for a wretch like me. The baptism in the Spirit brought a great release in my spirit and an intense love for the Lord. I felt as if my life had been transported up to heaven itself. I lived in the light of that glory for a number of days thereafter.

During all those days, I gave expression to the unspoken longings of my heart through this new language that the Lord had given me. I could not understand what I was saying, but it was like a secret love-language between me and the Lord. I was certain that the Lord understood every word, for it came straight from my heart. And it brought spiritual healing too - like a soothing balm in my innermost being. The Holy Spirit brought freshness into my life too - like a spring of water springing up from within me continually. I somehow felt this spring would never dry up, like other earthly springs of joy, but would keep on flowing from within me until the end of my life, in greater and greater measure. I believed God for that.

I realised that what I had experienced was the same experience that the first disciples had received on the day of Pentecost, that had transformed them from frightened cowards into bold witnesses for the Lord. I realised too that this experience was not something for me to testify about in a boastful way, but something to be humbly used for the glory of God alone.

I had not studied the Bible deeply. So I could not explain the Biblical basis for this experience, even to myself. All I knew was that I hungered and thirsted for God and He met with me and rivers of living water began to flow out from my innermost being, as Jesus had promised (John 7:37-39). The baptism of the Spirit brought an altogether new dimension into my Christian life and a greater hunger for God and His Word.

After this experience, it was not difficult for me to share my faith with others around me. My timidity was gone. The new language I received remains with me even today, bringing freshness into my prayer-life. I find it to be of great help when I am under pressure and when I am tempted to be discouraged.

I was thankful that God had met with me in this way before I got married.

01.12. CHAPTER 12 - A YOUNG MAN!

CHAPTER 12 - A YOUNG MAN!

One day our pastor came to see me, along with his wife, and asked me whether I was thinking of getting married and if so, whether I would be interested in considering a young man from the church as a possible life-partner. His name was Prakash and he was working as a technician in an electronics company. He was a good Christian who had surmounted many obstacles to get a good education.

There were many factors to be considered in this proposal - both positive and negative. He and I were from different communities and our mother-tongues were different. I wanted to marry someone with whom I could speak freely in a common language. Communication was, for me, a very important part of married life. So I was glad to know that he spoke English well.

Prakash had a good testimony in the church, and from the little I had seen of him in the meetings, where he led the singing, I felt I could look up to him spiritually. This was a very important factor for me. I had seen many Christian wives who had great difficulty in their marriages because they could not look up to their husbands spiritually. I also sensed that Prakash and I had one important thing in common - our love for the Lord. But I did not want to take a decision too quickly. So I told the pastor I would pray about it. I was excited. But I did not want my excitement to run away with me. I fasted and prayed one day and asked the Lord to show me His will clearly; and then I continued to pray about the matter each day.

Prakash was living with his parents, being their only son. I knew that if I married him I would possibly have to live with them. I was willing for anything. All I wanted to know was the will of my Heavenly Father. I put away all the plans I had made to live a life of comfort and luxury. I decided that if I married him, I would respect his parents just as I respected my own.

I longed to have a home and a family and that thought cheered me. But it was not a life of comfort that loomed ahead of me. A new culture, a person from a different community and a life with my parents-in-law lay ahead of me. But it would be a life of happiness, for Prakash and I loved the Lord. That was what comforted me the most.

I thought of Ruth, a girl in the Bible who had left her people and married someone outside her own culture and race. She remained true to her husband and to his people. She started life as a poor woman. But God blessed her and even though she was from the Moabite race - a race that originated in incest (Genesis 19:30-37) and that was not permitted to enter the assembly of the Lord (Deuteronomy 23:3) - yet she became the great-grandmother of King David.

Two books I read at that time helped me a great deal in finding God's will. They were *SEX, LOVE AND MARRIAGE (The Christian Approach)* and *FINDING GOD'S WILL* (both by Zac Poonen). These books taught me to look at marriage from God's viewpoint. The first book also helped me to see what I should look for in a possible life-partner. Then I asked the pastor for more information

about Prakash and his family.

I also wrote to my parents about this proposal. But I knew that they would not be happy with it. They wanted me to marry someone who was rich or who was working abroad and making lots of money. And if I was not willing for that, they possibly wanted me to remain single all my life and support them. I wrote to them respectfully and asked them whether they would be more interested in my being happy or in my making a lot of money. I sent the letter with much prayer that God would change their mind. The thought of becoming somebody's wife overwhelmed me, at times. I was even a bit afraid. I was considering a very serious step that would change my entire way of life. I was going to share my lot with another person. It was not like having a new room-mate in my hostel. If she was difficult, I could always ignore her or change my room. But I could never do that with a husband! I prayed fervently that I might not miss the will of God. I also prayed that if I were making a mistake, the Lord would somehow stop this proposal at this stage itself. I wanted to be in the centre of God's will. I did not want to have an unhappy marriage as my mother had had.

After a couple of months of daily, fervent prayer, I felt a peace in my spirit about this proposal. This I knew was God's way of indicating to me that this was indeed His will for me. I told my pastor about it. The very next day I got a letter from my parents giving their approval for my marriage. How perfect was God's timing!

They had apparently made some enquiries (without my knowledge) about Prakash from some friends of theirs (who were working in a town near where I was working), and had obtained a good report about him. The pastor announced our engagement in the church-service one day. Prakash and I thereafter met each other in the visitor's room of our hostel and got to know each other a little better. I found a growing love for Prakash within me and sensed that this was reciprocated, even though we did not express it freely to each other, due to the reticence and reservations of our Indian culture!

How good God had been to me and how wonderfully He had led me to the one He had chosen for me. Although in my younger days I had foolishly fantasized in my mind about being in love with other men, the Lord had kept me, by His grace, from wasting my affections on anyone else. But even if I had made such a mistake and fallen, I knew that my loving Saviour would have forgiven me, blotted out my sins and helped me to start afresh. God gives all of us many chances even after we have failed, and helps us to forget our past completely.

I wrote about my engagement to my warden-friend, whose advice and prayers had kept me all these years. In typical, Christlike fashion, she replied that she shared my joy - even though she herself was still single. When I thought of all that God had done for me in this matter, at a time when I had given up all hope of getting married and my parents too were unable to help me, I was reminded of the words of Mary who said, "My spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour, for He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant, for the Mighty One has done great things for me" (Luke 1:47-49).

Prakash and I used to meet twice a week and I looked forward to every visit of his. I could see that he loved the Lord deeply, and this, more than anything else, made me secure. I waited eagerly for the day when I would be his bride. And we made plans for our life together. We concluded each visit with prayer, acknowledging the Lord Jesus as Lord of our lives. My days were full of sunshine

now!

01.13. CHAPTER 13 - A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN

CHAPTER 13 - A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN

We fixed a date for our wedding. My parents came a few days earlier. They were impressed by Prakash's character. I could see that God had brought about a real change in their attitude. When we honour God, He honours us too. Our wedding was a very simple one, because neither of us had much money to spare for a grand function. I know couples who began their married life in debt, just because they wanted to have a grand wedding-reception.

Prakash and I had agreed that we would never get into debt at any time in our lives. So we invited just a few of Prakash's relatives, the members of our church and some of my friends from the hospital, for the reception. Of course, my warden-friend was also there.

Both Prakash and I gave a brief testimony at the wedding as to what the Lord meant to us. This was unusual - for it is not normal for the bridegroom and bride to give a testimony at their wedding. But both of us felt that it would be a good opportunity to share our faith with our unconverted relatives and friends who had come to the wedding and who may never get another chance to hear the gospel. The pastor gave us some very good advice in his message. I listened very carefully and still remember almost every word he spoke.

He said that marriage was like a garden. The husband and wife are the gardeners. The Head Gardener was the Lord Jesus Whose instructions we had to follow closely, if we wanted a beautiful garden. In such a garden, the Lord Himself would come and walk with us and talk with us as He did in Eden. He said that we must avoid all rudeness of speech and destructive criticism of each other. We must cultivate a pleasant way of talking to each other and never speak in an irritated way. Whenever we find irritation cropping up, we were to pluck out that nasty weed immediately, cast it out and plant a seed of love immediately in its place.

Other weeds we were to look out for were, accusing one another, an unforgiving spirit, moodiness, comparing our partner with others, reminding one another of our past failures or of our past friendships with the opposite sex, keeping grudges and resentments etc.,

He went on to say that we must not expect our partner to do things the way we were used to doing them. We must be prepared to accept each other just as he or she is. Suspicion too, he reminded us, was a very dangerous weed. It was related to jealousy - and both were very poisonous weeds that easily found root in any garden that was neglected. Even the root of these weeds should be taken out as soon as they begin to appear.

Some poisonous weeds, like suspicion, he went on to say, were planted by the devil and if we were not watchful, they would grow very quickly and destroy both us and our marriage. Fear and discouragement could grow into gigantic trees that would easily crush the little plants in the garden. These too were to be pulled out at the root-stage itself. As the pastor was speaking about fear, I remembered what I had read in a book titled "Hind's feet in High Places" (by Hannah

Hurnard), about a crippled girl named "Much Afraid" whom the Lord transformed into a bold, courageous girl. In Pilgrim's Progress too, I had read about Giant Despair who imprisoned Christian and almost put him to death.

Discontentment, the pastor said, was another poisonous plant that produced the fruits of grumbling, complaining and nagging. (Nagging, he said humorously, was like having a bad stomach-upset in which the diarrhoea never stopped!!) If we were not watchful to root out these evils, they would wreak havoc and destruction not only in our lives but in the lives of others too.

He went on to speak of discontented people who had got into debt in order to purchase things that were beyond their means. Many finally committed suicide, when their debts became huge, and left their children fatherless. The pastor warned us that those who loved this world would find this plant of discontentment springing up everywhere in their gardens.

Speaking ill of others and gossiping were also plants that could infect our children and therefore should never be allowed in our garden. Wanting to win an argument or wanting to have the last word were also obnoxious plants that would make our entire garden stink.

He urged us to fellowship with people who wanted to plant good plants and to avoid all those who bring weeds and garbage (gossiping and evil speaking) into our garden.

Some of the good plants we could plant in our garden to replace the weeds were: Readiness to forgive one another, consideration for each other's feelings, sharing all earthly things with each other, sharing each other's views without arguing, daily Bible-reading and prayer, fellowshipping regularly with other Christians, and even cleanliness.

Such plants needed to be nurtured carefully if they were to grow into strong, healthy trees. The words we spoke to each other would be like the water that made these plants to grow. If our words were angry, it would be like pouring boiling, hot water on the plants. That would destroy them.

He read from Psalms 12:6, where the Lord's words are compared to silver refined seven times in a furnace. Our words he said, must be like that too - words that are refined and kind.

Good trees, he said, would take many years to grow. But once they start yielding fruit, many can be blessed by their nourishing fruit; and their leaves would bring healing to many too. He also quoted a verse that said that a kind reply could turn away another's anger (Proverbs 15:1). An essential plant that must be found in our garden, the pastor said, was the plant of "Judging oneself". This plant does not grow in open places but only in the shade, hidden from the eyes of men. It is so tender a plant that if we don't nurture it carefully, every day, it will wither away. This is a plant that does not look very attractive. But it has such a powerful and pleasing aroma about it, that it could spread its beautiful scent over every part of our garden.

If we do not judge ourselves, the garden of our personal life and our married life could end up as one full of man-made plastic flowers - that looked nice before men, but were without any life. He warned us that many a marriage-garden was actually filled with plastic flowers that fooled people but did not fool God.

There were many who judged others, but few who judged themselves. Those who did not judge themselves would face a terrible judgment from the Lord when He returned to earth to judge all

men. The pastor stressed that "being always ready to forgive one another and to ask forgiveness from one another" were fundamental requirements for a good garden. For the wife, he said, submission was a tender plant that was most essential and extremely valuable. We all have a strong will and must be willing to give it up as Jesus did, who said, "Not My will but Thine be done". And God's will for wives was that they should be subject to their husbands, even as the church is to Christ.

Brokenness of spirit was like the sweet perfume that filled the whole of Mary's house when she broke the alabaster vial and anointed the feet of Jesus. God is near all those who are broken in spirit (Psalms 34:18). At my wedding, I thought of many of my friends who had made hasty decisions and rushed into marriage, after a blinding love-affair, and others who had been enticed by the thought of worldly gain and prestige.

I thought of many believing nurses who had married unbelievers merely to please their parents, or because they wanted to go to the U.S.A. or to some Middle East country to make money.

I was so grateful that the Lord had preserved me from such a fate. It was not my faithfulness that had preserved me, but the Lord's mercy. Although I loved my single days, when I could live an independent life, I was happy to get married. I look forward to living a life for the Lord now as a submissive wife to Prakash. I want to make a success of my marriage and show the world what God can do for other sinners like me.

I want to be a helper to Prakash and not a hindrance. I want our life to be harmonious in every way.

I know that as I go forward, if I remain humble, the Lord will help me in every situation. I want to love Prakash's parents and to be good to them and to all who are dear to him.

I know that if I sow my seeds in peace, I can expect a bountiful harvest of peace and righteousness in due course (James 3:18).

I praise God for all His bountiful gifts in my life. Many years ago, He had promised me from Isaiah 58:11 that my life would be like a watered garden and like a spring of water that never failed - for God Himself would be the source of my supply. Now I see God beginning to fulfil that promise.

01.14. CHAPTER 14 - HEIRS TOGETHER

CHAPTER 14 - HEIRS TOGETHER

Although I longed to have a home of my very own, the Lord has not seen fit to grant me one so far. Out of necessity, we have had to live with Prakash's parents. But Prakash and I are still "heirs together of the grace of life". So we are a royal couple!! And above all, we are happy in the Lord!

I have learnt to respect Prakash's parents and accept them as my own. They have been good to me. And on my part, I have learnt to do things their way. I have also learnt many practical things from them. I knew that I could learn much from them if I maintained a humble, teachable attitude. The Lord told me never to compare them with my parents, but to accept them just as they are. Then they in turn would accept me too, as their own child.

I took certain decisions, as soon as I moved into my new home:

- I would not resent it, if Prakash's parents wanted to spend time with him at any time, since he was their son.
- I would never do or say anything that would bring a distance between him and his parents.
- I would leave it to Prakash to decide when to draw the lines of separation between him and his parents (as the Bible taught in Genesis 2:24). I would not be a busybody in his matters.

One day, we heard of a small girl in a nearby slum whose parents were so poor that they were going to sell her off. This appeared to be a common practice in those parts of North India, because many parents were extremely poor. We quickly went to them and asked if we could keep their daughter with us, so that she would not have to be sold. Since we were living nearby, she could go and visit her parents every weekend too. They gladly agreed. I now had someone to talk to and to teach God's ways. We also arranged to send her to a nearby school. I found an opportunity now to show kindness to one whose earthly lot was miserable, and thus repay the kindness others had shown to me in my younger days.

Jesus came into the world to become the servant of all men. I too want to be like my Lord - a servant to all who came across my path, and especially to the poor and the needy.

I have tried to be a good companion to Prakash and to adapt my routine to his. Though our views are different on some matters, they blend together more and more as the days go by - like the colours in the rainbow. This makes our life together grow richer and more meaningful.

Often I find it boring doing the household chores such as cooking, washing and cleaning up the house. But I remind myself of what Brother Lawrence said in one of his books that he could feel the presence of God just as much when washing the vessels in the kitchen as when he was on his knees at the Lord's table, partaking of the bread and the cup. I want it to be like that for me too. Singing praises to God lightens every load.

I find that I still need to seek for God's grace to overcome my moodiness and stubbornness, my nagging of Prakash and many other habits in me that are un-Christlike. I want to be a wife who is like a crown to her husband, one whom he can safely trust in at all times (Proverbs 12:4; Proverbs 31:11).

These words, "That was my fault. I am sorry. Please forgive me" are the words that have brought healing again and again in many a situation that could otherwise have brought tension or an explosion between us.

I have learnt that one big secret of a happy marriage is to appreciate each other and be thankful for each other. Then there can be no room for any unpleasantness or misunderstanding.

How fortunate the girl is who knows the Lord as her intimate Friend and Guide. Such a girl will lack nothing in life, whether she is married or single.

Godliness with contentment is great gain - and that means to be content with whatever lot God has appointed for us in life.

It may be that I will never have the home of my own that I longed for, but will have to stay with my husband's parents all my life. I shall be content.

It may be that I will have to continue working as a nurse to help my family. I shall be content. Or perhaps I will have to stop working one day, when the Lord gives me a child and I become a full-time mother. I shall be content.

I am prepared for whatever the Lord has chosen to send across my path, for He is the One Who chooses all things for me now.

I want to be like the virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31:1-31, who has the law of kindness on her tongue, and who faces the future with confidence in her Lord. That is one chapter in the Bible that I meditate on, often.

Another verse that the Lord has often reminded me of, after I got married, is Psalms 45:10. There it tells me "to forget my father's house" now that I am married. Rebecca was not attached to her people after she married Isaac. As I had once set my hand to the plough when I chose the Lord Jesus as my Lord and Saviour and never looked back, even so, when I chose a husband as my earthly head, I had set my hand to another plough and I didn't ever want to look back. Lot's wife looked back and destroyed herself. I didn't want to make the same mistake. I could visit my parents and my family-members. But my attachment was to be to my husband alone henceforth.

I had many wrong ideas about sex. When I was single, I had thought that all sexual activity was wrong. Now, as a married woman, I realize that it is wrong only outside of marriage. I saw in the Scriptures that the sexual relationship was not just for the purpose of having children, but a duty that a husband and wife had to fulfil towards each other, except when they mutually agreed to abstain (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). I saw that God had created the sexual function even before man had sinned as one way in which a husband and wife could express their love for one another (Genesis 1:28).

Now that I am married, I find that I have to be more disciplined, if I am to find time to read the Bible and pray and thus maintain a close walk with the Lord - because that has to be fitted in to my busy daily schedule.

I find the late nights to be a good time, when I have finished all my work, to come beside the still waters and to talk to the Shepherd of my soul, before going to bed. In His presence, I find true happiness as I unburden my soul before Him. There I am renewed with joy that is pure and heavenly. There no sin can have power over me. There I find pleasures that are eternal.

I have now experienced a little bit of the reality of what I used to sing to myself for many years:

"There is a place of quiet rest, near to the heart of God -

A place where sin cannot molest - near to the heart of God." In one sense I am always in the presence of the Lord and my heart is frequently lifted up in praise to the Lord Who has done such wonderful things for me.

01.15. CHAPTER 15 - THE BODY OF CHRIST

CHAPTER 15 - THE BODY OF CHRIST The local church has been our "heart-throb"!! We have come to see the family of God as our real family.

I was thankful to see that Prakash held exactly the same views as I did on this vital matter. I could see that Jesus had separated me from my earthly family and brought me into His family.

We were only a small group of about 60 believers in the church there. But we loved one another, we helped each other and cared for one another. I could see that this was the way God wanted His church to be.

Such an atmosphere being found in the church was largely due to the labours of the pastor who was a selfless man, who had had a clear call from God to serve Him. I had seen many dead churches in my life. Now I saw the reason: A church ultimately becomes like its leader.

Prakash and I took part in the Sunday morning meeting and the midweek Bible-study meeting, regularly. I tried my best to adjust my duty-timings with other nurses so that I did not miss either of these two meetings. The times of praise and singing on Sunday mornings were really lively in our church and lifted my spirit every time. I also took notes regularly in the Bible-study meetings so that I could go over those verses of Scripture in my leisure time and also share whatever profited me, with other nurses. I found a hunger in my heart to study the Word of God.

I meditated on what the Scriptures taught about a woman's place in the church (1 Timothy 2:9-15; 1 Corinthians 14:34-38). I saw clearly that the Bible taught that men should be the leaders in the church. I wanted to obey God's Word in the smallest matter and I was happy to submit to my husband and to the elder brothers in the church and to pray for them in their ministries.

I saw that as a lady, my calling in the church was to avoid the limelight and be a helper, behind the scenes. I taught the children in the Sunday School and shared the Word in the sisters' meetings and in the nurses' meetings. The scarf that I wore to cover my head in the meetings was more than just a tradition for me. It symbolised for me my God-appointed place of submission to my husband and to the men to whom God had placed in leadership in the church (1 Corinthians 11:3-16).

I found that as I took that place of submission as a sister, joyfully, my service for God in the ministries that I was engaged in, became abundantly fruitful. I sensed a rich anointing of God in teaching the children and in sharing the word with the sisters.

Submission, I discovered, was an attitude in my spirit and not just an external thing. I saw it as the very spirit of the Lord Jesus Who submitted to His Father all through His earthly life. When this spirit permeates our whole being, God blesses us so that we can be a blessing to others.

I also saw rebellion as the very spirit of Satan. If I was going to be a wise wife, I could build my home, by submitting to my husband - even as the church is subject to Christ, in everything

(Ephesians 5:24; Proverbs 14:1).

Both Prakash and I felt that we should give regularly to the work of the Lord. We were not bound by any law in this matter neither did we feel compelled to do so. We gave cheerfully. We gave some money as offerings in the church. We also sent some money each month to two missionary organizations that had men and women working for the Lord in North India. We also prayed regularly for the Lord's servants whom we knew.

We never lacked anything in our home, because as we gave to God, He made what was left, to be more than adequate to meet our every need at home. Thus we proved the faithfulness of the Lord again and again. The local church was an integral part of Prakash's life and mine. The church was the Body of Christ, of which we were a vital part. Fellowship with the saints there enriched our lives in many ways.

We prayed with God's people, whenever we faced any problems. We also helped others who faced pressures and trials in their lives. I saw that God allowed many trials in our lives as His children in order to unite us more closely to each other as members of Christ's Body. I feel sorry for those who do not have a good local church that they can fellowship in, and also for those who do not value the fellowship they have in their local church.

Prakash and I can honestly say that we have tasted something of heaven in the fellowship of the brothers and sisters in our church.

01.16. CHAPTER 16 - LOOKING BACK

CHAPTER 16 - LOOKING BACK

Looking back over my past life, I find myself full of thankfulness to my Lord and my Redeemer for all that He has done for me.

He has made me who was once an insecure girl, now a daughter of God and a possessor of perfect earthly security as well as eternal security in heaven.

Living with Prakash and his parents, these past few months, has taught me a great deal. As I have already told you, I never enjoyed a happy home atmosphere in my childhood days. Now I can see how living in a happy home is far better than living in a hostel. In a home, one has to learn to give and take. Living together, we rub each other more often and then it is easier to get irritated with each other. I have had to learn to forgive, as well as to ask forgiveness, again and again. I also had to learn how to address those older than me by their proper, respectful titles in Hindi.

I had to learn how to share everything I owned, with everyone in the home. I had to learn how to receive an unexpected guest whom Prakash suddenly brought home, and how to miss my meal in order to set something before him!

I also decided that everyone in the home would get an equal share of all the dishes I cooked - especially the good ones. I never took a special helping for myself. But if it was Prakash's favourite dish, I would give him a sample to taste in advance - because he always complimented my cooking!!

I had to learn how to stay up at night, to care for a sick parent, at times. I have had to learn how to adjust with others who are different from me. But in spite of all this, I still prefer living with Prakash (even in a home that is not fully my own) than living anywhere else. The main thing I am learning is to "do everything in love". Then even when I make mistakes, they are not serious in God's eyes.

I have come to admire Prakash. He is very hardworking and he loves the Lord and he loves me. So we are both supremely happy. We go for a walk every evening and share our day's experiences with each other. I look forward to that, every day! At times, we have arguments - like all married couples. But we have tried to keep them from getting out of control. I know that God has called me to be a helper to Prakash and not just a "Yes-woman". That's why I tell him my opinion quite frankly. But having given him my opinion and the reasons for it, I then leave it to him to decide whether to accept it or not.

I can see how different I am from him. The little things that bother me so much don't seem to bother him at all. This may be because I am a woman and he is a man!

We tease each other and laugh together often! When we can do that without hurting or humiliating each other, then we know that our relationship is really healthy! Our life together has actually been great fun!

One day I sat down and made a list of all the things that were specifically my own problems and asked God how I could cope with them.

I was lonely and homesick frequently - ever since the day I first left home. These bouts of loneliness and homesickness would usually appear whenever something upset the regular daily routine of my life. But as I came to know God more and more as my Father and Mother and Friend and learnt to tell Him all my feelings and asked for His help, I found I was able to handle my loneliness.

I was very fearful. I was afraid of the dark, afraid of people, afraid to face the future and afraid of many other things. I was even afraid I might die, when I worked as a nurse attending on patients who had deadly diseases. Then one day I saw how many times God spoke the words "FEAR NOT" in Old Testament times to the men He loved and how often Jesus said the same words to His beloved disciples. I saw these words both as a command as well as a word of comfort from a loving Father and Friend. I keep reminding myself of that again and again. The Lord drives away my fears, either as soon as they come, or after I have struggled with them for a while.

I also had a bad habit of crying for no reason at all or because of some silly matter. I see now that such weeping was the result of self-pity. The Lord assured me that He would wipe away every tear of mine. I thought much about a song that I had learnt in the hostel, when I was a schoolgirl:

"He [Jesus] had no tears for His own griefs,

But sweat drops of blood for mine."

Over the years He has helped me to get over this habit of "crying" too and to be more concerned about the sorrows of others.

Insecurity was another big giant in my life and manifested itself in many different ways. It made me very possessive of my friends and my property! I wanted desperately to be loved by others, and even resented it if my friends loved others. I wanted their friendship exclusively for myself. I saw this attitude in me, even when I was in the hostel. I knew that this attitude was wrong, but I could do nothing about it.

After I was married, I found the same possessive attitude towards Prakash. I could not tolerate even his relatives being close to him. I would justify that saying that Prakash was now mine. But I have come to see that my attitude was wrong. How could I expect my husband's mother to stop loving her son just because he married me? I enjoyed others showering their love on me. How selfish it was of me then not to allow Prakash to enjoy the love of his own relatives. Perhaps this was another of those traits found in women, that I had to overcome, as a child of God.

I also saw a great craze in me to buy things. I thought Prakash would not like me spending a lot of money or that he might not see the need to buy something which I felt was necessary. So I would at times buy things without consulting him. But being naive and simple, I was often cheated by the people of that town. Then I realised that it was better to do my shopping along with Prakash and buy any expensive item only with him. At times, I hoped he would buy me some clothes of the latest fashion. But I saw that such cravings were born from a desire to impress people, and I repented of it. I had to put away worldliness and to stop hankering after worldly fashions. I also needed to learn how to share what I had with others poorer than me. Then God would give me all

that I needed - even if I didn't get all that I wanted.

Sometimes I would retain an anger towards my mother-in-law and would not talk to her for a long time. I resented her advising me and her critical comments. My silence was my way of taking revenge. I now realise that such silence can at times be even worse than an outburst of anger. I asked the Lord to help me overcome this sinful habit. I saw that it was when I was careless in my daily walk with the Lord that I fell. When I realised my sin, I would ask the Lord to forgive me and ask my mother-in-law to forgive me as well. As an offshoot of my insecurity and my possessive nature I found that I was jealous of other women who talked to Prakash. I knew very well that he was not interested in anyone other than me. No-one could be more faithful than he was. Yet my possessiveness made me jealous. The Lord taught me that it was wrong to accuse Prakash in this way or to be suspicious of him, and thus make life difficult for him.

Perhaps it was because I had known that my own father had been unfaithful to Mummy, that I reacted in this way. Or perhaps, this is how all women are! But then I thought of how often I myself had to talk to many men, in my work in the hospital. What was wrong with that? I realised then that it was my attitude that needed changing. How patient Prakash had been with me!

I remembered the advice my mother had got from the lady we had visited when I was a small girl. She had told Mummy that even if her husband was unfaithful to her, she must forgive him and show him so much love that he would be drawn to her by the power of that love, just as iron filings are drawn to a magnet. Thus a wise wife could keep her husband from many pitfalls.

One day a man was admitted into our hospital who was dying of cancer. I heard that, while he was working in another city away from his family, he had fallen into sin and had had a child through a woman there. His wife, who was a true believer, brought him to our hospital and cared for him until he died. I discovered that she later befriended the woman her husband had sinned with. She even adopted the little child born to that woman and brought it up as her own. She told others that she loved the child because it was her husband's offspring! Only Christ could have done such a miracle as this - to make a human being so loving and forgiving.

Such examples challenge me to be a loving wife to my husband too. I have learnt that the greatest need in marriage is to endure in love until the end. Love covers a husband's shortcomings and failures, overlooks his mistakes and does not bring to mind his past sins. Every time I read the love chapter (1 Corinthians 13:1-13), I feel I am miserably short of God's standard and realise that I have a long way to go. The only light that shines in the darkness of this world is the unchanging love of God. God has loved me so greatly. Thus He has placed me in debt to all around me, to share His love with others who come across my path.

Love, I saw, was the greatest thing in the Christian life. But my human love was totally unreliable. I saw the need to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit, so that my heart could be filled with the love of God.

I know that God, Who did not spare His own Son for me will also with Him freely give me ALL THINGS - all through my life.

What a wonderful salvation I have received.

I was an outcast from my earliest days, but I have now found such grace from the Lord that I wonder at times if there is anyone happier than me, in the whole world. Some of you may wonder how I could possibly be so happy, when I am living with my husband's parents, with no home that I can call my own. It is only because I have found my happiness in the Lord and not in my circumstances. "Godliness with contentment is great gain".

I've met many Christians who never seem to be happy and I know the reason now. They have unsatisfied earthly longings. They feel they must have one thing or another, and cannot do without it. Thus they become restless.

I remember vividly what I told the Lord on the day I was baptized in the Holy Spirit: "From now on, I will desire nothing on earth but Thee, Lord Jesus" (Psalms 73:25). I check my heart frequently to see if I have kept my word. When I find that I have backslidden, I repent and renew my promise to love the Lord with all my heart.

Thus far, the Lord has preserved me. I believe He will preserve me in this devotion to Him until the end of my life. My experience has been according to my name. I have found "grace upon grace".

I want to give all glory and honour to the Lord Jesus.

"Jesus my Lord, I bow in full surrender,

For Thou hast purchased me on Calvary;

Now I am Thine, and Thine alone forever,

And Thou my portion for eternity."

02.01. GOD Made Mothers

GOD Made Mothers by Dr. Annie Zac Poonen

02.02. Copyright Info

Copyright - Dr. Annie Zac Poonen(1998) This book has been copyrighted to prevent misuse.

It should not be reprinted or translated without written permission from the author.

Permission is however given for any part of this book

to be downloaded and printed

provided it is for FREE distribution,

provided NO ALTERATIONS are made,

provided the AUTHOR'S NAME AND ADDRESS are mentioned,

and provided this copyright notice is included

in each printout.

For further details, please contact:

The Publisher

02.03. Table of Contents

Table of Contents

A Personal Letter

1. A First-Class Mother
2. Keeping Our Conscience Sensitive
3. Children Need God's Word And Prayer
4. Spending Time With Our Children
5. Teaching Our Children Principles And Not Rules
6. Teaching Our Children Disciplined Habits
7. Disciplining Our Children
8. Encouraging Our Children
9. "Have Patience With Me"
10. A Spirit-Filled Helper
11. Sitting At The Feet Of Jesus
12. The Gentle Whisper Of God
13. Remember Lot's Wife
14. A Door Of Hope

Some Advice For Expectant Mothers

Appendix 1. Preparing For Baby's Arrival

Some Advice For New Mothers

Appendix 2. Care Of The Infant

Appendix 3. The Growing Child

Appendix 4. Milestones And Immunology

Appendix 5. Physical Defects And Other Troubles

Appendix 6. Accidents And Diseases - Prevention And Cure

02.04. A PERSONAL LETTER THAT YOU MUST READ

A PERSONAL LETTER THAT YOU MUST READ

Dear Mothers,

I have written this book mainly to answer the questions that many mothers have asked me during past years. It has been written for mothers who feel a need for spiritual help and encouragement.

For 30 years, God has given me grace as the wife of a servant of the Lord. My husband was often away from home, preaching the gospel. Because of his uncompromising stand for the Lord, our family was a constant target of Satan's attacks. Today, we can testify that every attack of Satan was overcome - by God's grace alone. I am saying that only to encourage you to believe that God will do the same for you too.

God has also given me grace to be the mother of four sons - all of whom are grown up now. By the mercy of God alone, they have received Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and are following the Lord today.

I am not writing as an expert, but as one who has struggled, failed, got up and pressed on in the race - and discovered in the hard places of life that God is indeed "a very present help in trouble" (Psalms 46:1).

As a medical doctor, I have also added some practical advice at the end of the book.

The greatest thing you can do for your children is to lead them to God so that they receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. This will ensure that you and your children spend eternity together.

You must lead your children to salvation when they are still young. Once they are older, they may not respond as readily as at an earlier age. A child wants its mother close to it at night. So when you tuck your children in bed, don't be in a hurry to go away. Spend a few minutes with each of them individually, or with all of them together.

Talk to them about the Lord. Children are most responsive to spiritual things at bedtime.

Sing a hymn to them like "Just as I am without one plea... O Lamb of God I come", for example. Then tell them a short story, like one of the parables that Jesus spoke, or a story from some "Bedtime Storybook".

Then pray with them, something like this: "Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for this day and for all the ways in which You blessed me today with food and health and loving parents and brothers and sisters and many other good gifts. Please forgive me all my sins and cleanse my heart with the blood You shed for me on Calvary's cross. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus, and make me Your child from today. Thank You for hearing me. Amen".

Children who grow up in God-fearing homes may pray such a prayer many times. But one of those times, it will be from their hearts, with a sense of their own need, and then they will make contact with God. Thereafter they will no longer be just your children, but children of God as well. That will be your greatest joy.

02.05. CHAPTER 01 - A FIRST-CLASS MOTHER

CHAPTER 01 - A FIRST-CLASS MOTHER

"O God, You have taught me from my youth; and I still declare Your wondrous deeds. And when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me until I declare Your strength to this generation (to my children)" (Psalms 71:17-18).

All of us mothers have a great responsibility before God, to pass on to our children all that God has taught us. We must not leave this earth without having done so. This is not a responsibility that we can afford to postpone until our children are grown up. We must start sharing with our children the wonderful things that God has done for us, right from the time that they are very little.

Timothy's grandmother Lois must have passed on her "sincere faith" in God to her daughter Eunice at a very early age and Eunice in turn must have passed on that faith to her son Timothy also when he was very young (2 Timothy 1:5). The result was that Timothy grew up to be an outstanding servant of God. What a great service to the church those two faithful mothers performed.

There is no magic formula for bringing up children aright, since each child is different. But you must never forget that it was God Who chose you to be the mother of your children. It was God Who created each of those children in your womb - and He created each of them with a purpose. He appointed YOU to be their mother. So you have to take your God-given responsibility seriously and be willing to sacrifice everything for His sake and their sake.

Children are God's gift to us, and it is only by His strength and with His wisdom that we can bring them up aright. We must believe that God will do wonderful things for our children.

Psalms 127:4 says that children are like arrows in the hands of a warrior. Arrows are used by a warrior to shoot at the enemy. We can put the Devil to shame through our children, if we bring them up aright for the Lord. On the other hand, if we are not faithful, our children can grow up to serve the Devil, for that is the natural direction in which their corrupt human natures tend. But if we teach them to reverence God and instruct them in the principles of God's Word, they can grow up to be soldiers in God's army. This is a great responsibility and we must never take it lightly.

Psalms 127:1-5 goes on to say that the parents of such children will not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies at the gates of the city (Psalms 127:5). The Bible says that it is through the mouths of our children that God plans to crush His adversaries (Psalms 8:2). May the Lord's Name be honoured then as the Devil is put to shame through our children. And when it goes well with our children, we must be careful to give God all the glory for it. We must not take any of that glory ourselves, imagining that it was because we were such faithful mothers that our children are following the Lord. Our boast should only be in the Lord and in what He has done. Not even in our thoughts should we take any of that glory to ourselves.

God compares His love to that of a mother for her child (Isaiah 49:15), because as the Creator of all men and women, He knows that a mother's love is the closest thing on earth to His own Divine, sacrificial, selfless love.

There is an old saying that God created mothers because He wanted to show Himself to little children through them. Our challenge as mothers is to make our homes such an exciting place for our children, that they will never prefer any other place to their home. They should always long to come home from wherever they are. May the Lord help us to be better mothers then, so that our children can see what God is like, as they observe us, and see what heaven is like when they observe our home.

What a challenge it is to seek to be a first-class mother.

"Dear Lord, I do not ask

That Thou should'st give me some high work of Thine,

Some noble calling, or some wondrous task;

Give me a little hand to hold in mine,

Give me a little child to point the way

Over the strange, sweet path that leads to Thee;

Give me a little voice to teach to pray,

Give me two shining eyes Thy face to see.

The only crown I ask, dear Lord to wear

Is this : that I may teach a little child.

I do not ask that I may ever stand

Among the wise, the worthy, or the great;

I only ask that softly, hand in hand,

A child and I may enter at the gate"

- (Author unknown)

02.06. CHAPTER 02 - KEEPING OUR CONSCIENCE SENSITIVE

CHAPTER 02 - KEEPING OUR CONSCIENCE SENSITIVE

If our children are to grow up in the fear of the Lord, then one of the most important things we mothers must have is a sensitive conscience. Our conscience can become insensitive if at any time we become satisfied with our spiritual state. Perhaps we have heard the Word so often that we have now become familiar with it. Then we can no longer hear the Spirit speaking to us through it and our conscience becomes dull. Like a knife that has lost its sharpness, the truths that once excited us no longer do so.

We can become insensitive in our conscience through attachment to material wealth. When we prosper materially, it is easy for our conscience to become dull. It is easier to feel our need of God when we are poor than when we are rich. Even a small raise in our husband's salary can make us proud. Jesus said that it was easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter God's kingdom. The Lord rebuked even an elder in a church once for imagining that he needed nothing just because he was wealthy (Revelation 3:17). Wealth is a great snare. So we must be very careful if we have begun to prosper financially. It is not wrong to be rich, if God has made us so. But we must ensure that wealth does not go to our head and make us dull in our conscience. Poverty of spirit is the best state of mind to be in always.

Honesty is one of the most important virtues that we must have as mothers and that our children must see in us always. We should teach our children truthfulness by being truthful with them ourselves. We must get rid of all lying and every form of exaggeration from our lives. If we hear our children exaggerating or telling lies, perhaps they picked up that habit from us! We must never promise our children anything if we know we won't be able to keep our promise. If the cause is some unavoidable circumstance, then our children will understand, because there will always be situations where we have to deny ourselves for the sake of others. But otherwise we must keep all the promises we make to our children.

We must also cleanse ourselves from every type of hypocrisy ("acting"). Our children must see that we don't tell them to do something that we don't do ourselves. We must ask God to show us where we fail in this areas, so that we can repent. God can speak to us even when we see hypocrisy in our own children.

Covetousness is another deadly sin that we must cleanse ourselves from. If our children see that we are not content with the earthly goods God has chosen to give us, they too will become covetous. Girls (especially) observe very carefully what their mothers buy or long to buy.

If God wants us to have something He will give us the money to buy it. If He doesn't do that, that would be His way of telling us that we don't really need it. Even if we could have afforded it, it may not have been absolutely essential. And then it would be best for us not to have it. A good conscience is far more valuable than all earthly goods put together. Our children can learn contentment with the simple, cheap toys and games that we can afford to buy for them. They can

also learn to improvise their own games too. In the long run, they will then turn out to be more creative than other children whose rich parents can afford to buy them expensive, fancy toys and games.

We must also be careful not to backbite or speak evil of anyone in our homes. I have seen the tragedy of children despising and hating other believers in their own church as a result of the backbiting and gossiping that they heard against those believers in their own homes. What a tragedy it is when parents poison and destroy their own children like this! Surely it must be of such parents that Jesus spoke when he said that anyone who stumbled little ones should "have a millstone tied round his neck and be thrown into the sea (Matthew 18:6). The mother has to be most careful in this matter, because she is the one who spends the maximum time with her children.

Children can easily sense when there is bitterness in their mother's heart against anyone. A little bit of sour milk or curd can make a whole vessel of milk sour - and sourness turns into bitterness, with time. The Bible warns us that many can be defiled by a root of bitterness in the heart. So we must get rid of all bad attitudes promptly.

Misunderstandings can arise in the closest of earthly relationships. But we must do our best to get rid of them as soon as possible, with God's help. Even small children can sense the difference between good and evil, music and noise, harmony and conflict etc., They understand these things, long before they start speaking. So we must be careful not to defile them.

We must also cleanse ourselves from all partiality. We must not have any favourites among our children. All of them must be the same to us and of equal value to us. No child must be treated in a special way.

Pride in our children's beauty, or behaviour, or intelligence, or anything else is another sin that we have to be very watchful about. We can destroy our children if we are proud about anything in their lives. As soon as we become proud, the nature of Lucifer takes control of us. Lucifer was a beautiful angel, but he became the devil in a moment when he became proud.

We must also be careful that our motive in bringing up our children in a good way is not OUR OWN glory. If that be the case, our children will quickly sense it and they too will begin to do things merely to impress others. We must teach our children to live for the glory of God alone.

Let us seek God for grace then to live in continuous repentance and continuous cleansing from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (2 Corinthians 7:1) so that we can keep our conscience sensitive until the end of our lives.

02.07. CHAPTER 03 - CHILDREN NEED GOD'S WORD AND PRAYER

CHAPTER 03 - CHILDREN NEED GOD'S WORD AND PRAYER

God told the Israelites that they were to teach their children about Him, when they sit down, when they walk together in the streets, when they are about to go to bed and when they get up in the morning (Deuteronomy 6:7). This teaches us that it is important to teach our children spiritual principles at all times and on every occasion.

It is tragic to see the number of children from Christian homes who are doing things today that even unbelievers would not do! What is the cause? Is it because their parents failed them??? I don't know and I don't want to pass a judgment. I would rather sympathize with their parents and encourage them to believe that God can still do a miracle and change their children. But we must all learn lessons from the failures we see around us, or else we will make the same mistakes ourselves and our children will suffer.

Only through God's Word and prayer can we protect our children from disaster. There is no other way.

Reading a "Children's Picture Bible" to our children even when they cannot read for themselves is a good habit. Because, later on, they will then feel like reading it all by themselves. Another good habit to encourage in our children is that of memorising Scripture. That can be a good way for us to memorise some Bible-verses too!!

If we talk to our children about the Lord and His Word constantly, we will keep the channels of communication open with them. Then we will quickly detect any bad habits or words that they may have picked up at school or from their friends; and then we can help them to get rid of them.

We should keep our children away from things forbidden in the Scriptures. For example, we should not take our children for heathen festivals, neither should we attend them ourselves. We should not allow our children to celebrate heathen festivals along with their friends - for example, lighting sparklers and rockets at Diwali time. In the same way, when we know that the baptism of babies is wrong in God's eyes, we should not allow our children to attend such child-baptisms - even the child-baptisms of our own relatives. Our children will not grow in reverence for God and His Word, if we do not teach them that they have to be separated from all that is of darkness, even if they have to displease their closest friends and relatives, as a result. We want to be friendly with our relatives. So we can visit them at some other time.

We should teach our children that the commandments of God are all for their very best - and therefore they should obey them joyfully. Children must be taught to love the Word of God and to obey the Lord out of love and reverence - and not out of the fear of getting caught or being punished.

Prayer is like a blanket with which we can cover our children. Just like we would make sure during a cold night that our children are properly covered, we also need to ensure that they are covered in

a cold world by our prayers. Wherever they are - in school or far away - we can ask God in prayer to protect them from the snares that the enemy has prepared for them.

We must unite with our husbands and claim the promise of our Lord that " if two agree concerning anything on earth, it will be granted to them by our heavenly Father" (Matthew 18:19). We must pray to God, agreeing together with our husbands, that all our children will be born again and become wholehearted disciples of the Lord. We must not allow Satan to bring anything between us and our husbands, lest Satan get an opportunity to attack our children. We should offer ourselves and our children on the altar to the Lord every day.

Praying together as a family is also very important. In the mornings, this may not often be possible, since it can be a big rush getting the children ready for school etc., So a brief prayer asking for God's guidance and protection over them should be enough. We could also pray for any urgent needs at that time. But in the evenings, at dinner-time, it is good to take some time to read the Scriptures and to pray together. Each child should be encouraged to pray. On holidays, we could spend a longer time together with God's Word.

Only God can preserve our children in an evil world. This is why we must depend on the Word of God and prayer more than on anything else. Every problem our children face can be overcome with the Word of God and prayer. When we face problems with regard to our children, if we have developed the habit of listening to the Lord, He will give us a promise for the solution of each problem. We can then cling to that promise and pray on, until the problem is solved.

We mothers should give our children a sense of security and love. Our children should find in us a haven and a refuge to which they can always turn. This will enable them in later years to understand the love and care of God more clearly. Surely this is a great privilege that we have - to reflect the nature of God to our children, so that their young minds can grasp the Unseen more firmly.

"The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands" (Proverbs 14:1)

02.08. CHAPTER 04 - SPENDING TIME WITH OUR CHILDREN

CHAPTER 04 - SPENDING TIME WITH OUR CHILDREN Our children must be first priority in our lives as long as they are at home. We must never leave the bringing up of our children in the hands of their grandparents or their Sunday-school teachers. God has given that responsibility to us mothers first of all, because we brought them forth and we spend the most time with them at home.

Therefore, we must never neglect our children for the sake of pursuing our profession or a career, or by excessive visiting of relatives and friends or by any other form of social activity. When my children were at home, I found it better to avoid attending most social functions, for their sake. I never regretted such self-denial, for the time saved thereby was time well invested with my children. But when God brought needy people to my home, I would set everything aside and seek to help them out. And then God took care of my children.

Now that all my four sons have grown up and are away from home, I find that I have plenty of time for visiting people and other social activities. So I would encourage you to wait for God's time for everything.

Once we are married, our husband, our children and our home should have topmost priority in our lives - in that order. We will have to sacrifice many things if we want our married life and our home to be happy and if we want our children to grow up aright. But it is well worth it in the long run.

It will be very difficult for us to give full attention to our children, if we start working - even if it be only in a part-time job. We will return home in the evenings, from such a job, tired and weary, and find ourselves getting easily irritated and upset with our children over little things. Many things can then go wrong in the home. We will find that our children also tend to become more naughty and stubborn, when they find Mummy herself in a bad mood frequently!!!. It is a full-time job to be a mother - especially when the children are small and of school-going age. We mustn't therefore take on more than we can handle at such a time.

We should do everything possible to attend the meetings of the church along with our children. Thereby we set a good example for them. But if at times, we are unable to go to some meetings because our children are sick, we should not feel condemned. At such times, our children may be crying in secret, and their unspoken cry may be, "Mummy, please don't leave me alone now." When children are sick, they need the assurance and comfort of a mother more than anything else. So we shouldn't leave them in the care of others, at such times. One day they will thank us for the happy home we provided them, even if they never know how many sacrifices we made for their sakes.

Even if we are bedridden, we can still be good mothers to our children at home. We may not be able to attend many meetings perhaps. But our fellowship with the Lord can still be unbroken. There are many Christians in Communist prisons who cannot attend any meetings at all. But they are gems whom the Lord is polishing - and He will display them to the whole world one day. We

mothers too can be such gems for the Lord.

We must take an interest in everything related to our children. If they have some function in school or if they are taking part in some sports event, we should go and watch them participate in it. By such actions, we can win the hearts of our children - for they will see that we are interested in the things that they do. On holidays, we can play indoor games with them and talk to them about the things that interest them - and not just the things that interest us. We must talk to them individually and pay attention and listen to them when they talk to us. Then they too will pay attention to us when we say something to them.

We should take an interest in their academic studies too. If they don't understand something, it is no use scolding them. We should try and study that subject ourselves and explain it to them. If that is beyond us, then we should get someone else to help them. We should not plan social visits at times when our children should be studying. Neither should we be occupied with entertaining visitors at times when our children need our attention. Teaching our children will involve a lot of sacrifice on our part and we will certainly have to deny ourselves a lot of socializing if we want to do it right. But we will not regret it when we see our children grown up and doing well in life.

Many mothers find it a real problem getting along with their teenage children and getting them to share their problems with them. One reason could be that those mothers were so busy working and entertaining friends when their children were small, that they had hardly any time to spend with their children then. Now the tables are turned and their teenage children have no time to spend with their mothers!!

We need to win the confidence of our children when they are small itself. But if we failed to do that then, let us seek the Lord and try to do so at least now. It is never too late to start trying. We should never give up hope.

Let us never forget that our children are God's special gifts to us, and He tells us concerning each child of ours, "Take this child and nurse it for me ... and I will give you a reward" (Exodus 2:9). Our children must grow up realising that they are valuable and precious to us. They must taste God's goodness from us mothers first of all. Then our homes will be what God wants them to be - and God will be glorified.

02.09. CHAPTER 05 - TEACHING OUR CHILDREN PRINCIPLES AND NOT RULES

CHAPTER 05 - TEACHING OUR CHILDREN PRINCIPLES AND NOT RULES As mothers, we often think in terms of how to correct our children in a right way. But if we would only take some pains in instructing our children aright, we can avoid giving them a lot of unnecessary correction.

There should be very few rules that we make for our children. If we make too many rules, our children will either become legalistic or end up disobeying every rule we make. We must teach them principles rather than give them many rules. Simple instructions are better than complicated rules. The most important principles that we must teach our children are obedience to parents, being truthful, unselfishness, being respectful to older people, and having a concern for the rights of others. If they follow these principles, they will not need many rules. Later on in life when they leave home they will have these principles and values to guide them all their lives. The Bible promises that it will go well with children who honour their parents. So if we want it to go well with our children, we must teach them to honour us. They must also be taught to speak with respect to all older people.

We must teach our children to be unselfish, in practical ways at home. We must teach them to share their toys and the things that they like, with each other, and with others who come to our home.

Children must be taught to respect the property of others and never to steal. We must never allow them to bring home things from school that don't belong to them. If our children see us borrowing things from others that we are not careful to return, they too will start doing the same thing themselves. Children are not naturally virtuous. They must be taught virtue.

Children should be encouraged to do manual work at home. But we shouldn't give the same job to the same child repeatedly. We must rotate the jobs among the children so that each one gets a turn according to his/her ability. Thus we will be fair to all. We should not get our children habituated to receiving payment or reward for the work they do at home. I know there are different views on this. But there are dangers in this method. It may be all right occasionally. But otherwise our children must be taught that helping at home is the normal thing for everyone to do - father, mother and children. They must not feel that they are doing us a favour by helping us at home.

We must give our children the freedom to say whatever they want to us and to talk about any subject freely at all times. Of course, they should not be permitted to be rude or cheeky. But if we allow them to be free with us, we will soon discover the things that are bothering them. When they are aloof and quiet, we will know that something is wrong. We must win our children's confidence and they must consider us as their closest friends. Our children will always value the fact that we mothers cared enough for them to help them and not just blame them. So if we take the time to cultivate fellowship with them, there will be less need to correct them. They will see the sacrifices we make for them and the wholehearted attention we give them - and they will respond to us

warmly. Years later when they face pressures in life they will look back to similar situations when we mothers had faith and did not give up our faith....and how God brought us through that trial triumphantly. That is how their own faith will develop.

It is important that we never allow our children to be rude to any servants we have in our home. If we make our children apologise to a servant even once, that will often be enough to cure them of such behaviour. We must teach our children to be thankful to servants who help us in our homes. If our children earn some money or get a cash prize at school, they should be encouraged to get a gift for such servants, to show their appreciation for them. We must take it very seriously if our children ever despise anyone who works for us. The unfortunate circumstances of servants may have placed them lower in the social scale, but their Maker watches over them and will hold us parents responsible if our children despise them. If our children grow up with an attitude of superiority towards those who are socially lower, that will destroy our children in the long run. Asking forgiveness is difficult for all; it is worthwhile if we mothers set an example.

Oneness with our husbands is also very important. This will give us spiritual authority when we deal with our children. We must always do our best to resolve all differences of opinion with our husbands at the earliest opportunity. We should do this for the glory of God. But it is good for the sake of our children too. We cannot expect our children to submit to us if we ourselves don't submit to our husbands. The spirit of rebellion can easily be brought into a home by an unsubmitive wife and then all the children can catch that infection from her!! We must never forget that we and our husbands have a common goal: The well-being of our children

We should avoid praising our children too much in public, since that could puff them up. They may think that what we are flattering them or that we are exaggerating. But it is good to encourage our children - both publicly and privately. But we have to be careful here - for praising one child publicly can lead to jealousy among the other children and can lead to sibling rivalry. It can also lead to the child beginning to behave self-righteously thereafter. Our home must be a foretaste of heaven. We must provide for our children a home that is like a "heaven on earth" - a place to which they can retreat from the battles, struggles and temptations they face in the world.

02.10. CHAPTER 06 - TEACHING OUR CHILDREN DISCIPLINED HABITS

CHAPTER 06 - TEACHING OUR CHILDREN DISCIPLINED HABITS

Discipline is a good thing to teach our children - discipline in their eating habits, their study habits and even in their recreation. Even during holidays it is good for them to do a little study and memorising of Scripture.

Life will be much easier for us, if we teach our children early in life to take care of their own things, to keep their things neatly, to get up on time, to eat their meals on time, etc., The older children can also be taught to wash their own underclothes and to share some of the heavy work at home, so that they don't take their mothers for granted. This may take a little time for them to learn. But once learnt, these habits will help them throughout their lives. Our children must also be taught to honour God and to put Him first in their lives. One way is by teaching them when they are young, to attend the meetings of the church regularly and on time. I have seen how my own children have experienced God's help, when they honoured God by attending the weekly Sunday meetings, even when they had examinations the very next day. God honours those who honour Him.

Children should be taught to sit quietly in the meetings. By teaching them this, we will be teaching them to respect God, by not distracting others who are listening. We can give small children some storybook to look at or a colouring book to paint. Even when they are older and sitting by themselves, we should keep an eye on them to see that they are behaving themselves. If we find them misbehaving, we should warn them when we return home from the meeting and remind them of the importance of reverencing God.

It is not good to give older children storybooks to read during the meetings, if they are old enough to pay attention to what is being preached. If they can pay attention to their teachers for 3 to 4 hours every day in their classrooms, they can certainly pay attention for 2 hours in a meeting. We would not want them to be reading story books, while their teachers are explaining something. Neither should they be doing that in the meetings!

Children must be taught to be content with the food and clothing they are given and also not to be wasteful with material things.

Disciplined study habits are also important. We may have to sit with our children, especially when they are small, and go over their lessons with them so that they can be confident in the classroom. We don't want them to make education their god. But God will certainly not be glorified if they do badly in school because of their laziness. Our children may not be intelligent. But we can teach them all to be hardworking.

02.11. CHAPTER 07 - DISCIPLINING OUR CHILDREN

CHAPTER 07 - DISCIPLINING OUR CHILDREN

"Teach a child to choose the right path, and when he is older he will remain upon it" (Proverbs 22:6 - Living).

"Discipline your son in his early years while there is hope. If you don't, you will ruin his life" (Proverbs 19:18 - Living)

"A youngster's heart is filled with rebellion, but punishment will drive it out of him" (Proverbs 22:15 - Living)

"Don't fail to correct your children; discipline won't hurt them! They won't die if you use a stick on them! Punishment will keep them out of hell" (Proverbs 23:13-14 - Living).

"Discipline your son and he will give you happiness and peace of mind" (Proverbs 29:17 - Living). When it comes to correcting and disciplining our children we need much wisdom and grace. We must chastise them, just as God chastises us - in love and with compassion, seeking their eternal good. We should not leave all disciplining of children in the hands of our husbands. A weak school-teacher will always send a disobedient child to the principal for punishment. And children will not respect such a teacher - or such a mother. Our children will see that we are weak if we never discipline them ourselves - and then we will soon lose our authority over them.

We should also know what matters to correct our children for and what to ignore. One fundamental principle to be borne in mind is that their character is more important than any material loss. We must have a proper sense of eternity's values ourselves. If our children are rude to us (or for that matter, to anybody), or if they tell deliberate lies, we must recognise these as more serious matters than if they merely broke some expensive item accidentally.

We must cleanse ourselves of all anger, impatience and irritation when disciplining our children. We must not punish them at any time in anger. I am sure we have all failed in this area in the past. But we can repent and ask the Lord for grace to correct our children in future, with love.

We should never give our children heavy manual work as a punishment. They should learn to work as a duty and not as a punishment. In the same way, we should not deny them food as a punishment - unless it be a luxury item such as a chocolate or an ice-cream. Children need good food for proper growth.

If we warn our children that we will punish them for disobedience in some area, then we must keep our word. Otherwise they will think our threats are empty - and they will lose respect for our words. But we can reduce the severity of a punishment if we see that they deserve a lighter one. We can even cancel a threatened punishment if we see that our children are sorry for what they have done. Even God Himself was merciful to Nineveh and canceled the threatened punishment when he saw their repentance (Jonah 3:1-10). God deals with us in severity and in kindness - and so

must we, with our children.

Using the rod or the belt on our children is not the only form of punishment. We can also restrict them from playing or have them lie down quietly in their beds for some time. These actions too can speak to their hearts when they have done something wrong.

We should never punish our children unmercifully. We must not slap them on the face or injure them when disciplining them. Faces are meant to be stroked in love and not to be slapped. We should avoid using our hands to hit our children. It is better to use a rod when we punish them, as the Scripture says (Proverbs 23:13-14). Hands are meant to caress our children, thereby expressing our love for them.

Once our children become teenagers (above 13 years of age), we should avoid punishing them physically. If we have disciplined them between the ages of 1 and 13, there won't usually be any need to punish them physically thereafter. So let us make use of the years when they are young, to discipline them and to train them in godly ways.

We should never discipline our children in the presence of others, since that will be disgracing them publicly - and that will make their punishment double. We must respect their dignity at all times. We could punish them for their failures privately. Disobedience and rudeness however must always be corrected at once. If we fail to discipline them in such matters, they could go to dangerous extremes that could ruin them as they grow up. And then it may be too late to correct them. Some parents punish their children publicly just to show others that they are strict in bringing up their children. This is seeking the honour of men and is evil in God's eyes.

Both father and mother should be united in disciplining their children. If we mothers try to defend our children, when Daddy is punishing them, then we run the risk of destroying our children in the long run.

After disciplining our children, we must assure them that they are forgiven. We must also teach them how their mistakes can be corrected. But we should be careful not to remind them of their mistakes again and again. Some mothers do this, and that only serves to frustrate the children even more.

There are times when we should reward our children too. God Himself rewards us when we have denied ourselves in some area. When Abraham denied himself and gave Lot the opportunity to choose first whichever land he wanted (Genesis 13:1-18), God rewarded Abraham immediately. In the same way when our children have been good and denied themselves in some way, it is good to reward them. We could also give them gifts on their birthdays, or when they are sick, or after they have been hospitalised.

There can be times when we feel bad for having punished our children too much and then seek to make up for it by giving them some gift as a compensation. That is all right if done only occasionally. But if it becomes a habit, we will soon find our children losing all respect for the punishment we give them. It is better to reward them at some later time, when they have made an effort to be good.

It's easy when problems arise concerning our children, to lose the sense of joy and wonder and gratitude to God that we first had when our baby was born. But we should never forget that it is a

priceless privilege to bear a child. There are so many wives who have never had that privilege and who would give anything in the world to have a baby. So we must determine that we will keep our hand on the plough at any cost; and we must do our best to see that everything runs smoothly in our homes. God will renew our strength and keep us spiritually fresh, if we spend time with Him and maintain a close walk with Him.

02.12. CHAPTER 08 - ENCOURAGING OUR CHILDREN

CHAPTER 08 - ENCOURAGING OUR CHILDREN

I consider encouraging our children to be the most important thing that we can ever do for them, as mothers. But alas, this is what is missing in most homes.

We see many children growing up warped and twisted in their personalities, because of parental abuse, lack of love or lack of fellowship. A child who has the misfortune of growing up in a home where he is never encouraged, is like a plant growing under the shade of a boulder that never gets to see the sunlight.

It is easy to praise and encourage a talented child or one who does well in studies or athletics. But it is the weaker child who needs encouragement the most. We must sense the need of such a child who may be hurting inwardly but does not express his hurt. A sensitive mother will be able to pick up his feelings as easily as a thermometer reads the temperature!! When a child feels inferior, or is not able to achieve what his older brothers have achieved, or feels rejected by his friends, and begins to feel unwanted, do we add to his pressures by scolding him when we should be encouraging him?

We can test ourselves by asking how often we use the word "Don't" to our children. Let us tell our children what they should do and not just what they should not do.

Perhaps you feel that one of your children was born without your planning to have him/her. Have you ever said these words to anyone or to yourself perhaps: "This child was an accident". How contrary that is to the Word of God which says that "children are a gift of the Lord" (Psalms 127:3). We need to value every child as a gift of God. God makes no mistake, even when we did not anticipate having a child.

We should never expose our children's failures publicly or let them down publicly. Our children must know that we will be loyal to them even behind their backs.

We must also teach our older children to accept their younger brothers and sisters and not to be jealous of them, just because we spend more time with the younger ones. This can at times be a problem, when a new baby is born and it gets a lot of attention from everyone. But with God's help, we can show our children that all of them are equally valuable to us.

How often we have failed to be compassionate to a child who has failed. Even if a child has backslidden or fallen into sin, a mother can still lead that lost lamb back into the Saviour's fold by her loving concern and prayer. When a child has failed, that is not the time to scold him. God does not scold those who lack wisdom and neither should we (James 1:5). How much wisdom we ourselves need to be better mothers - and God doesn't scold us!

Many backslidden children have been restored to the Lord through the faithful prayers of their mothers. So let us hold on to the promises of God without wavering.

If we spend time with our children, we will find that even while we are doing some ordinary task with them, they begin to open up and share their problems with us. And then we can encourage them to overcome and not to go under whatever they are facing. As our children grow older, we must treat them as mature adults and give them the respect that they are due. We must stop treating them like the babies they once were. Then we will find that they grow up to be our friends and they won't be distant from us.

There are many opportunities we have, as our children grow up, to prove for ourselves the truth of the promises in Scripture. God's providential care and concern will become a living reality to us, if we commit our children to Him day by day and live in dependence upon Him. Bringing up children can be a great means of spiritual maturity for us too. And this will ultimately affect the spiritual lives of our children as well. May God help each one of us to be faithful.

"When children live with criticism they learn to condemn,
When children live with hostility they learn to fight,
When children live with ridicule they learn to be shy,
When children live with shame they learn to feel guilty,
When children live with tolerance they learn to be patient,
When children live with encouragement they learn to be confident,
When children live with security they learn to have faith,
When children live with fairness they learn justice,
When children live with praise they learn to appreciate,
When children live with approval they learn to accept themselves,
When children live with friendship they learn to love."

(Author Unknown)

02.13. CHAPTER 09 - HAVE PATIENCE WITH ME

CHAPTER 09 - HAVE PATIENCE WITH ME "Have patience with me," cried the slave as he begged his fellow-slave for mercy (Matthew 18:29). This is the also unspoken cry that comes to us as housewives and mothers from many of those with whom we have to do each day. But we need to be sensitive in our spirits if we are to hear that cry - for it is unspoken.

It may be that our children are slow at learning something that we have repeatedly been trying to teach them, and we are sorely tempted to become impatient with them. If we could hear their unspoken cry, saying, "Have patience with me, I am trying my best to do it right," then it would be easier for us to overcome the temptation to get irritated with them.

Perhaps the servant who helps us with our work around the home is somewhat clumsy, and not as clean as we want her to be, and we are tempted to be hard on her. But her unspoken cry is, "Have patience with me. Give me another chance and I'll improve" - and we are presented with another opportunity to be more gentle. Or it may be that our aged parents, being old and infirm, are now dependent on us. Their feeble, unspoken cry is also, "Have patience with me. I don't want to trouble you, but I need your help now." If we are sensitive to their feelings, we will hear their cry and help them, without depriving them of their dignity, and without letting them feel their dependence.

Perhaps the behaviour of our fellow-sisters in the church is a trial for us. Their unspoken cry is also, "Have patience with me. I still lack a lot of wisdom." Then we realise that they also, like us, are struggling towards perfection. In such situations, we all find a tendency in our flesh to be like that unmerciful slave. Yet those are the very times when we need to remember afresh how much we have been forgiven by God, and how patient others have been with our own follies. So we should have our spiritual ears attuned at all times to hear the cry for patience that comes to us from our fellow-slaves - both young and old.

"Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." (James 1:4).

02.14. CHAPTER 10 - A SPIRIT-FILLED HELPER

CHAPTER 10 - A SPIRIT-FILLED HELPER The Holy Spirit is our Helper in our time of need (John 14:16). A wife who is filled with the Spirit will naturally then be filled with this characteristic of the Spirit and be a helper to her husband in his times of need. God created Eve to be such a helper for Adam. A good helper is one who is quick to see the need and the helplessness of her husband and equally quick to run and meet that need. Strong though your husband may be, there are still times when he needs someone to stand by him and encourage him in the battles of life.

Blessed is the wife who can be such a helper to her husband.

Unfortunately many wives are so taken up with their own sorrows and trials that they are always wanting to be comforted and consoled and pampered by their husbands. Thus they are never free from themselves to be of any help to their husbands. In some cases, this could be because those wives took on responsibilities for many unnecessary things that could have been avoided, and that finally weighed them down with burdens that became too much for them.

We need to recognise our limitations, and take on only what we can handle.

It is not enough that we help our husbands. As mothers, God has called us to be helpers for our children too. When our children fail in some area and are discouraged, or when they sin and disappoint us by their conduct, or when they don't come up to our expectations, what is our attitude?

Baby-girls are thrown into rivers in China, and into garbage-bins and temples in India, because they are a disappointment to their mothers who wanted male-children. Are we like those mothers, when a child of ours fails us in some way? A child who has failed, or who feels inferior, needs more love, compassion, understanding and care, more time to be spent with him and more prayer - not to be thrown into the river!!

We must believe that God, the Master Potter, can remake the most broken vessel in the world into something useful for His purposes.

He is able to remove the hardness from the most stubborn child of ours, and to make him a vessel that will glorify Him. The Holy Spirit, the Helper, has come to make Divine successes out of those of our children who are failures in this world. And we mothers are called to encourage our children to believe this. Or take another example: When the father has had to discipline a child firmly, we should not spoil that child at such times, by "comforting" him by giving him the impression that his father has been unduly hard on him.

Some mothers can go even so far as to encourage their children to deceive their fathers - as Rebekah encouraged Jacob to deceive Isaac. Jacob is commonly spoken of as a deceiver. But who was the one who taught him to deceive? An unwise mother, who was not one with her husband. These things are written for our instruction. As women, we have a vast storehouse of emotional energy within us. Instead of expending that energy on nagging our husbands for not

doing various things for us, why not spend it more profitably on carrying the burdens and problems of our children - for, after all they too have problems, and they are too young to bear them alone. They need someone to help them.

We are in a battle with an Enemy who is determined to destroy our homes, our children and our families. We must never give up in this battle, or lose sight of who our real enemy is, until every member of our family is safe in the kingdom of God. As the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, we as helpers must pray for our husbands and our children.

We can liken this struggle to a tug-of-war, in which the forces of darkness are pulling against our husbands and our children . Which side of the rope are we going to pull on - WITH our husbands and our children (praying for them and encouraging them), or AGAINST them (nagging them and scolding them)?

We need never be discouraged in this battle, for we have the Holy Spirit at all times to strengthen us, all of God's promises to back us up, and a cloud of witnesses to cheer us on. Every one of us can become the type of helper that God wants us to be.

All of our present self-denials and sufferings will seem as nothing in the final day, when our husbands and our children rise up and call us blessed, because we did our task as helpers faithfully.

02.15. CHAPTER 11 - SITTING AT THE FEET OF JESUS

CHAPTER 11 - SITTING AT THE FEET OF JESUS

"Mary sat on the floor, listening to Jesus as He talked. But Martha was the jittery type, worrying over the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, 'Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to You that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me.' But the Lord said to her, 'Martha, you are so upset over all these details! There is really only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it - and I won't take it away from her'" (Luke 10:38-42 - Living).

Martha was working hard at home. What can be more gratifying for a sister who truly loves the Lord than to make a good meal for her beloved Master and for His disciples? But that sweet labour she was engaged in became a burden too great for her to bear, when she saw what her sister Mary was doing. Not only was Mary doing nothing to help her - which seemed selfish - but she also appeared to be so happy in the Lord's presence. And the Lord seemed happy with her too. Martha's attitude had shades of the attitude that Cain had towards his younger brother. It is not easy for a sister to see others free from household burdens and rejoicing in the Lord, when she herself is weighed down with heavy burdens in her own home. Are we the jittery type like Martha? Martha was a weak vessel. All of us sisters are. She was also tired. But all of that still could not justify her spirit of complaining, judging others, comparison, jealousy and self-pity. When we are tired, we can go to Him Who invites us saying, "Come to Me all you who work so hard beneath a heavy yoke, and I will give you rest. Let Me teach you - for I am gentle and humble - and you will find rest for your souls; for I give you only light burdens." (Matthew 11:28-30 - Living). In the midst of all our work, we can live before God's face and acknowledge that He is on the throne, fully assured that He knows our every burden and problem. That will enable us to do our work with a lighter heart and with a spirit that is free - free to love and bless the others, even those who seem to have an easier lot in life, who seem to be able to go wherever they want to, whenever they want to.

"There is really only one thing worth being concerned about, and Mary has discovered it," Jesus told Martha.

It is a comforting thought that we don't have to choose between being a Mary or a Martha. We can be both. We read that after Lazarus had been raised from the dead, they made the Lord a supper in that home again, and "Martha was serving" (John 12:2). Mary was again sitting at the Lord's feet. But this time Martha had no complaints. She was happy, because she had learnt how to be at rest in the middle of her service.

She had probably learnt to "sit at the Lord's feet", while working in the kitchen. We who are tied down to our houses can do that and experience the joy of fulfillment in our earthly work. We can be at the feet of our Lord, even while we are doing those necessary chores for our family. It is the unrest that comes from a spirit of complaining and jealousy that takes us away from the Lord's

feet, not our daily work. The whole earth is the Lord's footstool. So we can sit at His feet anywhere.

David could testify, "I am quiet now before the Lord, as a child weaned from the breast" (Psalms 131:2 - Living). With no restlessness or possessive desire for the attention of its mother, the weaned child goes about without a care in the world. We can be like that too, for when we abide in the Lord, we will discover that He is with us, even in the midst of our household work.

"A single day spent in His temple (and my home is His holy temple, if that is the place He has appointed for me) is better than a thousand days anywhere else! I would rather be a doorman (or a busy wife and mother) in the temple of my God than live in palaces (of ease and comfort, outside His will for my life)..... For the Lord gives us grace and glory. No good thing will He withhold from those who walk along His paths" (Psalms 84:10-11 - Living) - even when those paths keep me for days on end cooped up in my home with long hours of work, or with sick children.

"I am with you always. I will never leave you nor forsake you", is the Lord's word to us. This is the good news that our Lord has brought to us sisters in the new covenant: That He will always be with us, no matter what we are doing. And so we can meet with Him always - in our homes.

Now we desire nothing on earth but the presence of our Lord Himself (Psalms 73:25). As Madam Guyon has so aptly put it:

"While place we seek or place we shun

The soul finds happiness in none;

But with my God to guide my way

'Tis equal joy to go or stay.

Could I be cast where Thou art not

That were indeed a dreadful lot;

But regions none remote I call

Secure of finding God in all." The Old Testament saints cried out saying, "As the deer pants for water, so we long and thirst for the living God. Where can we find Him, so that we can come and stand before Him?" (Psalms 42:1-2). But today, we find Him always right next to us - in our own home. How blessed!

02.16. CHAPTER 12 - THE GENTLE WHISPER OF GOD

CHAPTER 12 - THE GENTLE WHISPER OF GOD "I stand silently before the Lord.....Why then should I be tense with fear" (Psalms 62:1-2 - Living).

Haven't we all felt discouraged at times?

Haven't we felt like running away from some difficult situation? The great prophet Elijah once felt like that too. He had stood alone for the Lord at a time when others in Israel had backslidden (1 Kings 18:1-46). But after that great victory, he ran away from his appointed place. He ran 500 kilometres and finally found himself at Mount Horeb, with an earthquake and a windstorm and a fire around him (1 Kings 19:1-21). But there was a greater storm than all of these within his own heart. But Elijah was not alone on that mountain. Just as God had been with him when he took a stand for the Lord on Carmel, God was with Him when he ran away in fear and despair as well. As mothers, we may find ourselves in situations at times, where a storm rages within our hearts, and we feel like running away somewhere. But our heavenly Father is so compassionate that He will stand by us, speak to us tenderly, and encourage us, even if we are fed up with life, like Elijah was. At such times we must refuse to listen to the stormy voices of self-pity, because they will lead us to do and say many things that we will regret later on. Instead, let us do what Elijah did, when he was discouraged: Listen for the "sound of a gentle whisper" (1 Kings 19:12 - Living) . Above the windstorm and the earthquake, the Friend of sinners, Who understands our every weakness, seeks to speak to us. That gentle whisper alone can bring comfort to our souls. The storm will be stilled, and peace will reign in our hearts.

David said, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me.....How precious it is, Lord, to realize that You are thinking about me constantly! I can't even count how many times a day Your thoughts turn towards me. And when I waken in the morning, you are still thinking of me" (Psalms 139:7; Psalms 139:9-10; Psalms 139:17-18 - Living).

"Peace, Fear not, It is I," said Jesus, with gentleness to His disciples, as He came walking to them over the very waves and the sea that they feared would drown them. In no time at all the storm was stilled. And He is the same today - to still every storm in our lives that may cause us to fear or despair. "Thy gentleness makes me great" (Psalms 18:35). Do we face hostility from others? Then consider Him Who endured contradiction and hostility from sinners against Himself (Hebrews 12:3). The enmity we face from even friends and relatives are only indications that we are on the right path. Along that path, we see Jesus, our Forerunner - Who also suffered hostility, but Who did not yield to self-pity, criticism, or complaining, but instead overcame evil with good. When He suffered, He did not threaten, but forgave and blessed His accusers. He listened to the gentle whisper of His Father and committed His cause to Him. Our Father Who watches everything that everyone says and does, will judge everything righteously one day, and there is no partiality with Him, because He is aware of the true facts in every situation.

If we do what Jesus did, we will be able to overcome all feelings of self-pity, and exult with joy that we have a share in the fellowship of His sufferings. Then we will also be able to finish with all reviling, slander, accusations, demands, self-defense, self-justification, and self-pity.

Let us allow the Lord then to crush our Self-life through such fiery trials. From that death to Self will arise a fragrance in resurrection-power to God's glory. And we will hear Him saying, "You are my beloved daughter, with whom I am well-pleased". That word of approval will be our greatest reward.

Let silence reign then within our heart at all times, for it is now God's holy temple. "The Lord is in His holy temple. Be silent all flesh before the Lord." (Habakkuk 2:20; Zechariah 2:13). By such tranquillity and silence under provocation, we will prove that we are true servants of our Lord Who told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this earth. If it were, my servants would fight" (John 18:36).

Jesus is King. Earthly Pilates and their soldiers are all but slaves of our God. And He Who "turned the curse into a blessing" for His people centuries ago, will do the same for us even today (Deuteronomy 23:5).

God invites us to "BE STILL (relax, cease striving and let go) - and recognise that He is God" (Psalms 46:10).

Yes, God is Sovereign. All authority in heaven and on earth are still in His hands. He is our Creator, Redeemer, Master and Lord. All that He sends across our path has been doubly filtered through the micro-filters of 1 Corinthians 10:13 and Romans 8:28. So we can be at rest at all times. In the thick of the battle, when the fire is hottest, we will hear His gentle whisper telling us, "My grace IS sufficient for you, even in this situation. I will not allow you to be tested or tempted beyond what you are able to bear. I will make all that you are facing to work together for your very best - to transform you increasingly into My likeness."

Yes, even the weakest among us sisters can come out triumphant.

"Drop Thy still dews of quietness

Till all our strivings cease;

Take from our souls the strain and stress

And let our ordered lives confess -

The beauty of Thy peace."

02.17. CHAPTER 13 - REMEMBER LOTS WIFE

CHAPTER 13 - REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE

Outside the ruins of one of the richest cities of its time, we find a salty statue of a woman, that brings a message to women of all time. The words of the Lord, "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32), are a warning to all of us. When Lot's wife looked back, that was but the final act of a way of life, whereby she had ruined her family already. Her husband "was a good man who was sick of the terrible wickedness that he saw everywhere around him, (in Sodom) day after day" (2 Peter 2:7-8 -Living). But she did not feel about Sodom the way her husband felt. And that was the tragedy.

Having no fear of God herself, she could not teach her two daughters to fear God either. She was perhaps too busy socializing, to have time to spend with her two daughters as they grew up.

She was a prominent businessman's wife, and she was proud that her daughters too had been accepted in Sodom's society. She had no doubt overruled her husband's objections and allowed her daughters to adopt the styles and fashions of Sodom, and finally to be married to two of Sodom's smart young men. Thus she destroyed her daughters. A word of warning comes to us mothers from that 4000-year old pillar of salt: Spend time with your children. Remember Lot's wife.

Lot's wife had her treasure in her earthly goods, and so her heart was there too. Since we mothers work so much at home with earthly things, it is easy for us to place far too great a value on food, clothes, household gadgets etc., And so another warning comes to us from that pillar of salt: The things that are seen are temporal. Remember Lot's wife.

Perhaps it was the parting from her worldly friends in Sodom that Lot's wife found so difficult. Many sisters are ineffective for the Lord, because their best friends are their worldly relatives and neighbours, and they spend most of their time in unprofitable conversation with them. To such sisters too, the word of warning comes: Bad company will neutralise your witness for the Lord. Remember Lot's wife.

Perhaps it is some failure in the past that could be weighing us down, or a hurt or a betrayal by some loved one that we don't seem to be able to forget. Or it may be some sorrow or affliction that we delight in recounting to others to earn their sympathy.

Whatever it may be, looking back is always dangerous. It can halt all spiritual progress and reduce us to pillars of salt, when we could have become pillars in the church. (Yes, God's Word tells us that even sisters can become pillars in the church if they overcome sin - Revelation 3:12).

Let us heed the warning then: Forget the past. Don't brood over it. Remember Lot's wife.

"Flee to the mountains, and don't look back, or you will die" was the call of the angels to the Lot family (Genesis 19:17). This is the call that comes to us also from heaven today. Let us live on the mountain-top with the Lord, and never live in the past. And let us give up our tight hold on the

things of earth that we will have to leave behind one day, in any case.

Remember Lot's wife.

02.18. CHAPTER 14 - A DOOR OF HOPE

CHAPTER 14 - A DOOR OF HOPE "I gave her time to repent....." (Revelation 2:21). When we read these words, do we think of an earthly father threatening his daughter with dire consequences if she does not repent?

No. It isn't so. It is the voice of a heavenly Father who loves His daughter and Who is opening a door of hope for her and showing her a remedy for her faults. He wants her to repent and so He gives her time.

We hear the Father saying, "I will speak to her tenderly and I will transform her Valley of Troubles into a Door of Hope" (Hosea 2:15 - Living)

Think back to another "her" - Eve. God certainly punished her for her disobedience. But along with the words of punishment a door of hope was also opened - a remedy for her sin, a hope of a glorious day when her seed would crush the enemy's head. The deceiver would be dealt with and her children would still be able to inherit the kingdom of God.

Think of a second "her" - the haughty daughters of Israel and Judah who went after idols. Despite repeated warnings from the prophets whom God sent to them in His love and mercy, they hardened their hearts and spurned the entreaties of God. And so they were led captive and scattered. Yet in the very message of judgment, God opened a door of hope for them too, giving them a promise of restoration in the future (Jeremiah 29:11).

Such is the infinite love of God. Even in His sternest judgments, He always opens a door of hope. As Frederick Faber has said,

"There's no place where all our sorrows

Are more felt than up in heav'n

There's no place where all our failures

Have such kindly judgment giv'n."

Let us then use the time given us now to repent, and not be like that wicked, "false prophetess" Jezebel, who mocked God's warnings and despised his prophets, and about whom the Lord had to say, "She does not want to repent" (Revelation 2:21).

Let us rather be like that other repentant woman about whom the Lord said, "Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much" (Luke 7:47).

God has opened "a door of hope" for every one of us - even for those wives and mothers who have failed the most and who have made a mess of their lives!! God can fulfil His plan for your life even now, if only you will trust Him. Nothing is impossible with our God. Only trust Him.

Those who trust in Him will never be disappointed. As my husband often says, "God is ALWAYS on our side against Satan."

Hallelujah!! Amen!!

02.19. APPENDIX 01 - SOME ADVICE FOR EXPECTANT MOTHERS

APPENDIX 01 - SOME ADVICE FOR EXPECTANT MOTHERS PREPARING FOR BABY'S ARRIVAL As soon as the newly wed wife feels that she is expecting a baby, she should visit the doctor. The first signs of pregnancy are: Missing of period, nausea and vomiting, increased frequency of urination, changes in the breast. The expected date of delivery is 9 months and 7 days from the beginning of the last menstrual period.

There may be things in the mother's or father's constitution which may need treatment. Some ailments may not be evident in the parent but might affect the child. Some of these can be corrected. So it is good to have a medical check-up, if you are in doubt.

Pregnancy is not an illness - obviously! But if you happen to be on the borderline between health and ill-health, then pregnancy can make you unwell. Good nutritious food and healthy habits are most essential. And, by the way, the mind needs to be fed too. Meditation on God's Word can relieve your mind of tensions and improve your health and thereby the health of your unborn baby too. Some mornings you may find yourself too tired or sick to concentrate on reading the Bible. Then try meditating on just one verse, or read a good book of daily devotions or a book of hymns . You could also ask your husband to share the time of devotion and prayer with you.

Diet The baby in your womb gets its food through what you eat. So your daily diet should ordinarily consist of the following :

■ Rice, wheat or other cereal ■ 2 to 4 glasses of milk ■ Eggs, meat or fish ■ Grams and dhal (lentils) - sprouted lentils are very good ■ Curds (yogurt) ■ Vegetables - leafy and non-leafy ■ Fats and oils ■ Fresh or dried fruits

Vegetarians should substitute more curds (yogurt) and dhal (lentils) in lieu of meat and fish. Rice, wheat and fats are fattening and should not be taken excessively. Your diet should be supplemented with multi-vitamins, iron tablets and calcium for building up the baby's bones and teeth. Avoid excessive salt and eating too much of fried food from wayside vendors.

You must also take the iron, calcium and magnesium tablets prescribed by your doctor regularly during the early months of pregnancy, and immunisation against tetanus after the sixth month.

Fresh air Do take time occasionally to get out of your stuffy kitchen (or office) and breathe a few breaths of God's fresh air. This can be most invigorating. Take a walk in the evening with your husband. This will relax and refresh you and your husband too! Try to maintain an upright posture when walking.

Exercise

Physical exercise can help digestion, promote sleep, prevent constipation and keep your muscles in good working condition. This will make it easier for you to deliver your baby when the time comes. So don't give up your house-work - taking care of course, against over-exerting yourself.

Deep breathing exercises, expanding the chest and abdomen are helpful. Sitting on the floor with legs crossed, once in a while, is good for your pelvic muscles. Avoid straining the back. Avoid lifting heavy things. Bend your knees when you have to stoop and try to keep the back straight.

Cleanliness And Rest You should have a bath daily, taking care to wash yourself thoroughly.

You should have a good sleep at night, and if possible, for an hour after lunch as well. Pause from your daily work, now and then, to relax for a few minutes with some fruit or a cup of curds. You should cut down activities that tire you too much. **Your Husband's Part**

Pregnancy is a time of emotional stress for a woman. An understanding and sympathetic husband can make life easier for his wife. You should therefore share your problems with your husband. Remember that the two of you are "joint-heirs of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7) Many men may not be aware of the medical and physiological aspects of pregnancy. Try and make your visits to the doctor together so that your husband can understand the role he has to play at such a time.

Some "Don'ts"

1. Don't allow fatigue and mental strain.
2. Don't allow situations where there could be sudden strains or falls or your having to lift heavy items.
3. Don't take long, bumpy rides, particularly during the first three months and last three months of pregnancy. It is best to travel as little as possible. Try to keep your legs elevated from time to time.
4. Don't allow constipation. Take plenty of fruit and water.
5. Don't take laxatives, sedatives or other drugs without consulting a doctor.
6. Don't wear uncomfortable footwear and tight clothing.
7. Don't try to slim during pregnancy.
8. Don't allow yourself to be exposed to anyone having German measles and other viral infections. Avoid taking any X-rays. If an X-ray is essential for any reason, then make sure your abdomen is protected with a lead screen.

Ante-Natal Checkups You must visit your doctor regularly.

Here are some things that should be reported to your doctor at once:

- Any brownish or blood discharge at any time.
- After the sixth month: Severe headaches, visual disturbances, swelling of feet, decreased output of urine, excessive weight-gain (normal weight-gain is about 1.5 to 2 kilos per month after the third month of pregnancy), lack of movement of the baby, abdominal pain and vomiting, swelling of the feet or puffiness of the face.

Some Simple Remedies For morning-sickness: Get up half an hour later than usual. Rinse your mouth with 1/4 teaspoon of soda-bicarbonate in a cup of water and drink a glass of lime-juice. Avoid fatty meals. For pain in the legs: Avoid stooping and bending down, as far as possible, and

don't stand when you can sit. It may also help to soak your feet in warm water for about half-an-hour before you retire at night. For varicose veins: These will usually disappear after delivery. A simple exercise is to lie on your back, raise your legs and rest the heel against a wall for a few minutes. This can be done several times a day. Avoid standing for a long time. Elastocrepe bandages are also beneficial at times.

Onset Of Delivery The symptoms of the onset of delivery are usually as follows: Regular contractions of the uterus that will come at first as a pain in the low back that will travel to the front of the abdomen. A pink vaginal discharge will also appear. Sometimes there will be a sudden gush of water. If there is bleeding, you should rush to the hospital.

Finally

Look forward confidently to the birth of a healthy baby, and have faith in God, for the Bible says, "Women will come safely through child-birth if they maintain a life of faith, love, holiness and gravity" (1 Timothy 2:15 -J.B.Philips)

02.20. APPENDIX 02 - SOME ADVICE FOR NEW MOTHERS

APPENDIX TWO - SOME ADVICE FOR NEW MOTHERS CARE OF THE INFANT The immediate care of the newborn, just after birth, will be supervised by the doctor or midwife.

You should then take your baby for a medical check-up once every month. The doctor will advise you about immunisations etc. Your baby will sleep most of the time during the first month. His wants are few - sleep, warmth, comfort, and food.

Sleep

During the first month, the baby may be awake only for its feeds. As he grows older, he will be awake for longer periods.

Provide him with a quiet, well ventilated room (without any draught) to sleep in. Keep him under a mosquito net to protect him from flies and mosquitoes etc.

There is no need to rock him to sleep as this will become a habit that may become difficult to break, later on. Your baby may feel more comfortable if he is made to lie on his stomach. This will save him from choking himself in case he vomits, and will also relieve him of any colics. His head too will thus have a good shape and won't be flattened. But you should check him frequently, whenever he is sleeping on his stomach.

Warmth and Comfort

Remember that a baby doesn't have an efficient temperature-controlling mechanism in his body, like an adult has. So don't over-dress him in the hot season. A thin cotton dress diaper will be sufficient.

Woollen clothes can also irritate a baby's skin. So when using woollen clothes in winter, make sure that you use cotton underclothes as well. To check whether your baby is warm enough, you should feel his hands and feet and see whether they are cold or chilly. When using a cap, ensure that it is of some knitted material so that the baby can breathe, even if the cap falls over his face. When your baby awakes, check that he is not uncomfortable with wet diapers. Diapers should be washed well, rinsed thoroughly and dried in the sun. Particles of soap on them can irritate the baby's skin. If possible, try and boil all diapers once a week.

Bathing The Baby

Very hot baths can be harmful for a baby. Keep a separate soap and towel for your baby. Wash him in warm water and try and give him an oil-rub every time you bathe him. Avoid exposing the baby's body to anything that will suddenly cool it, and ensure that no water enters his nose, mouth and ears.

Clean out visible secretions in his nose and ears, but never put anything into them that could cause injury. If the nose is blocked, it can be cleaned with something soft like a thin wick made out

of soft cotton cloth. The ear can also be cleaned in a similar way.

Care should also be taken over the umbilical cord, till the navel has healed completely. Until then, you should keep it dry, applying a clean dressing over it and a light, soft bandage round his abdomen in that area.

If the baby is even slightly ill, it is better to give it a sponge bath rather than giving it a regular bath and thus exposing it to chill.

Feeding

There is actually no substitute for breast-milk! It is the best milk your baby can have. There are antibodies in breast-milk that can protect your baby from many infections. Breast-fed babies thrive well, are more satisfied, have a greater feeling of security and also do not get bowel-infections as easily as bottle-fed babies. In the beginning, feed your baby every three to four hours between 6 a.m. and midnight. After the first month, you may find that your baby prefers to sleep through the night. You can then omit the night-feed. But don't let him starve if he is hungry and cries at night. A nursing mother should have a good diet herself, including vitamins and iron tablets. She should also take sufficient rest every day. She should avoid hot spicy foods, chocolates, laxatives, sedatives, aspirin and other drugs, as these can be passed on to the baby through the milk, and may harm him. The breasts should be washed before and after feeds. You should never allow your breasts to be engorged with milk, lest an abscess begin to form there.

Bottle-Feeds

If you have sufficient breast-milk, you need not start your baby on bottle-feeds until he is 6 to 9 months old. Fresh cow's milk, if used, should be boiled well. Baby-milk-powder is usually fresh and free from germs. But always check the date of expiry on the tin before buying milk-powder. Drinking water should also be boiled. For every kilogram of body-weight, a baby usually needs about 125 millilitres of fresh milk and 75 millilitres of water every day. So for a 3-kilogram baby, the daily formula would be about 400 ml. of fresh milk and 200 ml. of water, with two tablespoons of sugar. This can be divided into five feeds during the day. (If you are using baby-milk-powder, follow the instructions on the outside of the tin). As the baby grows older he will need more milk and less water. In summer, or whenever the baby has diarrhoea or a fever, you should add more water to his feeds. In tropical countries like India, where germs multiply easily, the feeding-bottle and its nipples should be boiled well. Otherwise the baby can easily get diarrhoea or some other infection. The bottles should be boiled for at least ten minutes, and its nipples boiled separately in mild salt water. Make sure you don't touch the inside of a sterilised bottle or the inner portion of a sterilised nipple.

Check and see that the milk is not too hot, before giving it to your baby, lest he burn his tongue!

After the first month you can start giving him vitamin drops and fruit juices as well. Make sure that fruit juices are well strained.

General Precautions

People with colds and infections should not be allowed to come near your baby. If you yourself have a cold, you can wear a mask or cover your nose and mouth when feeding him.

Here are some things that you should report to a doctor:

1. Any discharge from the baby's eyes. (Remember that babies have no tears for the first three months).
2. Any rashes on his skin.
3. Jaundice. Physiological jaundice may occur in many infants on the third day, but it will usually clear up in a week. If it persists it should be reported.
4. The area around the baby's nipples may sometimes be swollen and excrete a yellow fluid. This is normal in many infants, but if they get infected and form an abscess then they should be reported.
5. Any foul smell or pus from the navel.
6. Bleeding from any site - mouth, navel, skin, rectum or vagina.
7. Any frequent, watery, foul-smelling stools. (Babies normally have three to four bowel-movements daily for the first three months.)
8. If the baby is not growing properly. (An average baby should double his birth-weight in about five months, and triple it in about a year.)

02.21. APPENDIX 03 - THE GROWING CHILD

APPENDIX THREE - THE GROWING CHILD

It is an awesome and sacred responsibility that falls upon a mother when God gives her a child to nurture and bring up. Neglect or carelessness on her part may handicap her child (physically, mentally or emotionally) for the rest of its life. How careful therefore a mother needs to be to discharge her responsibilities with the utmost care.

Such a word of warning is particularly needed in our day when there is an increasing tendency on the part of many mothers to leave their children in the care of `ayahs' and to concentrate on earning additional income for the family. The effects of such neglect of the children are often seen only in later years when things become impossible to correct.

There is no more sacred duty we can fulfil as mothers than to bring up our children in spiritual, mental and physical health.

Diet

If your baby is on breast milk, he will need only vitamin and iron drops, and fruit juices in addition, during the first three months. When he is three months old, you can introduce him to solid foods. The first solid could be cereals. Tinned cereals of various types are available in the market. One of the cheapest cereals may be a ragi preparation: Place 2 teaspoons of ragi powder in a thin cloth, tie the cloth and squeeze it repeatedly in a cup of water until all the cereal is extracted. Only the husk and roughage will be left in the cloth. Add a cup of milk to this liquid in the cup and boil, stirring well, till it turns dark brown. Add sugar and serve it warm to the baby. This is most nutritious. When he is four months old, very ripe mashed bananas can be added (half to one teaspoon to begin with). Other fruits such as apples, may be cooked and mashed. You could also use a mixture of several cereals like rice, ragi, wheat, maize, dhal (lentils), green-gram, powdering them, after washing and drying them. This powder can then be made into a porridge. A daily diet for a six-month old could be somewhat as follows, ■ 6-7 am: Breast milk or bottle feed.

■ 9 am : Orange juice (or tomato or other fruit juices). Vitamin and iron drops. Cereal or idli, followed a little later by breast milk or bottle-milk. Vegetable soup can be prepared by pressure-cooking different vegetables, including greens. This liquid can then be given along with the solids.

■ 1 pm : Cooked, mashed vegetables like carrots; bottle-milk.

■ 4 pm : Hard biscuits.

■ 6 pm : Cereal, fruits (such as plantains), breast milk or bottle-milk.

■ 10 pm : Milk (if he is hungry)

Meat and fish can be added when the baby is a year old. Although meat and fish broth can be given even earlier, along with mashed vegetables, it is better to give curd (yogurt) and other milk products. This is because proteins from meat and fish are a greater strain on the baby's kidneys at an early age. So, vegetable proteins such as those found in beans and lentils, are better. By the time your baby is one year old, he should be able to eat two small idlis for breakfast, rice, dhal and vegetables for lunch and dinner, in addition to milk. If cow's milk is given, 300 ml. a day is adequate.

Don't use any drugs, especially antibiotics, without a doctor's advice.

Feeding The Baby 1. It is not necessary to give solids before the baby is three months old.

2. Solids should be started one at a time, in very small quantities, and increased gradually.

3. If he is interested, offer fluids in a cup after six months. (Don't be discouraged if he spills it! He will learn!!)

4. If any new food causes a digestive upset (vomiting, diarrhoea), stop it and stop all solids as well. You should then wait for a while before re-starting any solid foods.

5. If the digestive trouble persists, then consult a doctor.

6. Give him a bottle-feed only after he has had the solid food, as otherwise he may refuse the solids.

7. Don't force the child to eat if he is not interested. He may like a change in diet too. Try to make mealtimes interesting. Avoid too many sweet foods, since they spoil the appetite and damage baby's teeth.

8. Remember that during the second year, babies don't grow or gain weight as much as in the first. So don't be worried if you don't see much growth in the second year.

Toilet Habits

Conscious control of the bladder and bowel may be developed only after the second or third year. But you can save yourself from messy napkins by putting him on the pot immediately after a feed. You may be able to anticipate a bowel movement if you watch him carefully. Teach him early to use the toilet or pot and not to pass motion or to urinate in the open.

Summer Care In warm summer months, a diaper and thin cotton dress is sufficient to cover the baby - and a cotton blanket at night. Avoid over-dressing him in summer. When out in the sun, protect his eyes from the direct rays of the sun. If you notice any prickly heat rash, use a bland lotion or ointment like zinc-oxide cream.

Just like adults, babies too need extra fluids in summer. So give him plenty of sweetened water with a small quantity of salt in it. Remember that when the baby has diarrhoea, he loses more fluids. Notify your doctor if your baby has diarrhoea. This is a more serious matter if it happens in the summer months.

It is best to use boiled water always for the baby - since many germs spread through water in tropical countries like ours. So if you are traveling with a baby, ensure that you carry sufficient

boiled water with you.

Winter Care

Avoid exposing your baby to the cold and to draughts. Use cotton under-clothing and woollens on top. Blankets should be light and warm. Ensure that clothing is not tight around his neck. Use long-sleeved garments and pajamas to protect his legs. Remember that a baby loses more heat from his limbs than from his head. So use pajamas and socks when it is cold. It is useless putting a warm cap on his head, if you keep him bare below the waist!

Check near the folds (neck, thighs and arm-pits) to see if there is any rash. (This should be done in summer months too.) Babies feel comfortable if you put powder on those areas. Take special care to keep diaper areas washed and dry always. By using proper clothing, your baby can be protected from pneumonia and lung infections. You must ensure that his dress is appropriate for the climate and that he is comfortable, clean, dry and able to move his limbs without any hindrance.

Provide good restful sleeping conditions - at all times.

Teething The first tooth may appear by six or eight months. Usually the lower two front ones appear first. Normally the baby may be irritable and disinterested in food at such a time, because of sore gums. Many babies may have constant watering from the mouth at such times. In such cases use a bib. You should ensure good oral hygiene and care of the teeth. Wash his mouth after every meal or give him boiled water to drink after a meal.

Hygiene Teach your child good hygienic habits from an early age and he will grow up to appreciate cleanliness.

Pray with him and sing hymns to him even when he cannot understand a word of what you are saying. Such practices will make a deep impression on his subconscious mind. As he grows up he will learn the value of spiritual hygiene as well.

02.22. APPENDIX 04 - MILESTONES AND IMMUNOLOGY

APPENDIX FOUR - MILESTONES AND IMMUNOLOGY

Isn't it a thrilling experience to see your baby grow and develop into an individual with distinct characteristics of his own? As he grows, you will naturally be anxious to know that he is developing normally, both mentally and physically.

There are no ideal standards that indicate normal development.

Babies differ and if one begins to walk, say, three months later than another, this is no indication that he is in any way abnormal or backward. He can grow up to be just as normal and healthy as the other. So don't get unnecessarily worried.

However, here are some things that babies usually do at different stages in their growth :

■ At 1 month : Baby can usually focus his eyes on objects and his eyes and head will follow slow-moving objects. He can also lift his head while lying on his stomach.

■ 4 months : He can usually recognise his mother, smile at people, grasp objects and inspect his own hands. He can hold his head erect when carried and may "goo" and laugh.

■ 7 to 8 months : He can sit without support, lift up his arms to be carried and put objects into his mouth.

■ 9 to 10 months : Baby can stand with support, wave bye-bye and raise himself to sitting and standing positions.

■ 1 year : He may walk without support and use a few words with understanding. The soft spot on the top of his head begins to close. He may have 6 teeth by now and can hold a cup to drink.

■ 2 years : Baby can run, build blocks. He may speak in simple sentences and obey simple instructions (when he feels like obeying!!). This is probably the best time to start the process of subduing his will and teaching him obedience. Bowel and bladder control (in the daytime) is usually established by this time, particularly in girls. Boys may take a few months longer. The most important thing is to let your baby develop and grow naturally.

Don't keep comparing your child with your neighbour's! And don't ever force your child to do something he is not ready for, whether it be sitting, drinking from a cup or walking. Give him freedom to grow at his own pace. Encourage him as he grows to do certain things for himself, like dressing himself. He should also be encouraged to play with other children. Don't overprotect him.

Immunology Most hospitals follow the following procedure.

■ Within the first 3 months - BCG ■ 6 weeks - DPT (Triple antigen) 1st Dose; OPV (Oral Polio Vaccine) 1st Dose ■ 10 weeks - DPT 2nd Dose; OPV 2nd Dose ■ 14 weeks - DPT 3rd Dose; OPV 3rd Dose ■ 18 weeks - OPV 4th Dose ■ 22 weeks - OPV 5th Dose ■ 9 months - Health

check ■ 9 - 12 months - Measles Vaccine ■ 18 months - DPT 1st Booster; OPV 1st Booster ■ 5 years - DPT 2nd Booster; OPV 2nd Booster Repeat the appropriate booster dose after any exposure to diphtheria or polio.

After a bad wound, repeat the tetanus booster.

TAB (Anti-typhoid) booster should be repeated every year.

It is advisable to give an injection of Hepatitis B Antigen (0.5 ml.), intramuscularly, in the thigh at some time. The second dose should be given after one month.

Care of Premature and Twin Babies A premature baby is one born before the full-term or whose weight is less than 2 kgs. Twins or triplets, even if full-term, usually weigh less than 2 kgs. and should be treated as premature babies.

Premature babies are not able to maintain normal body temperature and are sometimes unable to breathe, swallow, digest food and withstand infection. They feel tired very quickly too. A premature baby weighing less than 2 kgs. should be kept in a hospital preferably, at least until he weighs 2.5 kgs. If you have to keep him at home, observe the following precautions :

1. The baby should be kept at a constant room temperature of about 28 degrees Celsius, as far as possible. Protect him particularly against draughts. In winter, beds can be heated with hot-water bottles.
2. Watch him closely until his breathing is steady and free. Keep the head low and turned to one side, so that secretions from his throat will come out of his mouth and not flow inwards and choke him.
3. Handle him as little as possible. Too much handling tires him.
4. Feeding. Babies who cannot suck can be fed with a medicine dropper. Those who cannot swallow will need tube-feeding. In the beginning, they may not be able to tolerate milk and can be given sugar-water.(Boil one tablespoon of sugar in 250 to 300 ml. of water.) They can be given diluted milk gradually. Start the baby on Vitamin C drops by the 4th or 5th day, and Vitamin A and D drops after a week.
5. Protect him against infections. Take meticulous care with feeds and in keeping yourself clean. When the baby reaches 2.5 kgs, he can be treated as a normal baby. He may be slow in general development at first, but will soon develop normally. There are special feeds available for weak and undernourished babies. An Absolute Essential You cannot make your baby grow. Only God can do that. But you can provide him with an atmosphere for healthy growth. In fulfilling this responsibility, one absolute "must" is to spend time with your baby. Never get so busy that this gets crowded out of your daily routine. This must be a top priority.

You may perhaps have to give up certain secondary things in order to find this time but it is well worth it.

02.23. APPENDIX 05 - PHYSICAL DEFECTS AND OTHER TROUBLES

APPENDIX FIVE - PHYSICAL DEFECTS AND OTHER TROUBLES

Why God permits sickness and disease to come into the families of even those who are His own children, does not have an easy answer. Perhaps it is so that we might have a fuller experience of His grace and power (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) and also that we might more readily sympathise with others who are suffering (2 Corinthians 1:4-8)

We have to thank God for every form of medical treatment He has placed at our disposal that can help alleviate pain and heal sickness. And of course He can heal miraculously too. The instructions given here are to help you to know when to go to a doctor. They are not meant to be a substitute for such a visit.

Resistance to disease can be built up only through the years. Babies obviously don't have such resistance, and so they fall sick much quicker and much more seriously than adults do. Babies have the added limitation of not being able to explain what is bothering them. All they can do is cry. It is helpful, therefore, for mothers to know something about the common complaints their babies can have.

Physical Defects

Squint or crossed eyes : For the first two or three months most babies' eyes will appear crossed, because they are not able to focus. If this persists up to 18 months or 2 years, medical help should be sought. Otherwise the weaker eye will gradually lose its vision.

Blocked tear duct : One or both eyes may sometimes water or have a sticky yellowish discharge. This should be reported to the doctor so that it can be rectified by probing the duct. Probing is best done before the baby is a year old.

Noisy breathing : This is worse when the baby is lying on his back and may improve when he sleeps on his side. It usually disappears by the sixth month. If a baby who has been breathing silently suddenly develops noisy breathing, this should be reported to the doctor.

Cleft lip and palate : Babies with a cleft palate can easily aspirate milk into their lungs. They are also more prone to catch a cold. They may have feeding problems too. In any case they will need surgery, and medical advice should be sought at the earliest.

Hernias : This is a bulging of the abdominal wall in the umbilical region or the groin. The bulge becomes more prominent when the baby cries, coughs or strains. It usually appears after the baby has had a cold or illness. Sometimes the hernia disappears when strapped with adhesive tape (after pushing the bulge inside). If it persists, it may require surgical correction. In rare cases, the bowel may get trapped in the bulge. The doctor should then be called immediately, as this can be very serious.

Birth-marks : Many new-born babies have dark patches on their skin. These usually disappear in course of time. If the patches show any tendency to increase in size, they should be shown to a doctor.

Problems and Illnesses

Babies express hunger or discomfort by crying. Sometimes, of course, they may cry for no reason at all, but you should try to find out the cause of their crying. The baby may cry when it needs a change in position, or when it is wet or dirty or too cold, or too warm or sleepy, or due to digestive problems. When the baby cries from hunger, he may also chew his fists. He will fail to gain weight too. This will mean that his feeds are insufficient.

If a baby manifests any of the following symptoms, a doctor should be called: irritability and drowsiness, consistent refusal to take its feeds, unusually loud crying or whining, vomiting, rapid noisy breathing, hoarseness of voice, cough, diarrhoea, fever above 38 degrees Celsius, rash, convulsions or any noticeable change from his usual behaviour.

Digestive Troubles

Diarrhoea : The baby's stools will be foul-smelling, watery, showing signs of undigested milk, or greenish with mucus and blood. The baby will have fever. You should be very careful on such occasions in handling his diapers and you should wash your hands frequently. The diapers should be boiled or put in some disinfectant and put out in the sun to dry. All food should be covered so that flies don't sit on it. The baby should be given more water in his feeds and all solids should be stopped. Sometimes it may be necessary even to stop the milk and give him boiled glucose water with a small quantity of salt in it. The doctor should be informed, since the baby will require antibiotics in the case of an infection. Don't take any chances with diarrhoea and vomiting as your baby can become seriously ill very quickly. You should be cautious in re-starting feeds after a spell of diarrhoea. Feeds should be diluted to start with and their strength gradually increased. If the diarrhoea is not due to an infection but due to a change of food or overfeeding, then give him more dilute feeds for a day or so, and he will soon be back to normal. Babies on breast milk do not usually have this problem.

Vomiting : To keep your baby from vomiting, hold him upright after each feed and let him burp (expel the air he has swallowed). If vomiting is accompanied by any of the symptoms mentioned above, then the doctor should be informed.

Constipation : If the baby's stools are hard and he has discomfort when he has a bowel movement, give him fruit juices or strained raisin juice (raisins washed well in boiled water, soaked overnight and crushed) and more water in his diet and more sugar in his feeds. Sometimes babies are constipated because they are not getting sufficient feeds. In this case they will of course show signs of hunger as well. If constipation is severe, the baby may need a suppository or an enema.

Colic : This is common among babies in the first three months. The baby screams and passes gas, especially after a feed. To avoid this, see that the baby doesn't swallow air. The hole in the nipple of the bottle should be large enough for milk to drop at the rate of two drops per second. It may also help, if baby is made to sleep on his abdomen. Sometimes, a suppository may help. If colic persists, a doctor should be called. Some babies continue to have colic in spite of all the

precautions taken, but outgrow it in due course.

Hiccups : This may be stopped by a drink of warm water or by a change in baby's position. In any case, the hiccups will stop by themselves in a few minutes.

Thrush : (White coating of the tongue caused by fungus). This is usually found in babies during an illness. It can be prevented by giving the baby boiled water after every feed. Boil the nipples and bottles well.

Colds and Ear and Chest Problems

Colds : When a baby has a cold it puts him off his feeds and disturbs his appetite. Colds can also lead to chest complications and earaches, so you should try your best to protect your baby. Keep him away from anyone who has a cold. If you have one yourself, wear a mask while handling him. If baby does catch a cold, give him extra doses of Vitamin C drops and fluids. Keep his head low to drain secretions. If the infection goes to his ears or lungs or if his voice gets hoarse, inform a doctor. Do not start antibiotics without medical advice.

Ear trouble : This is usually indicated by the baby crying and moving his head from side to side. There may also be a discharge from one or both of his ears.

Chest troubles : These are often indicated by rapid and difficult breathing in addition to cough and fever. The child may need antibiotics. So a doctor must be consulted.

Skin Troubles

Diaper-rash : A baby's skin, being sensitive, can often develop a rash in the diaper region. This can be avoided by changing diapers frequently, and thus keeping the diaper region clean and dry. If there is a rash, use zinc-oxide ointment after cleaning the area. Diapers can be soaked in water containing a small quantity of vinegar. Strong detergents that remain on a baby's diapers or clothes (after a wash) can cause an allergy or rash too. So all of the baby's clothes must be rinsed well.

Prickly heat : This occurs in hot weather and at times because the baby is over-dressed. Use some bland lotion or zinc ointment or prickly heat powder especially over the folds of baby's body. Change his clothes more often.

Eczema : This may be due to an allergy. So the factor causing it should be discovered and avoided. It usually disappears as the child grows.

Skin Infection or Impetigo : In this condition there will be itchy blisters containing pus. The baby's towels, clothes etc., should be boiled well. A doctor should be consulted and treatment taken quickly, as this can spread rapidly.

Scabies : This usually appears in older children, between the fingers and the toes, and is very infectious. It can become worse, if the child scratches it. This should be shown to a doctor and treated. Any ointment used should not be applied more than 3 times. Care should be taken that the ointment is not applied near the child's eyes, nose or mouth.

Fever and Convulsions In babies, high temperature sometimes causes convulsions (fits). These usually disappear when the fever comes down. To bring the temperature down cool the head and body with ice. A plastic packet with ice cubes kept on a towel and placed on the top of the baby's head and a dose of CROCIN syrup (paracetamol) will usually bring the temperature down quickly. When a baby has fits, he may lose consciousness, become pale, twitch his limbs and roll his eyes. Put a folded cloth in his mouth at such times to prevent him from biting his lips and tongue. Make sure however, that he is able to breathe. Wipe off any saliva and keep his head lowered so that he won't aspirate any secretions. The doctor should be informed so that the problem causing the convulsion can be treated. Fits resulting from high fever are not serious. You should not allow the child's temperature to go high. This can be controlled through ice packs and CROCIN syrup.

It is humanly impossible for any mother to protect her child from all harm, danger and disease, no matter how careful she is. But Jesus said that little children have angels to watch over them constantly (Matthew 18:10). This encourages us. And so, after we have done our best for our children, we can safely trust God to do the rest.

02.24. APPENDIX 06 - ACCIDENTS AND DISEASES - PREVENTION AND CURE

APPENDIX SIX - ACCIDENTS AND DISEASES - PREVENTION AND CURE

Babies are very fond of exploring, and love to examine everything they see. They are ignorant of danger. So we mothers are the ones who have to protect them.

Accidents and First Aid For the first year and a half it is best to keep away from baby's reach anything that might hurt him. After that he can be taught gradually how to use various things like scissors, pencils etc.

Never leave your baby alone when he is in the kitchen, bathroom, or on the floor. Until he is a year old, the best place for him to be alone is in his crib or playpen. Never leave him alone in the house even when he is sleeping.

Prevention is better than cure. So take special care to ensure that he has no access to medicines or to anything poisonous. Pins and buttons, if lying around, will find their way into his mouth. So keep them out of his reach too. It is safer for babies to play with large toys rather than small ones, for the same reason.

Minor accidents can be treated at home, but certain accidents must be reported to a doctor at once, such as for example:

1. If the baby has swallowed any sharp object or any poison.
2. If he has pushed anything into his nose or ears.
3. If he is badly scalded or burned.
4. If he is bitten by some animal.
5. If he becomes unconscious or pale.
6. If he vomits after a fall or a blow on his head.
7. If a cut or a wound does not stop bleeding, or if it is infected and he has fever.
8. If he has a sprain or a fracture.

If he has swallowed any drug or poison, the first thing to do is to make him vomit. Make him drink plenty of water and then tickle his throat with your finger. After he has vomited, feed him only with something bland, like milk, for a few days.

Bruises following a fall, can be treated with ice-packs or cold compresses. Cuts, scratches and bites should be washed with soap and water and some antiseptic applied. The wound should be kept covered. Bleeding may be stopped by applying pressure over the wound.

If the baby has a bad wound, especially one that is likely to have street-dirt or manure in it, he should be immunised immediately against tetanus. Some wounds will need suturing as well.

If the child gets dust in his eyes, do not rub his eyes, but wash them with plenty of water. If the eyes are still red, you may need to put some antibiotic eye-drops.

If the child is choking with some object in his throat, hold him upside down and tap his back. Never put your finger into his throat on such occasions, since that may push the object further down.

Common Ailments

Worms : In India this is very common. The child has itching around the anus and thighs, when he has pin-worms. If he has vague abdominal pain and loss of appetite, and looks pale, his stools should be examined for worms. If he passes worms in his stools, he should be taken to a doctor and treated. If the hygiene is good, there is no need to administer medicines for worms, routinely.

Tonsillitis and Adenoids : If the child has a throat infection, or if he breathes through his mouth, or has an ear-discharge, he should be shown to a doctor. Regular use of Vitamin C tablets usually prevents such infections.

Allergies : If the child shows some allergic manifestations, like skin-rash or breathing difficulty, or has an attack of asthma, consult your doctor. Try and find out what he is allergic to, so that you can avoid that.

Infectious Diseases

Measles : The child will have high fever for 3 or 4 days, with a running nose and redness of eyes. At this stage, the child will be irritable and will resist bright light. He may be more comfortable in a room where there is no glare. The rash will begin on the face and neck and gradually spread over the whole body. It will usually fade away in 3 or 4 days and disappear completely in about a week. Possible complications resulting from measles are pneumonia, bronchitis, ear infections and, rarely, encephalitis (brain inflammation). If any of these are suspected, a doctor should be informed immediately.

German measles: This is milder than simple measles and complications are rare. A pregnant mother should avoid exposure to German measles, especially in the first three months, as it can cause serious defects in the unborn baby.

Mumps : The child will have fever, headache, poor appetite, and generalised aches and pains for a day or two. After that a swelling begins to appear at the corner of one or both jaws near the ear-lobes. This increases for 2 or 3 days, and then slowly subsides. Complications in children are rare. In adults, this can cause inflammation of the testes and ovaries or pancreas, or a form of meningitis. This can be avoided if the child is immunised against it.

Diphtheria and Whooping Cough : In diphtheria, the baby will have fever and a sore throat with a membranous patch in the throat. In whooping cough, the baby will have fever along with severe fits of cough followed by a whooping sound, while it draws in its breath. The baby may also become blue.

Poliomyelitis : The child has general symptoms of fever and headache and of being unwell. He will also have pain in his legs and when he bends his neck forward. The doctor should be informed when this is suspected. If the child has been immunised against polio there is less chance of his catching it. If there is an epidemic around, he can have partial protection for a few weeks by being given gamma globulin. The above-mentioned diseases are, however, rare nowadays, because of the widespread use of immunisations.

Chicken-pox : The child loses his appetite and has slight fever. The rash is itchy and raised like blisters, and comes out in crops, especially over the face, trunk and scalp. It usually takes 3 days to come out completely. Calamine lotion can be applied to ease the itching. The child should not be allowed to scratch, as the blisters can get infected. If skin infection (pus in the blisters) is suspected the doctor should be informed.

Nutritional diseases : Diseases like rickets are preventable if the baby is on a good diet, and is given adequate vitamins. Malnutrition is very common in Indian children but can be avoided if the child is on a good diet. It is good to give a baby multi-vitamin preparations regularly.

Rheumatic fever : This usually starts 2 to 3 weeks after a sore throat or cold. The child will have pain in a joint. The joint will be warm, swollen, red and very painful. After 2 or 3 days, this joint becomes normal and another joint gets affected. In addition, the child may have fever, chest-pain and breathlessness. The doctor should be informed immediately, as the heart can be affected. If the child gets repeated attacks of rheumatic fever, his heart may suffer severe damage. In such a case, he must be under the regular supervision of a doctor and given antibiotics until he reaches adulthood.

What has been said need not make hypochondriacs of us, so that we live in constant anxiety every time our children are even slightly sick. Children are able to get over many physical hurdles with amazing ease. God has a special care for them and so we can safely commit them into His Almighty hands.

Emotional Problems That A Mother Can Face

Let me conclude with a few words about emotional problems and "mood-swings" that some mothers face. There are many reasons for this. The cause could be hormonal, especially if you are middle-aged.

Sometimes, the cause may be tiredness or pressures at home or with the children.

Whatever the cause, ensure that you take sufficient food and rest. And don't take on unnecessary tasks outside the home that may be too much for you to handle. Take some extra iron, calcium and vitamins in your diet as well.

It may be necessary to seek medical help, if the problem persists. Our Heavenly Father knows our frame that we are but dust. And He cares for our bodies. His grace IS sufficient for us to come out triumphantly in every situation - no matter what the problem may be.

How wonderful it is that in a world cursed by sickness and disease we can be in touch with the living God. This is indeed an unspeakable privilege.

If we have learnt to praise God in all situations, and have freed ourselves from all bitterness, and cast all our anxiety on Him, we can be overcomers in every crisis we face.

Finally, let us remember God's unchanging promise to us at all times - that He will NEVER leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5-6).

03.0.1. Women, Why Are You Weeping

Women, Why Are You Weeping by Dr Annie Zac Poonen

03.0.2. Copyright Info

Copyright – Dr. Annie Zac Poonen (2001) This article has been copyrighted to prevent misuse.

It should not be reprinted or translated without written permission from the author.

Permission is however given for this article

to be downloaded and printed

provided it is for FREE distribution,

provided NO ALTERATIONS are made,

provided the AUTHOR'S NAME AND ADDRESS are mentioned,

and provided this copyright notice is included

in each printout.

For further details, please contact:

The Publisher

03.0.3. Table of Contents

Table of Contents This Book And You

1. God is your Father
2. God is your Husband
3. God will save your children
4. God will be with you in death's valley
5. God's Name will be glorified when you are persecuted
6. God will deliver you from worldly sorrow
7. God will draw you to Himself through godly sorrow
8. God has a plan even in your physical pain
9. God cares for weeping women

03.0.4. THIS BOOK AND YOU

THIS BOOK AND YOU A woman has been blessed by her Maker with a sensitive nature. She is capable of great depths of feeling and has a rare capacity to understand people's problems. Thus she is able to alleviate the pains of others with sympathy and concern. But this sensitivity is also the cause of many of her problems. Tragic things happen to her just like they happen to others. And it is then that she herself needs help!

Some women weep for weeks on end as if their sorrows could be drowned in the sea of their tears. Others weep inwardly and are crushed by the weight of their grief. Many women retain the emotional scars of their suffering long after their problems have been solved. But sorrows and trials can be turned to a good purpose – the purpose with which a sovereign God Who loves us intensely, allows them to enter our lives. Trials can shape our character. Like the sandalwood tree that imparts its fragrance to the axe that cuts it, a woman can become a blessing to many (even to the one who harms her) through what she has learnt of God in her sorrows! To become a woman of God, one must be prepared to face many trials, but these trials must not be permitted to overwhelm us.

Many of my friends have gone through great depths of grief and sorrow. In some of those cases, I was unable to fathom the depths of their suffering. But giving them a listening ear, talking to them, writing to them, and being a friend to them has enriched me immensely. I have discovered that we can become better persons, if we learn to handle suffering aright. We receive a unique education in the school of suffering. The final reward is Christ-likeness in character.

“When He has tested me I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). But the fire that purifies the gold also hardens the clay. A woman too can be hardened through her sufferings and live her life with endless complaints against others, and against God as well!

Almost all our trials and sufferings are events over which we have no control. But the Lord can turn them to our profit by making something good happen within us. All things work together for good to those who love God and who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

Jesus meets us women today, just as He met Mary Magdalene when she was weeping at His tomb on the resurrection morning. He asks us the same question too: “Woman, why are you weeping”.

“He knows every detail of what is happening to us” (Job 23:10 – Living). He is not ignorant. And He goes on to ask us: “Whom are you seeking?”

What will our reply be? Will we be able to say honestly, “Lord, it is You that I’m seeking in the midst of my trials. It is Your face alone that I long to see through my tears”.

How insufficient is the comfort we get from people. Let us look to Jesus instead.

Even the weeping mother of Jesus found comfort from Him as He hung on the cross. He arranged a home for her to stay in and told John to look after her.

Such is His concern for each of us women even today. Let us find our rest in His concern for us.

Bangalore Dr. Annie Zac Poonen

03.01. CHAPTER 01 - GOD IS YOUR FATHER

CHAPTER 01 - GOD IS YOUR FATHER “ I ascend to My Father and to your Father” (John 20:17).

While working as a doctor , I came across a number of women who used to abandon their babies in the hospital, if the babies were girls! The mothers would disappear without paying their bills. They were poor and they were disappointed to have borne girls, who they felt would only be a burden to them all their lives. The wretched dowry system in India causes so many problems, especially to poor girls, in every part of our country. Those mothers felt that their girl-babies would have the opportunity for a better life, if left in a Christian hospital or orphanage, than if they were taken back to their village. In an orphanage, perhaps some rich person may even adopt their girl! And there was less chance in a Christian orphanage, of their child being abused by men. In my surgical ward, there was a sweet, nameless, two year old girl, who never smiled, never spoke, hardly cried and even refused to eat. She was found at the gate of the hospital by a social worker. The girl seemed to be quite intelligent. But looking into her eyes filled with pathos, one could only imagine what horrors she had already faced in her brief earthly life. All of us who worked in that ward liked her and did our best to cheer her up. Usually such little girls were sent to some Christian orphanage. This one was my patient and so, when she recovered, some Christian friends and I arranged for her to be sent to a well-known Christian orphanage.

I used to enquire about her occasionally through the years and even prayed for her now and then. Then one day, more than 30 years later, I met her. She was now married and had children. But the very first question she asked me was: “Who are my parents?”

All through those 30 years, this question had haunted her. There was a vacuum in her heart that had longed for the love of a father and a mother – something that she had never received in the orphanage.

She had everything else that a woman would want – a good husband, children, education and even a good job. But there was still this ache in her heart that made her weep as soon as she met me.

Unfortunately, I couldn't tell her who her parents were, for I didn't know. But I could tell her of a loving Father in heaven who could be more to her than any earthly parent could ever be. She couldn't however, bring herself to forgive her unknown parents for deserting her when she was a baby. I could see that those feelings of rejection were destroying her soul.

I can think of other girls who, even though they have parents, have not received from them the love and attention that they longed for. These girls too have grown up as insecure, lonely, unhappy individuals in a hard and cruel world. And then there are the girls from broken homes, and girls born to unwed mothers. Many, many girls facing such tragedies feel that their parents cannot understand them.

Many young girls come from backgrounds that are tragic, but all of them can find the security, love and care that they long for, if they come to the bosom of our heavenly Father. Do you hurt from memories of some abuse that you may have suffered in the past - perhaps a deep, secret hurt, which you cannot tell anyone? I met a girl once who had been sexually abused as a child. She felt so dirty, angry and robbed of her virginity that she could never trust any man. How relieved she was when I told her to look at the whole matter as "an accident" that happened to her - for which she was in no way responsible.

Jesus alone can heal every hurt and cleanse away the guilt and shame. He can help you to forgive the one who harmed you. Your experience can make you compassionate toward others who have suffered similarly - so that you can help them.

Perhaps you resent your strict parents and the restrictions that they imposed on you about your dress and conduct etc., Some girls at times feel like running away from their home to end their lives. But there is no girl whose future looks entirely negative. There is a silver lining in every dark cloud. So learn to think of the good things that can happen to you. Be thankful for the good things your parents did for you, so that you are alive today. God can help you to adjust to the difficulties and trials you are facing. So don't ever give up hope.

Don't envy the lot of those who seem to have a better deal in life. God did not make any mistake in the way He made you or in the environment that He planned for you. There are millions in the world whose lot is more sad than yours. You have much to be thankful for.

Perhaps you sinned and conceived a child before getting married. I know many girls, in such situations, who made the the right decision, to have their babies. Some kept their babies with them; others gave them away for adoption. But they did not kill their babies. And when they humbled themselves before God and repented, He gave them understanding husbands too. The Lord took away their guilt and shame. So you can trust God even in such dark times - even if others malign you. The Lord is waiting to receive you and offer you a new life.

Some time ago, we read in the newspapers in India of three sisters in a family (all of marriageable age) who together committed suicide, by hanging themselves in their bedroom. Their father had been unable to afford the large dowry that the parents of every boy was asking, if their son was to marry any of these girls - and the father was getting desperate and frustrated. They decided to put an end to their father's misery by ending their own lives!! How tragic!

Perhaps you are facing a similar situation, where every marriage proposal that comes for you ends up being cancelled because of the large dowry demanded. Don't get discouraged. God is your Father and He knows your need and cares for you. Marriage is not the greatest thing in the world. Fulfilling God's plan for your life is. So dedicate yourself totally to God and seek to do His will alone in your life. And you will have a fulfilling life when you come to the end of it, whether you are married or not. Some of the greatest missionaries in the world have been unmarried women. Have you failed in some examination, even after trying your best? Do you feel that others do not sympathise with you? Does the devil make you feel that your whole life is a failure? Don't entertain those demonic thoughts, for they can finally lead you to the point where you may try to end your life.

You can stop weeping, my sister. Your life need not come to a standstill just because you failed in one examination – or even in many examinations. Do those exams again. One day you will succeed. Never give up. And if you don't pass, or don't have the intelligence or the financial resources to study further, remember that God has chosen the poor and the weak of this world to shame the clever and the rich.

God loves you just as you are – whether you pass your examinations or not! He doesn't look at your marks-card before accepting you!

Perhaps you have been disappointed in love! The one you had hoped to marry has now married someone else. And you weep - as all youngsters will do at such times. But if that young man married someone else, that only goes to prove that he was not in the will of God for you. God has someone better or something better for you – perhaps a single life of service to Him.

God allows many things in our lives to make Himself more precious to us than everything and everyone else in the world. Let Him then be the fairest of all on earth to you from now onwards. So to those who were forsaken by their parents, let me say: There is no need to find out why your parents abandoned you. You were not a mistake, for all your days were written in God's book from eternal ages (Psalms 139:15-16).

You were chosen by God before He created the worlds (Ephesians 1:4; Ephesians 1:11). You are not responsible for the mistakes of your parents.

You have pined long enough for a family. Rejoice now that you have a Heavenly Father Who wants to make you a part of His family. And remember: He never abandons His children.

He has loved you with an everlasting love and He has lavished that love on you. Picture yourself always as a child, safe in the loving arms of God your Father. You were created in His image and He longs to bless you and to be available to you always.

He is waiting to show you all that He has kept in store for you. One day He will take you to live in the mansion He has prepared for you - a far better place than any earthly house or inheritance. But you must accept His offer to become His child and be a part of His family. Then no one can wrench you out of His hand. So give your whole life to Him.

“As many as received Him [Jesus], to them He gave the right to become the children of God even to those who believe in His Name”(John 1:12).

You can become a child of the heavenly Father if you admit that you are a sinner, accept the death of Jesus for your sins.

Repent of all your sins and forsake them – and He will cleanse you thoroughly in the blood that He shed for you.

Forgive all those who have wronged you - including your parents.

Don't allow memories of the past to haunt you or condemn you.

You cannot fulfil God's plan for your life, if you keep feeling condemned about your past.

You must put your past behind you once for all. Put your past under the blood of Jesus – and press on towards the future.

Jesus suffered and died not only to make you clean, but also to make you feel clean. When Christ comes into your life, you are justified before God. And God looks at you now, just as if you had never sinned in your entire life. Let the realisation of that fact bring joy to your heart - always.

Thus you, like many of us who did what I just wrote, will belong to the wonderful family of God . As you read the Bible, you will hear God speaking to your heart. And when you speak to Him in prayer, you will have the assurance that He hears from heaven and will answer you. The Father told Jesus once, “You are My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased”. One day He will call you His beloved child as well – one in whom He is well pleased. Do not weep any more.

You are not an orphan. You are the child of a King.

I read a letter some time ago, that beautifully expresses what I am trying to say. It was written by Barry Adams, who has very kindly given me permission to quote his inspired compilation here in full :

FATHER'S LOVE LETTER The words you are about to read are true.

They will change your life if you let them - for they come from the heart of God. He loves you. And He is the Father you've been looking for all your life. This is His love letter to you. My Child, You may not know Me, but I know everything about you (Psalms 139:1) I know when you sit down and when you rise up (Psalms 139:2) I am familiar with all your ways (Psalms 139:3) Even the very hairs on your head are numbered (Matthew 10:29-31) For you were made in My image (Genesis 1:27) In Me you live and move and have your being (Acts 17:28) For you are My offspring (Acts 17:28) I knew you even before you were conceived (Jeremiah 1:4-5) I chose you when I planned creation (Ephesians 1:11-12) You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in My book (Psalms 139:15-16) I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live (Acts 17:26) You are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalms 139:14) I knit you together in your mother's womb (Psalms 139:13) And brought you forth on the day you were born (Psalms 71:6) I have been misrepresented by those who don't know Me (John 8:41-44) I am not distant and angry, but am the complete expression of love (1 John 4:16) And it is My desire to lavish My love on you (1 John 3:1) Simply because you are My child and I am your Father (1 John 3:1) I offer you more than your earthly father ever could (Matthew 7:11) For I am the perfect Father (Matthew 5:48) Every good gift that you receive comes from My hand (James 1:17) For I am your provider and I meet all your need (Matthew 6:31-33) My plan for your future has always been filled with hope (Jeremiah 29:11) Because I love you with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3) My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on the seashore (Psalms 139:17-18) And I rejoice over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17) I will never stop doing good to you (Jeremiah 32:40) For you are My treasured possession (Exodus 19:5) I desire to establish you with all My heart and all My soul (Jeremiah 32:41) And I want to show you great and marvelous things (Jeremiah 33:3) If you seek Me with all your heart, you will find Me (Deuteronomy 4:29) Delight in Me and I will give you the desires of your heart (Psalms 37:4) For it is I who gave you those desires (Php 2:13) I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine (Ephesians 3:20) For I am your greatest Encourager (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17) I am also the Father who comforts you in all your troubles (2 Corinthians 1:3-4) When you

are brokenhearted, I am close to you (Psalms 34:18) As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close to My heart (Isaiah 40:11) One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes (Revelation 21:3-4) And I'll take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth (Revelation 21:3-4) I am your Father, and I love you even as I love My Son, Jesus (John 17:23) For in Jesus, My love for you is revealed (John 17:26) He is the exact representation of My being (Hebrews 1:3) He came to demonstrate that I am for you, not against you (Romans 8:31) And to tell you that I am not counting your sins (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) His death was the ultimate expression of My love for you (1 John 4:10) I gave up everything I loved that I might gain your love (Romans 8:31-32) If you receive the gift of My Son Jesus, you receive Me (1 John 2:23) And nothing will ever separate you from My love again (Romans 8:38-39) Come home and I'll throw the biggest party heaven has ever seen (Luke 15:7) I have always been Father, and will always be Father (Ephesians 3:14-15) My question is, "Will you be My child?" (John 1:12-13) I am waiting for you. (Luke 15:11-32)

Love, Your Dad,

Almighty God.

(Copyright Barry Adams –1999) [You can see "Father's Love Letter" on the webpage: <http://www.fathersloveletter.com>]

03.02. CHAPTER 02 - GOD IS YOUR HUSBAND

CHAPTER 02 - GOD IS YOUR HUSBAND

“Your Husband is your Maker, Whose Name is the Lord of Hosts. Your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel who is called, the God of all the earth (Isaiah 54:5). A good friend of mine suddenly lost her husband in a tragic accident. He had not even wished his young wife good-bye. His life was snuffed out by the cruel mistake of a drunken driver who ran him over on the road. And this happened as he was on his way to a prayer-meeting.

Another friend of mine lost her husband after a very brief illness. That unwelcome visitor called “Death” comes uninvited to every home. Only the bereaved one can understand the gnawing pain and the loneliness that death brings. Your thoughts are full of memories of your loved one and you keep wishing that you could re-live those happy days with him again. But it is not to be. Tears that flow day after day and torrents of weeping at night are the only relief that you get from your overwhelming grief. The Bible says that our Lord makes a note of all our tears : “You have seen me tossing and turning through the night. You have collected all my tears and preserved them in your bottle! You have recorded every one of my tears in Your book” (Psalms 56:8 -Living).

One precious child of God read the following article the very month her young husband went to be with the Lord. When I met her, I saw how she had found great comfort in God through it:

“There is perhaps today some woman who a year ago or it may be a few months or weeks or possibly a few days ago had by her side a man so strong and wise that she was freed from all sense of responsibility and care, for all the burdens were upon him. How bright and happy were the days of his companionship. But the dark day came when that loved one was taken away, and how lonely and empty and barren and full of burden and care is life today. Listen woman, there is One who walks right by your side today who is far wiser and stronger and more loving and more able to guide and help than the wisest and strongest and most loving husband that ever lived. He is ready to bear all the burdens and responsibilities of life for you. Yes ready to do far more. Ready to come and dwell in your heart and fill every nook and corner of your empty and aching heart and thus banish all the loneliness and heartache for ever.” (A.W.Tozer)

Another woman could not live anymore with her alcoholic husband and felt she had come to the limits of patience. All her friends suggested that she separate from him. She was at her wits end. She had nowhere to turn and she did not know how she would ever be able to cope all by herself. Are you suffering something like that? Is your loneliness arising from a separation from your husband? Are you haunted with memories that bring regret and remorse? Do you find yourself wishing that those angry outbursts had never occurred?

Even if you are a single parent facing tangled, complex situations because of your children and surrounded by unhelpful relatives, nothing is too difficult for the Lord.

He will enter into your life and undo every knot that Satan has tied and solve every problem - if you will only yield your all- unreservedly to Him. So stop weeping. Just hand over the broken fragments of your life to Him. He is the Master-Potter who can remake every broken vessel. We are but clay in the Potter's Hands! (Jeremiah 18:6). Are you facing the cold, chilly blast of another woman who has entered your husband's life? The Lord can help you to forgive both of them. Your life need not be blighted even by that.

Don't shed tears of anger. The Lord will make up for the loss of your earthly partner. He can even change your partner's heart and turn it towards you once again. He is a God Who does wonders.

Don't plan something in hatred. Instead, ask God to fill your heart with His love and to give you grace to speak words of love to your husband, instead of bitter words. God is near those who are crushed in spirit.

Perhaps you longed to be married, but nothing has worked out for you as yet. Find your comfort in Jesus alone. The Father has already given us the best Helper - the Holy Spirit (John 14:16). He will not leave us comfortless.

Perhaps you are disturbed each time you hear the news that someone is getting married. You don't feel like congratulating her. Instead you feel like weeping in your room. Jesus is near you and feels your pain. The dark nights of weeping covered up by outward tranquillity in the daytime, are all known to Him. He does not stand aloof when His beloved child goes through sorrow. His heart bled for us. He will reach down and touch you and pour His healing balm into your heart and your sorrow will become bearable. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. And your faithfulness in this trial will finally bring you an eternal weight of glory.

I have heard the testimonies of some widows whose husbands were martyred for the Lord. What a note of victory there was in their words!

It amazed me!

How could they forgive the ones who killed their husbands? The Master who prayed for those who crucified Him saying, "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing", alone can help us.

I met a poor, young widow once, whose husband had been axed to death in North India for preaching the gospel. I was moved immensely as I heard her testimony. Standing there with her little children, she said that her prayer was that in the very place where her husband's blood was shed, a church should be born. Indeed, she was a triumphant, weeping sister. The blood of Jesus cries out for mercy, unlike the blood of Abel that cried for vengeance. A true child of God can live as the Lord taught us to live in the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5:1-48, Matthew 6:1-34, and Matthew 7:1-29).

God is the God of the widows and fatherless.

Jesus taught a parable on prayer where He likened us to a widow who went to an unjust judge for protection against her adversary. She persisted and thus got what she wanted.

Jesus once publicly appreciated a widow who offered two mites - what others considered as so little - to God. But she gave from her poverty and it cost her, her whole livelihood to make that offering.

There we learn that Jesus takes note of every little sacrifice that we make for Him – and especially the sacrifices that we make for Him through grief and tears. The Bible says that a godly widow will “wash the feet of the saints” (1 Timothy 5:10) – or in other words she will refresh the hearts of God’s people by her service. A widow can do that only if she has first laid her own burdens, sorrows and tears at the feet of the Lord.

03.03. CHAPTER 03 - GOD WILL SAVE YOUR CHILDREN

CHAPTER 03 - GOD WILL SAVE YOUR CHILDREN “I will save your sons [children]” (Isaiah 49:25).

I got a desperate long-distance telephone call from a mother one day. She had sent her son to study in a college some hundreds of miles away. There his friends had led him into a “Christian” cult-group. Instead of completing his education, the boy had become a fanatical member of that group, and was now giving away all his money to them. He had adopted their ways and their language, and wanted to have nothing more to do with his family. The group quoted Scriptures to justify their actions, but all sensible Christians could clearly see that they were wrong. The leader of the cult would give directions to the members on every little detail of their lives and they lived as a close-knit family. Although they claimed to be happy, they were empty and under bondage. Only a few were ever able to leave the cult. The parents had not given time for God in their family, when the children were growing up. It was only when calamity struck that they began to seek God. Now, they realised that God alone could speak to their son. Only prayer could break the strong chains that bound him.

I think of another young man – this one grew up in a fine Christian family - who was taught by his parents from childhood, to be separate from the world. When he went to college, the peer pressure there made him succumb to wild drinking parties. But God answered the fervent prayers of his distraught parents and today he is a fine Christian man.

Some children who have grown up in godly homes may, at times, have temporary setbacks when they seek to try out the pleasures of this world. We mothers must then pray them out of such dark days.

All mothers have had times when they have wept for their children.

Some weep because their children are born with physical defects or health problems, or are suffering from incurable diseases.

Others, because their children have strayed away from the Good Shepherd and are living like the prodigal son “in a far country” with no communication with the parents, even while living under the same roof as them.

Some are weeping because their son or daughter is lost in a cult and will have nothing more to do with the parents. Some children are victims of alcohol or drug abuse. Others are trapped in wrong friendships. Some have got into criminal ways and are arrested and locked up. In all these situations, the child may have been going through pressures that the parents could not understand or fathom. Maybe the child never felt that he ‘belonged’. He may have felt isolated because of the generation gap between him and his parents. There might also have been a lack of communication between the parents and him. But there is hope for every one of them.

I have heard of many a young man who finally yielded his life to the Lord in a prison. Our children cannot run away from the Lord forever. His love and mercy follows after them and catches up with them finally. A godly woman once said, "Nothing is too great for His power and too small for His love".

So, dear mother, your tearful prayers are not wasted. Keep on praying.

I visited a Christian family once, where all the four children had been afflicted with a physical disability, that made them waste away when they reached adolescence. Three of the children were bedridden and the oldest had died. But the whole family was still radiant with the love of God. The mother worked hard to make life comfortable for her children, even though she knew that she would have to lay them down in their coffins one by one some day. She wept, but she knew that she would see them in healthy, resurrected bodies one day. A few months back I heard that all the children were now in heaven, and that their life of suffering on earth was over.

God gives us our children as a loan for a short period on earth, to train them for His kingdom. I read a poem once that tells us of our responsibility for the children God gives us: THE CHILD GOD LENT US "I'll lend you for a little while a child of mine", God said, "For you to love while he's alive, and give back when he's dead.

It may be for a year or two, or five, or four, or three. But will you, till I call him back, take care of him for me?

He'll bring his charms to gladden you; and should his stay be brief, You'll always have his memories as comfort in your grief.

I cannot promise he will stay, since all from earth return. But there are lessons taught on earth I want this child to learn.

I've looked across the whole wide world and searched for teachers true; And from the folk who live on earth, I now have chosen you.

Now, will you give him all your love, nor think the labour vain, Nor hate Me when I come to take this lost child back again?" And this is what the parents said, "Dear God, Thy will be done. For all the joys this child will bring, the risk of grief we'll run.

We'll shelter him with tenderness, we'll love him while we may. And for the happiness he'll bring, we'll ever grateful stay. But if You come and call him home much sooner than we'd planned, We'll brave the bitter grief that come and try to understand."

(Author unknown)

Remember, dear mother, that children feel many things inwardly. But it is difficult for them to express their feelings in words. So you need to be understanding when they are moody or silent or withdrawn. They are not being evil. They are just struggling with something.

Whatever your child is going through, remember that there is One in heaven Who understands them fully. He stood at the bedside of Jairus' dead daughter and raised her up. Picture that scene, where Jesus took a few of His disciples and the grief-stricken parents of the little girl into the room and shut the door. Then He raised her from the dead and gave her back to her parents and told

them to give her something to eat.

Let Jesus do the same for you today. Allow Him to take you as you weep, into the privacy of your room. He will do something just as wonderful for your child too. Don't be discouraged.

All mothers who pray regularly for their children will remember occasions when they suddenly got an intense burden to pray for a particular child. After a time of prayer, they find that the burden has gone. Later they discover that it was exactly at that time that their child was facing some danger. This is how God makes us prayer-warriors on behalf of our children. Prayer is not the last resort, but the only answer to the problems our children face. The widow in Nain got her son back from the dead. Your child may be spiritually dead and even stinking (like Lazarus was). But he or she too will hear the call of Jesus and come out alive. So cry to the Lord day and night for your child. God has given us many promises and He will fulfil them all and answer you speedily. Your eye has not seen, neither has your ear heard yet, what the Lord has kept in store for you, if you wait for Him. "What is impossible with man is possible with God ". This verse has been a hidden spring that has strengthened me so many times in my trials. I can testify to innumerable answers to prayer with regard to my own children, in so many varied circumstances. I give all the glory to God for what He has done for all my four boys in answer to prayer. I know that prayer changes things. It can change things for you too – and for your children as well. God is able to do far more for us and our children than we can ask or even imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

If your child is the victim of a bad habit, never blame him. He is already hurting enough. He wants to be free, but he cannot break free. And never blame yourself either. That is not the time to say, "If only I had been a better mother." No mother is perfect. We all do our best, but we make many mistakes as well.

Confess to the Lord anything that is bothering you, and get it over with. Get rid of all feelings of regret and condemnation. Condemning oneself is one of Satan's sharpest arrows with which he wounds and paralyzes many of God's children and makes them prayerless. We are in a battle-field, fighting for the lives of our children. So let us not spend our energies weeping. There is work to be done and it has to be done right now. Ask God to help you as you speak with your child. Let God break down the barriers that have been built up over the years. Your tearful pleas will work wonders – both with God and with your son and daughter.

You need to fight on your child's behalf - because he is helpless. It is you who needs to be strong. As David snatched a lamb out of a lion's mouth once, we too have to snatch our children out of Satan's mouth.

You were a weak, timid woman until now. But rise up now, dry your tears and join the battle in the heavenlies. Feed on the Bread of Life, use the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, to fight the devil and to chase him out of your family. Rebuke him in Jesus Name and he will flee, as the Lord promised – at the speed of lightning (James 4:7 & Luke 10:18).

God's Word must be precious to you at such times. Don't let this trial with your child sap your spiritual energy. God's wonderful promises can sustain you in your deepest moments of sorrow. Read the psalms of David. They have a special power to lift our spirits in times of trial and sorrow. Go to God and ask Him to "show you a sign of His favour" towards you (Psalms 86:16). Claim promises such as these:

"I will restore to you the years that the locusts have eaten." (Joel 2:25).

"He is faithful Who promised.....Has He said and shall He not do it?" (Hebrews 10:23; Numbers 23:19).

"The latter glory shall be greater than the former" (Haggai 2:9).

"You did awesome things which we did not expect" (Isaiah 64:3).

"God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed." (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Such words are prophetic and powerful - and can work wonders for us.

"O wonderful, wonderful Word of the Lord.!

True wisdom its pages unfold: And though we may read them a thousand times o'er, They never, no, never grow old.

Each line has a treasure, each promise a pearl , That all, if they will, may secure; And we know that when time and the world pass away God's word shall forever endure."

(Julia Sterling) The Lord Who delivered David from the snares that his enemies laid for him, will deliver your child too (Read and claim Psalms 124:6-8).

Treat your child as if he has a disease, not as though he is a criminal. Never say words like this to your child at any time: "How could you do such a thing to us?"

Perhaps you are ashamed, because of what others may say about your child. But don't care for the opinions of man. My husband always says that you should throw man's opinions in the garbage bin! Your child is worth more than any man on earth. So don't waste your time weeping for the honour of your family that is tarnished. Weep for your child that he may be restored to God. That's all that matters.

Speak words of healing, forgiveness, faith and reconciliation to your child. Treat him/her like a mature person, because that is what he or she is going to be.

Pray in faith and rescue him out of the devil's trap. Use the prayer support of Christian friends. Be ready to receive your child unconditionally, just as the father received the prodigal son. If necessary, be willing to get medical, professional help for him. There are people trained to handle such problems among youth and you can get their help. Or you could read up about your child's problem and help him yourself. Above all, be united with your husband and pray for your child. If there is division in the home, the devil has a foothold. Jesus said that if two are united in His name and ask the Father for anything, it will be granted. So don't blame anyone. Even if your child may be reaping the consequences of a wayward life, remember that there is hope for everyone. Psalms 119:15 says, "I thought on my ways and turned my feet to Thy testimonies". The prodigal son returned to his father's home finally. I am sure his parents must have wept much for him. But one day their tears of sorrow were turned into tears of joy.

Whatever is happening to your child right now may have come as a surprise to you. But it was not a surprise to God. He knew what was going to happen and He already has a solution for it. He has

a solution for every problem and even for our every mistake. So we can turn to Him with total confidence and perfect assurance that He will bring our children out of every crisis.

“When my heart was embittered, and I was pierced within, then I was senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before Thee. Nevertheless I am continually with Thee; Thou hast taken hold of my right hand. With Thy counsel Thou wilt guide me, and afterward receive me to glory.(Psalms 73:21-24)

“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13).

God will never test you beyond what you can bear. Weeping may last for a night but joy comes in the morning. “The Lord is near the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Psalms 34:18).

All these crushing experiences make us yield more fully to the Lord and make us wait for Him to work for us and within us. One day even this trial will come to an end. But don't wait passively. Be ready to act when necessary. God will give you wisdom as to what to do. Bear the crushing, but work while you weep.

We are all so self-reliant and self-sufficient that only trials can teach us to pray and depend on the Lord. “Tribulation works patience...” The Lord has taught us to fast and pray. Knock at Heaven's gates and they will be opened for you, however timid and weak you may be. In the secret hours of the night, pray your heart out to God. You will soon see heaven open and the answer to your supplication. Write down the promises He gave you in those dark days and you will see each one like a rainbow or a precious gem that you can pass on to help others one day. The Father who hears your prayers in secret will reward you openly. He has also said that He will answer us speedily. So persevere in prayer until you get the answer. It is not God's will that your child should be lost eternally. The kingdom of God belongs to those who take it by violence; Jesus challenges us to take the kingdom .

“The angel of the Lord encamps around those who reverence Him and delivers them.” (Psalms 34:7).

“God is able to do far more than we ask or imagine” (Ephesians 3:20). So ask Him in faith. Come boldly to the throne of grace and persist in prayer.

“Arise cry out in the night. Pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord.... for the lives of your children” (Lamentations 2:19).

Fasting applies not only to food. We can fast from the vanities of life, from living a life of pleasure and from doing what our selfish passions dictate. It is not difficult to fast when there is a crisis - for our appetite vanishes anyway. But fasting is a choice that we make. Jesus said that some demons could be cast out only if we fasted and prayed.

We do not wrestle with human beings but with demonic forces. Satan is furious because his end is near and he is throwing newer and more cunning missiles at God's people. But Satan and his demons were all defeated by Jesus on Calvary. In the book of Revelation, we see a description of

their final end. And by faith, we see Satan already in the lake of fire. Praise God!

I heard a godly man once say that prayer is like a rope with which we can pull our children back to God. In 2 Kings 4:7, we read of a creditor (a picture of the devil) who had come to take away the sons of a poor widow, as slaves. The prophet Elisha told the widow to go home and collect empty vessels from her neighbours, shut the door behind her and her sons (a picture of prayer) and to pour out the oil (a picture of the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit). Her debt was thus paid and her sons were miraculously freed from the creditor. That poor widow must have wept and prayed to God, because she did not want to lose her children. Her prayer and weeping must have been desperate. And God answered her prayer. My dear sister, God will do the same for you. Are you weeping today for your children? Let me give you a promise from Hebrews 10:35 :“Women received back their dead by resurrection.”

Claim that for your loved one who is spiritually dead at this time. God will bring him back to life. God wants to show you great and marvellous things in answer to prayer (Jeremiah 33:3) - and He always plans to do good to you (Jeremiah 29:11; Jeremiah 32:40).

“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation and continue steadfastly in prayer” (Romans 12:12).

“This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

03.04. CHAPTER 04 - GOD WILL BE WITH YOU IN DEATH'S VALLEY

CHAPTER 04 - GOD WILL BE WITH YOU IN DEATH'S VALLEY "Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. Jesus asked her, 'Woman why are you weeping?'" (John 20:11).

Jesus knew why Mary was weeping. But I think He was asking her (as we would ask our child), "Why do you need to weep?" There is no need to weep when Jesus is near us.

Jesus Himself wept at the tomb of Lazarus. He knew that Lazarus would be raised from the dead. But He wept because of the terrible state mankind had come to, because of sin. But death has now lost its sting – ever since Jesus rose from the grave.

One childhood memory that stands out vividly in my mind is that of a mother wailing for her dead children. In the town where I grew up, there was a poor woman whose house had collapsed after heavy rains, and her two teen-aged sons had been killed in that calamity. We passed by her broken-down shack on our way to school and saw the bodies of the boys who never woke up from their sleep that morning. That devastated mother was calling out to them hysterically, in sorrow and anguish, as if to waken them. But it was in vain. She knew they were dead. Every onlooker was moved to tears. God cares for such mothers too, who have lost all hope.

Recently on our national holiday a terrible earthquake destroyed whole towns in Gujarat. What a lot of weeping there must have been in those regions. How many were orphaned and rendered homeless in a matter of seconds! Earthquakes are not necessarily God's punishment. When a tower fell down in Siloam in the time of Jesus, He said that those who died were not more sinful than others. He warned us that in the last days there would be wars, famines and earthquakes. So earthquakes only remind us that our Lord's coming is near. We must repent and be alert and pray. We must pray earnestly for our land of India that the Lord will be merciful to this land which is so steeped in idolatry.

Mary Magdalene had been grieving like all the others who loved Jesus, when He was cruelly crucified. She went early that Sunday morning, after the sabbath, to have a glimpse of the body of Jesus, to embalm it and to weep at the tomb.

One way to get over our sorrow is to weep. We should not stifle our tears.

Mary Magdalene was the first one to see the Lord after His resurrection. How thrilled she must have been when she recognized Jesus and when He spoke to her! She had no more tears of sorrow after that! Jesus then commissioned her to go and tell His disciples that He was alive and would meet them too. After all this, Mary still continued to be the same humble, ordinary sister that she had always been in the early church. She did not promote herself as the first one to see the risen Lord. She remained in the background. It was the once-fearful apostles whom the Lord would use for all the public ministry in the church. What an example Mary Magdalene is for us sisters. Even when the Lord gives us wonderful revelation, let Him and the church get all the glory.

Dear sister, in your sorrow, think of Jesus who wept at Lazarus' grave. Think of Mary who wept. It's all right for us to cry when a loved one departs from this world.

It takes time for us to get over such intense sorrow. But we are not to grieve like the ungodly people in the world. Screaming and wailing, speaking words that bring dishonour to God and questioning God, must never be found in us at any time.

I have heard people curse God at funerals and it has made me feel like leaving the place. The heathen should know that we have a living hope for the future.

Those who die in the Lord have gone immediately into the presence of the Lord. Because Jesus rose again from the dead, we have a glorious hope for the future.

Sometimes the hardest thing to deal with is the question of whether our loved one who passed away is eternally lost or not. We must finally leave this question with the Lord. The secret things belong to the Lord. No human being can answer that question for us. Don't ever go to fortune-tellers, or to even so-called "prophets" to find out the answers to such questions. The Lord has warned us never to do such things (See Deuteronomy 18:10-12). Only the Lord can help us overcome our grief. Be careful that you do not fall into the mire of discouragement. That can harm you emotionally, mentally and spiritually. You might even stumble others with your speculations. You may meet that loved one in heaven and regret all the time you wasted - time when you should have gone on with the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:1-58 is a good chapter to get comfort from, when we weep for a departed loved one.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 is another passage that tells us why we need not grieve as others do: "We do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of {the} archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord."

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). The risen Lord said to John, "Fear not, I am the First and the Last, the Living one; I died, and I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death (Revelation 1:17-18).

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou are with me" (Psalms 23:4).

Romans 8:38 tells us that even death cannot separate us from God's love.

Dear mother, you may be weeping as you think of one of your children who has gone ahead of you to heaven. But think of how happy he/she is today, free from all disability, and enjoying the company of Jesus and the angels. Your child is waiting there to welcome you too one day. So

weep no more. Here is a poem of a child of God who went to be with the Lord, speaking to his loved ones on earth:

IF YOU COULD SEE WHERE I HAVE GONE If you could see where I am now - the beauty of this place - And how it feels to know you're home and see the Saviour's face; To live in peace and know no fear - just joy beyond compare!

While down on earth you miss me now, you wouldn't want me there.

If you could see where I have come, and made the trip with me, You'd know I didn't come alone - the Saviour came with me.

He travelled with me by my side and held me by my hand, And brought me right into His home - this grand and glorious land.

If you could see where I am now, and see what I've been shown, You'd never know another fear, or ever feel alone.

You'd marvel at the care of God - His hand on every life - And realize He really cares and bears with us each strife.

If you could see where I am now - where God is always near - You'd see how He just longs for all to find their way up here.

You'd see He grieves when one is lost, His heart is filled with pain; And you would see His joy at last when one comes home again.

If you could see where I am now, could stay awhile with me - Could share the things that God has made to grace eternity - You'd never, ever want to leave, once heaven's joys you've known;

You'd never want to walk earth's paths, once heaven was your home.

If you could see where I am now, you'd know we'll meet some day And though I'm parted from you now, that I am just away. And now that I am home with Him, secure in every way, I'm waiting here at heaven's door to greet you some sweet day.

(Author Unknown) What a glorious hope we have as Christians!

03.05. CHAPTER 05 - GODS NAME WILL BE GLORIFIED WHEN YOU ARE PERSECUTED

CHAPTER 05 - GODS NAME WILL BE GLORIFIED WHEN YOU ARE PERSECUTED

I have many friends who have accepted the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, but whose husbands have not been converted. Their husbands harass and torment them. Sometimes they abuse them physically, publicly humiliate them and torture them in many other ways. Some of those wives have even been divorced against their will. Some endure every indignity silently in order to keep their family intact and to remain with their children.

There is a lot of heart-wrung weeping in homes like that. The Lord has given grace to these wives to stand true to Him and to be witnesses to the forgiving, meek and submissive nature of Christ. Their children have seen them suffer patiently for the Lord's sake and some of these children have accepted Christ. See how God turns evil to good. Eventually some of the husbands have been won over to the Lord. A friend of mine told me of the immense suffering she faced because her husband was a member of a secret organisation. There was confusion in their home for many years. How she wept and pleaded with her husband not to let their family suffer the consequences of his association with that group. But he could not break away from it. He had become wealthy, as a result of his contacts with the businessmen in the organisation.

Satan used a similar tactic to tempt Jesus: "If you bow down to me, I will give you all the kingdoms of the earth and their glory (which includes their wealth)". But Jesus rebuked Satan and told him to get away from him.

Some, who have left such secret organisations and become Christians, have revealed that new members have to invoke curses on themselves and their families, if ever they break the rules of the group. In some groups, members have to write the oaths in their own blood. Many make these promises without realising the seriousness of what they are saying. Some of these groups even worship Satan in secret. Such deliberately chosen chains are not easily broken. But God can help a person revoke every evil oath he made in the past. Many have been freed by the Lord from such groups - even some who were at one time leaders of such organisations. So never give up praying for your husband, whatever he may be a captive to. Weep and pray in faith. Seek the Lord's protection and pray for your husband, as you would for your only son. Christ broke every fetter when He died on the cross. He came to set every captive free.

Some unmarried girls who accept Christ face intense persecution from their relatives. One mother threatened to commit suicide when her daughter accepted Jesus. Jesus knows how your heart aches to hurt your dear mother who worked so hard to bring you up. But the Lord calls us to love Him more than we love our parents and to be faithful unto death. Your tearful prayers to the Lord for the conversion of your parents will not be in vain. Years later the mother (mentioned above) attended her daughter's wedding to a fine Christian man.

I know of teenage girls who have been thrown out of their homes even in these days, just because they accepted Christ or obeyed Him in water-baptism. I am certain that the Lord will honour them and He has prepared a glorious future for them. In the final day I know the Father will say to them, "This is My beloved daughter in whom I am well-pleased". Did you discover that due to financial difficulties, you have to live with your husband's parents forever? Even though they are good people, you have to live in a 'joint family', where you share your home with your husband's relatives; and your husband's mother runs the home. Everything in the house is common property and at times you feel that even your thoughts are common property! You resent it and you weep inwardly. You feel cheated out of a home of your own. You long to share your feelings with your husband. But you cannot say anything about his relatives, for that will hurt him. You live one day at a time and somehow manage to pull on, accepting the miserable situation, just as many other married women in India do. Sometimes you have outbursts of weeping and anger, because things are not as you would want them to be. There is chaos in your mind as well as in your life.

You cannot change the culture of India. But God can change you! You can learn to forgive and not take offence at words spoken to you. Those words are not going to matter a hundred years from now. Think positively of the many advantages of your situation - the practical help you have in the house, and your children having their grandparents with them. Many families live far away from their relatives. And with all the external turmoil in the house, you can still have a secret walk with the Lord in your heart.

You can also be a comfort and strength to other women in India who are facing similar situations. Every crushing experience we go through helps us to partake of Christ's sufferings. We can thus acquire the nature of Christ and be a blessing to those around us who are going through the similar problems. Are you being harassed (by words and actions) by your husband's relatives because of "insufficient dowry". Perhaps you are disgusted with those around you and are in despair, wishing you had never got married. We read of "dowry-deaths" almost every day in the newspapers. Your life is not your own. It belongs to God. So don't ever think of ending it. Instead ask God for grace to endure this trial. Don't do things that will be tragic for your family. Find your security in the Lord. He has promised not to allow any trial to become too much for you. It is futile to spend your days in accusing and blaming others. Wait in faith for the Lord to work on your behalf. Those who trust in Him will never be disappointed (Isaiah 49:23) and those who wait on Him will rise up and soar like the eagles one day (Isaiah 40:31).

Ask the Lord to give you wisdom in your situation.

Some believers have had the unique privilege of being dragged to court for the Lord's sake. That is indeed a privilege and an honour, because our Lord Himself was taken to court by His enemies. The charges levelled against you may all be false. But the Lord allows even that with a purpose. He has assured us that when we stand before judges, we need not worry about what we should say, for He will tell us what to say. So we can rest in Him with a child-like trust.

Here are some wonderful promises that God has given in His Word for all who are taken to court unjustly. You can claim all of them in Jesus' Name (Quotations are from the Living Bible):

"The Lord is my lawyer and defender, and He will rescue me." (1 Samuel 24:15).

“The Lord says, `Don't be afraid! Don't be paralyzed! For the battle is not yours but God's! You will not need to fight! Stand quietly and see the incredible rescue operation God will perform for you. The Lord is with you.”(2 Chronicles 20:15-17).

“The Lord will not let the godly be condemned when they are brought before the judge” (Psalms 37:33).

“Judgment does not come from the east or from the west, from the north or from the south (that is, from any man). It is God Who is the Judge condemning some and acquitting others. He will break the power of the wicked, but the power of the righteous will be increased.” (Psalms 75:6; Psalms 75:10).

“The Lord will not judge by appearance, false evidence, or hearsay, but will defend the poor and the exploited. He will rule against the wicked who oppress them.” (Isaiah 11:3-5).

“Their insults cannot hurt me, because the Sovereign Lord gives me help. I brace myself to endure them. I know that I will not be disgraced, for God is near, and He will prove me innocent. Does anyone dare to bring charges against me? Let us go to court together! Let him bring his accusation! The Sovereign Lord Himself defends me - who then can prove me guilty? All my accusers will disappear; they will vanish like moth-eaten cloth. All of you that plot to destroy others will be destroyed by your own plots. The Lord Himself will make that happen; you will suffer a miserable fate.” (Isaiah 50:7-11).

“The Lord says, `Your enemies will stay far away; you will live in peace. Terror shall not come near, for I am on your side. Your enemies will be routed for I am on your side. No weapon turned against you shall succeed, and you will have justice against every courtroom lie.” (Isaiah 54:14-17).

“The Lord says, `I will be your lawyer; I will plead your case.” [Jeremiah 51:36 (Living Bible)]

“O Lord, You are my lawyer! Plead my case! For you have redeemed my life. You have seen the wrong they did to me; be my Judge, to prove me right. You have seen the plots my foes have laid against me. You have heard the vile names they have called me, and all they say about me, and their whispered plans. See how they laugh and sing with glee, preparing my doom” (Lamentations 3:58-63).

“Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly” (Luke 18:7-8).

“No one could arrest Him because His hour had not yet come” (John 7:30; John 8:20).

If you or your husband ever have to stand in a court before your accusers, for the Lord's sake, don't weep. Hold back the tears. Instead, feel sorry for your accusers. How terrible will be their judgment in the day that the Judge of all the earth deals with them!

Jesus Himself was betrayed and taken to court and had to stand before a mocking crowd. Do not wonder then at what is happening to you. Aren't you His disciple? It is a rare privilege that He has given you to follow in His steps even in this area. Be bold. This is no time for tears. Leap for joy instead, for your reward in heaven will be great. Jesus is praying for you, and one day He will

vindicate you and honour you.

Here on earth our life is to be one of suffering. We are partakers of His sufferings, but He gives us His overflowing joy as well in every trial. He Himself was betrayed by a close friend and taken through a mock trial. He was slapped and beaten so much that His back was furrowed. Today, we can hire a lawyer and hope for some justice. But Jesus did not even have a proper trial and was unjustly condemned to die. His death was the most cruel death anyone could ever have suffered. But He had joy within Him because He thought of the reward of those sufferings - the reward of delivering you and me from the clutches of sin, to be His bride. He can give us joy too.

Isaiah 53:7-9 is a passage of Scripture that always moves me:

“He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He never said a word. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He stood silent before the ones condemning Him. From prison and trial they led Him away to His death. But who among the people of that day realized it was their sins He was dying for – that He was suffering their punishment? He was buried like a criminal in a rich man’s grave; but He had done no wrong, and had never spoken an evil word.” (Living Bible) The apostle Paul suffered much for the sake of the gospel. But from his prison cell he wrote some of his most wonderful epistles, like Philippians for example, where he tells us to rejoice in the Lord always.

All who seek to live a godly life in Christ will suffer some form of persecution. So we should not be surprised when that happens to us, as though some strange thing were happening to us (1 Peter 4:12). The Lord will encourage us through His Word each time.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:10.). The Lord has taught us to forgive those who persecute us, to love them and to pray for them. We prove that we are children of our loving Father when we do good to those who harm us. God is good to all. Perhaps your closest friend or relative has stabbed you in the back. Don’t weep. Rejoice that you have the privilege of walking in Jesus’ footsteps. Let the mind of Christ rule you at such times.

I have read of pastors who have been imprisoned for many long years for the Lord’s sake. This must have been very hard for their wives. We must pray for the families of Christians who are being persecuted even today in many countries. Persecution will come to us in India too. Let us pray that God will keep us strong in faith. It is good for all of us to take time to read the stories of martyrs and those who were persecuted in past times for the Lord’s sake. That will strengthen us when our time comes.

“The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:15).

“Our momentary light affliction works an eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:18).

“When you pass through the waters, they shall not overflow you” (Isaiah 43:2).

“God comforts (encourages) us so that we can comfort (encourage) others” (2 Corinthians 1:4).

“Jesus Himself helps us and lives to make intercession for us” (Hebrews 7:25).

“He is our Advocate’ (1 John 2:1).

“The upright will not fear bad news” (Psalms 112:7).

“As your days so shall your strength be. The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.” (Deuteronomy 33:25; Deuteronomy 33:27).

“He rejoices over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17).

“All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalms 46:1).

Peter speaks of fiery trials that we will have to face, and the Lord assures us in Isaiah 43:3 that when we walk through the fire we will not be burned. That means that our soul will not be destroyed in persecution.

Jesus teaches us to pray. The Holy Spirit also makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. When we are not able to put our anguish into words, the Holy Spirit comes to our aid. So let us yield to the Holy Spirit and He will cry out from within us.

03.06. CHAPTER 06 - GOD WILL DELIVER YOU FROM WORLDLY SORROW

CHAPTER 06 - GOD WILL DELIVER YOU FROM WORLDLY SORROW “The sorrow of this world works death “(2 Corinthians 7:10).

Much weeping among women arises from self-pity, getting offended, being slighted, or not getting some earthly thing that they wanted.

Some women are over-sensitive and touchy by nature. Their violent temper makes them flare up easily. James 1:19 tells us that we should be “slow to anger” - for “anger resides in the bosom of fools”(Ecclesiastes 7:9). Satan often makes people lose their temper and then makes them wallow in self-condemnation. Beware of Satan’s tactics! Get up from the muck immediately, repent of your sin and turn back to the Lord.

Some women constantly compare themselves with others who are better off than them. This always leads to discouragement and despondency that makes them miserable. If you want to compare yourself with others, then compare yourself with those who are worse off than you, like those who live in the slums.

Some women are habitually lonely and impose themselves on others, never finding the comfort they need anywhere. Instead, we could develop an intimate relationship with the Lord.

Some middle-aged women are physically weak and weep easily, due to hormonal changes. Such medical conditions can be treated and so they should see a doctor. God is the One Who created us and He knows our frame and is more than willing to help us at such times - if we ask Him. Does your weeping arise from worldly sorrow? Go through this check-list and see :

■Were you brought up as a spoilt child by indulgent parents, because of which you are now easily irritated and unable to cope with small inconveniences and delays? Is that why you weep? Don’t blame your parents. Deal with your irritability at the egg stage itself, before it hatches and becomes a deadly serpent that will hurt both yourself and others. Ask God to help you overcome the hang-ups of your upbringing.

■Do you love material things, clothes, music, jewelry, etc., so much that if you don’t get them, you become unhappy and start weeping? Do you start a tirade against your parents or your husband for not getting you such things? Confess your worldly attitude to the Lord and ask Him to deliver you from it.

■Do you weep because you or your husband or your child didn’t get a job or a promotion or a college-admission? God knows what is best for your family and He is in control of all your circumstances. So give thanks to Him in all situations.

■Have people hurt you deliberately in some way? Do you find it difficult now to forgive them? Are you weeping in anger and hatred? Do you feel like speaking evil of such people to others? If so,

you are being vengeful. Take such matters to the Lord and ask Him to help you forgive all concerned. Release them all from your mind and forgive them. Then you can greet them with a sincere smile, when you meet them.

■Are you weeping because you suffered some financial loss, through being cheated or treated unjustly? God can use your loss to free you from the love of money and make you more like Jesus. So praise the Lord even for financial loss. All such losses can be replaced by our Lord, Who is the Giver of all good gifts. He is the Judge who will one day deal with all the wrongdoers of the world. So it is best to leave such matters in His Hands. If you keep thinking of those who cheated you, you will only make yourself miserable. A good question that you can ask yourself in such situations is: "Is this going to matter fifty years from now?"

■Are you weeping because of problems with your husband, that you cannot tell anyone about? Satan is out to destroy marriages. Reject all thoughts of jealousy. God planned marriage to be a beautiful thing. So cultivate your marriage as you would a garden. Water the garden constantly and pull out the weeds of discord and suspicion that the enemy sows there. Sow godly seeds of love and forgiveness in the garden instead.

■Are you weeping because you are pregnant again? Perhaps you did not want any more children and you are disappointed to discover that you are pregnant again. Remember that every child is a gift of God. The very thought of rejecting a child is like killing it. Accept every child God gives you, in Jesus Name. You may find that the child you didn't want, brings you greater joy than all your other children. Later on, you can "plan" your family.

■Are you weeping because you have discovered that crying gets you attention, and enables you to get what you want from your husband or your parents - if you cry sufficiently? Ask the Lord to deliver you from such selfishness.

■Are you weeping because things are not working out as you want them to? Are you upset because God has not answered your prayers? Such an attitude comes out of a sense of self-importance. Ask the Lord to give you His patience. Are you preserving the memory of your worldly sorrows (as 'Egyptian mummies' are preserved) for others to give you their comfort and their sympathy? Whenever you are tempted to remember unhappy events of the past, ask the Lord to help you reject such thoughts immediately. If you keep doing that regularly, you will find over a period of time, that you forget such episodes altogether. And your soul will be healed. Your past is like a decomposed corpse that needs to be buried permanently. When you do that, you will find yourself liberated, and begin to experience a little bit of heaven here on earth. Thus you will make the world a better place for yourself and for those around you.

Live your life as God wants you to. Repent of your selfishness, and surrender your all to the Lord Jesus. You may feel at times that you have come to the limit of your endurance. But you will discover later that you were only over-reacting and that God's grace was sufficient to see you through. God will never allow you to be tried beyond your ability.

Many saintly women have suffered much for the Lord. In the 16th century in France, Madam Guyon was imprisoned for her faith, for a long time in a cold prison cell. But she wrote books from that prison-cell that ring with a spirit of triumph, and that bless people even today, because she remained devoted to her Lord.

God wants us women to be tough. He wants us to help others who are struggling and not end up with nervous breakdowns ourselves. His power is available to us at all times and He can make us strong. So let us trust Him, and we will find that our worst times can become our best times with the Lord's help.

Give your life and your future completely into the Lord's hands and He will help you through your most difficult times. There may be even greater trials in the coming days, but you will overcome them all. He will enable you to overcome the giants in your temperament and give you the power to live a life that pleases Him.

Thus, you will become a blessing to many.

03.07. CHAPTER 07 - GOD WILL DRAW YOU TO HIMSELF THROUGH GODLY SORROW

CHAPTER 07 - GOD WILL DRAW YOU TO HIMSELF THROUGH GODLY SORROW “Godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation” (2 Corinthians 7:10).

“Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4).

Godly sorrow is the sorrow produced by the Holy Spirit within us. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in human words (Romans 8:26).

It was such a sorrow that made us repent and come to the Lord at first. And throughout our lives it is good for us to be responsive to such workings of the Holy Spirit within our hearts.

We must weep whenever we fall spiritually or when we lose fellowship with our Lord as the bride did when she lost fellowship with her Beloved (Song of Solomon 3:1-4). Such weeping is good for our soul. Tears of repentance are never in vain. When we see our life in His light, we will discover how the cobwebs of our touchiness, covetousness, pride, selfishness and self-pity have defiled our heart and made life difficult for us and for others around us. Our weeping will then lead us to a brokenness and humility that will enable us to receive God’s grace continually.

Peter was so confident that he would stand like a rock and never deny the Lord. He even took out a sword in Gethsemane to defend his Master. But he fell in the time of temptation, just as the Lord had warned him. But the compassionate, forgiving look of his Master broke him to the point where he wept bitterly. He wondered if he would ever get a chance to tell the Lord how sorry he was for his failure and how much he loved Him? This has been the experience of many of God’s children, who have failed the Lord at some time. If that has been your experience, dear sister, then let me assure you that there is hope for you.

Remember, Satan had to get permission from God before he could sift Peter. And Satan has to get permission from God to sift you too.

Jesus prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail. And Jesus prays for you today. The Lord had faith that Peter would come through the time of testing and be restored. He has faith in you too. After Peter was restored, he went on to strengthen his fellow-believers and did a great work for the Lord. Thus will it be with you too.

If Peter had heeded the Lord’s warning in Gethsemane and prayed as he was told to, he would never have fallen - but Peter was self-confident. And so he failed. But the Lord appeared to him after His resurrection and encouraged him. And Peter got an opportunity to tell the Lord that He loved Him. And then the Lord re-commissioned him as an apostle.

God is a good God and He allows adversity and trial in our lives in order to reveal our true nature to us. Thus He humbles us and breaks us, so that He can transform us into His likeness. Nothing can separate us from God’s love. In times of personal sorrow, we should not be so wrapped up

with our own problems that we have no concern for others. Our Lord, as a “Man of sorrows” was yet “acquainted with our griefs”. He wept as He looked at the people in the city of Jerusalem who had rejected Him.

“He had no tears for His own griefs, But sweat drops of blood for mine”. Our Lord wept for others. Now it is our turn, as Jesus’ representatives, to weep for others.

Think of the story of Joseph who had been imprisoned unjustly. But there in prison, he forgot about his own sorrows and was concerned about the problems of the other prisoners. His concern for Pharaoh’s cupbearer was what finally led to his deliverance from prison. A genuine concern for others can be the first step for your deliverance too (Genesis 40:7).

“He who goes forth weeping, bearing precious seed will come home rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalms 126:6).

Here are some examples of men who wept with a godly sorrow:

■Isaiah wept when he saw the glory of God and the corruption of his own nature and said, “Woe is me for I am an unclean man” (Isaiah 6:5).

■Jeremiah wept for the backslidden people of God and wished that his eyes were a fountain of tears, so that He could weep for them continually (Jeremiah 9:1; Jeremiah 13:17).

■Daniel wept for the sins of God’s people (Daniel 9:20-21).

■Ezra and Nehemiah wept when they saw the fallen condition of God’s people (Ezra 10:1; Nehemiah 1:4).

■Paul had great sorrow in his heart continually for his own people (the Jews) who were unconverted (Romans 9:1-3).

Godly sorrow will make us grieve for the things that grieve the Lord.

Think for a moment of the idolatry in our land and how the Lord must be grieved about it. We may have got so used to seeing temples and idols in our land that it does not bother us at all (Acts 17:16). But we have a responsibility before the Lord for the land in which we live.

God has said, “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

I can remember occasions in the past when the Lord laid a burden on my heart to pray for others. A mother once asked me to pray for her son who suffered from sleeplessness. He was addicted to rock music and had no interest in God. Psychiatric help was useless. His head throbbed like the drumbeat of the music he listened to. God in His mercy answered our prayer and he is fine now. Many mothers are unaware of the dangers that their children face through rock music. In one of my travels, I saw a group of men and women having some 2-year old and 3-year old girls with them. I noticed something queer about their behaviour with the children. The little girls looked numbed and fearful and were possibly drugged. They were probably being kidnapped. Since there was no way in which I could prove this, I could do nothing about it. Seeing those poor children

made a deep impression on me and drove me to pray for child-abuse in our country. On another occasion I met a girl from a Western country who had come to India to find peace through gurus, meditation and eastern religions. I got an opportunity to tell her of the real Guru, the Lord Jesus, and found myself burdened to pray for her. Some Westerners have found the Lord in India. Ask the Lord to use you to witness to such needy, searching people or to pray for them. When Jesus was carrying the cross through Jerusalem and saw some women weeping for Him, He told them not to weep for him but for themselves and their children: "Daughters of Jerusalem", He said, "weep not for Me but for yourselves and your children."

Daughters of India, can we hear what He is telling us today?

03.08. CHAPTER 08 - GOD HAS A PLAN EVEN IN YOUR PHYSICAL PAIN

CHAPTER 08 - GOD HAS A PLAN EVEN IN YOUR PHYSICAL PAIN

Many women are afflicted with chronic illnesses and have to live with constant pain and sleepless nights. And their minds are filled with foreboding thoughts about the future – especially the fear of their children becoming motherless. Such thoughts can be horrifying.

Many long for some respite from their pain. Even the strongest analgesics begin to lose their effect after a while. When someone hears of another having been diagnosed with cancer, they begin to wonder if it will be their turn next!

Jesus suffered pain too - and He can sympathise with us and comfort us. He endured the cross, and he alone can help us endure till the end, when we are in pain. Don't ever yield to the temptation to take away your life. The key of Death is in Jesus' hands (Revelation 1:18). Don't try and snatch it away from Him. Wait for God's time, no matter how much you have to suffer. God can sanctify your suffering for you meanwhile. "There is a time to be born and a time to die" (Ecclesiastes 3:2).

Amos 4:12 says, "Prepare to meet your God."

We don't have to look at those words as a horrible threat to get ready to die. Instead, we can look at those words as a loving invitation from our Creator to meet with Him. Death is only a change of residence for a true Christian. It is like shifting to a far better house. Heaven is our final home.

I read of a mother dying of cancer, who in the midst of all her pain, recorded a taped message for each of her children - giving them advice for their growing years, including the matter of choosing a marriage partner. She also told them that if their father decided to bring home a new mother one day, they should accept her gladly and make her feel welcome. She turned her pain over to the Lord and did all that she could do for her family, when she knew that her time on earth was short. Do you weep when the doctor gives you bad news about your health? Are you constantly waiting for the next shot of morphia to relieve your pain? Cry out to Jesus. He bore intense pain too and He can make things bearable for you. He will never allow you to be tested beyond your ability, but will give you grace and strength to bear every trial. Our earthly pain makes us look forward to that better place where there will no more pain or sorrow.

I think of a chorus that we often sing in our church-meetings:

"There is joy in the presence of the Lord, There is joy in the presence of the Lord, All our tears and sorrows must go, There is joy in the presence of the Lord." The remaining verses speak of peace, power and victory in the presence of the Lord. Singing has a tremendous power to soothe us, when we are in pain or experiencing some sorrow.

If your life is totally surrendered to the Lord in every area, you will find that things are much easier when physical pain comes to you. In the past, even a headache may have been unbearable. But now you can pray and rejoice in the Lord, even if a life-threatening illness comes upon you. The Lord has promised “to be with us when we pass through the waters”, and He has assured us that “even the floods will not overflow us”.

“When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned – The flames will not consume you. Don’t be afraid. I am with you.” (Isaiah 43:2; Isaiah 43:5 – Living) His grace is sufficient for us in every situation. As our trials grow greater, the supply of His grace will become greater too. Praise God!

Many of God’s most precious jewels are those who have come out of depths of unimaginable suffering. Just as diamonds are formed in the depths of the earth, they too have suffered tremendous heat and pressure, unseen from the eyes of all men. You can be His precious jewel too. Tears are a part of the process that transforms us into the likeness of Christ - if you submit to God’s dealing joyfully, and don’t shed tears in self-pity. God can change your pain into your gain. A close friend of mine was given a wrong medical treatment and suffers perpetually now as a result of it. But she suffered even more, because she could not bring herself to forgive the doctor. [We mustn’t forget that doctors too are human beings, capable of making mistakes.] It took her a long time to forgive the doctor and to accept her lot. Jesus is the great Physician, Who heals our inner wounds as well.

I know of a young non-Christian girl who, while waiting at a bus-stand, was accosted by her boss who came disguised as a woman, wearing a purdah (veil). He had had a grudge against her for some time and now came to take his revenge on her. He threw acid on her face and ran away. She was scarred and blinded permanently. She had been a beautiful girl, but her beauty was now gone forever. The agonizing, scalding pain was unbearable and the hospital ward she was lying in, resounded with her cries. But in that hospital someone spoke to her about the love of Jesus and her spiritual eyes were opened to see Jesus as her Saviour. Her family became impoverished as a result of her prolonged medical treatment. But they too came to know the love of Jesus and were saved. I saw a picture of her former beautiful self (before she was scalded) and I know I will see her as more beautiful than that in heaven.

I met a young woman who for many years, has had to care for her paraplegic husband. He was crippled after a fall. They had never heard of Jesus before. But when all their relatives forsook them after the tragedy, and they were helpless and devastated, the Lord met with them and they both found Jesus as their Saviour. Now God is using them to minister to other cripples and many are coming to know the Lord Jesus. Despite their immense poverty and their suffering, their faces are radiant. All who visit them are blessed and can never forget their radiant, triumphant look. Yet at the time of the accident, this wife was newly married and was expecting a baby. She became like an insane person, crying day and night for months on end, asking God why He allowed this tragedy to happen to them. Then Jesus came and flooded them with His peace and power. God is now using them powerfully in a remote part of our country. Whenever I think of them I am reminded of Psalms 34:5 that says: “They looked to Him and their faces were radiant.” Their powerful testimony challenged me immensely.

I know another young wife who was unable to bear the harassment she received from her husband and his parents, and who tried to commit suicide by pouring kerosene on herself and setting herself on fire. This, as we know, is the most common method of suicide that women in India adopt, when they are harassed by their husbands and their parents-in-law for dowry. But this young woman did not die. God not only saved her from those flames but also from the flames of hell. She is now a wonderful sister in one of our village-churches, and is a testimony to the love and the mercy of God.

These are examples of women who found the Lord Jesus as a result of serious accidents. Whenever I am reminded, I pray and at times weep before God, for these women who have to live with constant suffering.

I also know of women who have been healed miraculously. Some have become disciples of Jesus after being healed. Some have been delivered from demons and are living for the glory of God now.

Jesus healed all who came to Him, when He was on earth. Ask Him to heal you too. The Bible tells us to ask the elders of the church to anoint us with oil and pray for us in the Name of the Lord when we are sick. The prayer of faith will heal the sick (James 5:14).

Sickness can also be connected with sin. When the Lord healed people on earth, He told some of them, "Your faith has healed you. Now don't sin any more." Illnesses such as arthritis, allergies, high blood pressure and gastritis, are sometimes connected with inner tensions, bitterness and feelings of hurt. So we must first confess our sin and ask the Lord to forgive us. We must also set matters right with those whom we have offended. Make sure that an unforgiving spirit does not get a hold of you – no matter how great the crime someone may have committed against you. God is the one who heals, either through medical means or otherwise. And when you are healed, don't forget to give thanks to God and to give all the glory to Him.

Submit totally to God's will and then ask the Lord in faith to heal you. The Lord is your Healer. And after you have been healed, give your healthy life back to God and dedicate it to be used in His service to bless and help others.

We cannot understand why God allows some of His most faithful children to remain sick while He heals others. God is sovereign. He allowed James to be killed, but released Peter miraculously from prison (Acts 12:1-25). But as we considered earlier, it is our Lord who has the keys of death, and only He can open that door for you. So we cannot die before our time, if we live in His will. We don't have to fear death. The early Christian martyrs went singing to their death.

Amy Carmichael (of Dohnavur, South India) wrote such wonderful books and poems when she was bedridden. She might never have written these if she had been fit and healthy.

Christ can be magnified in our bodies both through health as well as through a continuous thorn in the flesh (Php 1:20). So let us take our sorrows and trials as opportunities to humble ourselves before God and men. Let us never weep for ourselves.

"O my people, trust Him all the time. Pour out your longings before Him, for He can help you" (Psalms 62:8). When your "heart is close to breaking", the Lord will be close to you (Psalms 34:18). When we pass through the valley of weeping (Baca), God can turn it into a spring of waters

that will flow out in blessing to others (Psalms 84:6). As God comforts and refreshes us with living water from heaven, in the midst of our sorrows, we can share this living water with others around us.

One day, God has promised to wipe every tear away from our eyes (Revelation 21:1-4). There will be no more sorrows or trials or death then, no more mourning, or crying or pain, for all those things would have passed away. We wait eagerly, looking for that new heavens and new earth, where our Father will dwell with us forever. So our hearts eagerly cry out saying, “ Come quickly Lord Jesus.”

03.09. CHAPTER 09 - GOD CARES FOR WEEPING WOMEN

CHAPTER 09 - GOD CARES FOR WEEPING WOMEN The Son of God came to earth to show us that the Father loves us and is not angry with us. He also lifted women from the low and degrading levels into which society had thrown them. We read in the gospels of many women who came to Him at different times with varying needs. Never once did Jesus ignore their cries. He always had a kind word for weeping women.

We could say that He was always silently asking them this question: "Woman, why are you weeping?"

Mary Magdalene had undoubtedly wept much in her life. She had once been possessed by seven evil spirits. But Jesus had delivered her - and she never forgot her debt to Him. Her gratitude resulted in a passionate devotion to Jesus. Satan had destroyed her life. Demon after demon had possessed her and she was known in the city as a violent woman – a woman to be avoided. But we see in her, a demonstration of how Jesus can raise up those who are in the depths of despair, those deeply entrenched in the gutter of sin, and place them on spiritual thrones. Hallelujah!

Mary and Martha were two others who wept. They were sisters who had opened their home to Jesus. The Lord had often found food and refreshment in their home, and they had always been glad to work tirelessly for their Lord. One day their brother Lazarus fell seriously ill, and they immediately sent an emergency call to Jesus. But John 11:1-57 relates how Jesus deliberately delayed His arrival to their house. And they couldn't understand it. Why wasn't He coming? Every delay in the answers to our prayers is also planned by God to give us something better than what we asked for. Finally Lazarus died. Then Jesus arrived. Mary and Martha reacted differently to Him - one complained bitterly but the other kept her bitterness within and was silent. But Jesus understood their sorrow. He sympathized with them and even wept. He forgave their complaints and their bitterness and raised their brother from the dead. They had expected only a healing from Jesus, but He gave them a resurrection, and their weeping was turned into joy. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. He can do far more than we ask or think. He weeps with women even today and then wipes away their tears.

We read in the gospels of an unknown woman who had lived with continual bleeding in her body for 12 years. She had gone to one doctor after another – and they had fleeced her of all her savings. Her sickness was an embarrassing one, classified as "Haemorrhage". She must have been weak and anaemic from all the blood loss. Many a night she had wet her pillow with her tears pleading and asking God to heal her. She had been waiting eagerly for the Messiah to come to deliver Israel from all its sorrows. But for twelve years there had been no answer. Then one day she heard that the Messiah had come and was visiting her town. The crowd was immense that day, thronging around Jesus. But she was determined to get in through that crowd and touch at least Jesus' clothes. This weak woman pressed past men, women and children and managed to reach her hand through the crowd and touch just the lower part of His robe with her fingers. And she was healed immediately. Jesus stopped and called her forth and she testified timidly before

the crowd. Her testimony has now blessed people in all nations for 2000 years.

You too may be an unknown woman who has shed many tears. You may be suffering from some embarrassing disease. The Lord will not disappoint you. Come to Him. We can touch Him by faith even today. Jesus bore our sicknesses and our diseases and by His stripes we are healed. In John 4:1-54, we read of another needy woman – this time a Samaritan - whose life was one of rejection, and who had married and remarried five times. The one she was living with finally was not even her husband. She must have been sick of her life. The Jews despised the Samaritans as an inferior race. Women in Samaria normally went to the village-well in the mornings, to collect their water. But she must have had so many bad experiences in the past, with the other women of that village. They may have despised her, taunted her and shunned her. Shame, rejection and sorrow may have been her constant companions in Samaria. So she now preferred to come to the well at noon, when no-one else would be around. Imagine her surprise then when she found a man there. The Master had deliberately travelled through Samaria to meet her and had stayed back at the well that afternoon to talk to her. He used His thirst as a starting point for the conversation and gradually pointed her to her need for the water of Life. Finally, the Lord used her to bring the entire village to repentance.

What hope Jesus gives for despised women who are shunned by society. You may be downtrodden, ignored and belonging to a despised race, with no-one to fight for your rights. Woman, you don't have to weep any longer. Your Redeemer has come for you. In Matthew 15:22, we read of a weeping, but persistent Canaanite woman. She was not a part of the "chosen race". But God cared for her. Her daughter had been demon-possessed for many years and she did not know where to turn for help. She had heard that a Prophet had come to Israel Who cast out demons. But it was very difficult and perhaps too expensive for her to travel to Israel. Besides she was not an Israelite and she did not know if Jesus would have the time to listen to her or help her. And so she gave up all hope of ever seeing her daughter healed. Little did she know however, how much God loved her and how He had seen her tears: God sent Jesus to her. Jesus walked from Galilee to her hometown and back - 50 miles each way - just to help her. When she met Jesus, she knew that she was an alien and deserved nothing from God. She gladly accepted the position of a dog before the Lord and asked if she might have at least a crumb that fell from the children's table. She believed that one crumb from the hand of the Lord was enough to drive the demon out of her daughter. What faith!! Jesus granted her request. The daughter was miles away, but she was delivered instantly. The tearful years were replaced with joy and laughter that day.

What an example for you, dear mother, to seek our wonderful Lord. He has seen your tears too, and He knows your need. Your child may be living far away from you. But you can bring her to the feet of our Lord and she can be delivered. The Lord will travel any distance to wipe away your tears and to turn your weeping into laughter. And remember, you are not a dog, but a daughter of God. You can have the children's bread itself, and not just the crumbs that fall from the table! Go then in faith to the Lord and ask what you will for your daughters and sons, who have been deceived and possessed by Satan. The Lord will deliver every one of them. A weeping woman caught in adultery was once brought to Jesus by the Pharisees (John 8:1-59). According to Jewish law she deserved to be stoned to death. And so they brought her to the Rabbi of Rabbis, in order to trap Him. If He set her free, they would accuse Him of nullifying the Law. If He commanded her to be stoned, He would lose His reputation for compassion. It was a "No-win" situation. "Heads

they win and Tails you lose". Jesus dealt with each situation wisely. Even the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men (1 Corinthians 1:25). Jesus had compassion on her because He understood what it was that made her live the life she was living. It may not have been of her own free choice. Some man may have lured her with false promises and then ditched her. After that, men had repeatedly used her and discarded her. She hated this life. But how could she earn her living? Hardly a day went by without shedding tears. But who would understand her? Who would help her? Yes, Jesus would do both. He would understand her and help her.

I know of many women today who are being rescued from such a life by brave disciples of Jesus, who are taking the risk of confronting the mafia lords who run the brothels. The weeping women in such brothels have lost all hope of living a normal life. Some of them were kidnapped as children by agents who operate the flesh trade. They do not even know who their parents are, or where they come from. Many of these women have now become drug-addicts and need the money they get from prostitution to satisfy their craving for drugs. Many others are infected by HIV and are dying a slow death. Jesus cares for such weeping women and wants to deliver them. He wants to use you and me for this ministry, even today. That woman (of John 8:1-59) never thought she would live another day. She must have been weeping even as she was standing there before her accusers, expecting the first stone to hit her any moment. She saw the compassion on the face of Jesus and her pleading eyes hoped He would understand. He did. He forgave her and turned her path into a new life of discipleship and usefulness to society. He can do the same for you, no matter how low you may have fallen. "I do not condemn you. Go and sin no more", are His words to you today. In the Old Testament too, we read of another prostitute who found mercy from God. Her name was Rahab and she lived with her children in the city of Jericho. She had faith in God, despite her moral failures. She must have wept much over her past life and wanted to become a better woman, for the sake of her children. God saw her desire and so He directed the steps of the Israelite spies to her residence. She helped them and thus her life was saved, when all the rest of Jericho was destroyed. She even married an Israelite called Salmon and became a part of the family tree of Jesus Himself!! Her name is now found in "Faith's Hall of Fame" (Hebrews 11:1-40) along with Abraham and Moses and Joshua! Isn't that amazing? The only two people of that generation to find their names in Hebrews 11:1-40 are Joshua and Rahab!! God's ways are truly amazing. God can do the same for you, dear wayward sister.

We see a weeping widow in the city of Nain. Her only son, the young man who was taking care of her in her old age, had just died suddenly. She wept uncontrollably. She tried to delay the funeral as long as possible, lingering to look at the face of her dear son in the coffin. Reluctantly she allowed the mourners to take the coffin out of her house and she tearfully followed. She was expecting to spend a lonely, dismal night in her home, after the funeral. Little did she know what joys her loving Father in heaven had in store for her. Jesus planned His journey by Nain at that time. He is never late. And He stopped that funeral procession, got the coffin opened and raised up that dead young man and restored him to her mother. God cares for you and He will come by you in your time of sorrow too, dear helpless widowed sister.

All widows have a special place in God's heart. They usually have no one to care for them on earth. They are helpless and many people exploit them. But God is the God of the widows and fatherless and He says, "Let your widows trust in Me" (Jeremiah 49:11). Claim your rights then, dear widowed sister and go freely to your Divine Husband and your heavenly Father. In the Old

Testament too, we read of a woman whose son had died (2 Kings 4:1-44). She went to find God's prophet Elisha, for she knew that he alone could help her. No one who saw her that day had a clue that she was weeping inwardly as she travelled that long way. And when she met Elisha, she spoke to him in the language of faith, and said about her dead child, "It is well with my child" (2 Kings 4:26). No wonder she got her son back from the dead. God honours such faith. In Luke 13:1-35, we read of an invalid woman. This one had been afflicted by some strange ailment for 18 years, that bent her body downwards, so that she could not walk erect. But she ignored the pain and the disability and went faithfully to the meetings every week. It was good that she did not miss the meeting this sabbath day, because this was the day that God had planned for her healing. She had been bound by Satan for many long years. Her utterly hopeless condition made her walk like an animal. That is what the devil makes of his victims (Luke 13:11-13). All those 18 years, she must have wept as she walked down the streets, bearing the taunts of children who made fun of her. She was unable to look up. But her heart waited for her God to deliver her. She may have been an object of pity to others. But even this can make one weep. Some children may have been frightened by her warped, wrinkled appearance. She must have cried out to God on many a night, asking for freedom from the evil curse that the devil had put on her. Then Jesus came and set her free. Jesus saw her in the synagogue and called her out to the front and spoke those wonderful, liberating words, "Woman you are freed." Now she could look straight up to heaven and praise her Father Who had set her free.

Those words have now come down to you through twenty centuries: "WOMAN YOU ARE FREED" (Luke 13:12).

Dear Sister, won't you take that as a personal word to you from your Lord today? You are free now to glorify God, freed from every bondage, every sin, depression, bad moods, hang-ups, hangovers, and every wretched thing that Satan ever invented to harass women through the ages. You are free from the bondage of traditions, free from your foul temper, your uncontrolled tongue, your bitterness, your unforgiving attitudes, your resentments, free from the demonic forces that have oppressed you for so long and bound you. Straighten up right now and glorify God.

Serve Him. No more need you walk with your low self-esteem. You are valuable to God, even if others despise you and do not see your worth. The Hand of God is on your life from today.

"The Son of God came to untie every knot that Satan ever tied on you" (1 John 3:8 -Paraphrase).

"If the Son shall make you free you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Jesus called that woman "a daughter of Abraham". We too are daughters of Abraham, according to 1 Peter 3:6 – daughters of Sarah, that woman of faith, who has been given to us as an example there. She got the child she was promised in a miraculous way. She too must have wept for many years after her marriage, when she was barren. She waited and waited for the promised child, and must have been tempted to give up hope many a time. It was a shame in those days (as in many parts of India today) to be barren. Many proud mothers may have taunted Sarah and she must have faced the subtle comments and snide remarks of others. She would go into her tent and weep before her God. And God saw her tears and answered her. So don't give up praying with tears. Don't ever lose faith. God will answer you speedily, O woman of faith.

It is perhaps best to conclude with the beautiful story of that weeping, sinful woman who brought an alabaster vial of expensive perfume and anointed Jesus feet, after washing those dust-laden feet with her tears. (Those tired feet had walked the streets of Palestine for you and me as well.) Jesus saw her tears, her repentance, her desire to give up her sinful life and her longing to be accepted by God. He also saw the reasons behind her tears. The religious leaders at that dinner only saw her as a sinner. They looked at her on the outside. Jesus saw what was in her heart. She had been forgiven much and so she loved much. The alabaster vial of perfume (which she must have spent her life's savings to buy) was a token of her love. She spread the fragrance of her perfume, not only in that house that day, but through her story, into the hearts of many other women like us for 20 centuries.

Jesus gave her forgiveness, salvation and peace. And then He told all the dinner guests the story of a money-lender who forgave two debtors, one who owed him a small debt and the other who owed him a much larger debt. "Which of the two would love the creditor more?" Jesus asked. And then pointing to the sinful woman, He said that she loved Him more than anyone else there, because "she had been forgiven much".

Jesus used sinful, suffering women to teach other people many wonderful truths of the kingdom of God. He understands the condition of women in our Indian culture today, and has come to lift us up, and to give us hope and an awareness of our tremendous value in God's eyes. No one who comes to Him will ever be rejected. He blessed every woman who ever came to Him in her need, when He was on earth, and He is just the same today.

Dear fellow-women, we have all been forgiven much. This is why we must love the Lord much. He wants to use us now to show His marvellous truths to many others around us.

So, "Wake up, O (Indian) daughter of Zion, clothe yourself with strength. Put on your beautiful clothes. Rise from the dust. Take off the slave-bands from your neck. Let your light shine, for the glory of the Lord has risen upon you" (Isaiah 52:1-2; Isaiah 60:1 -Living).

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
 - 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net