

Instructions for a Godly Woman

by Helen Leibee

A godly woman submits to her husband, respects her headship order, and lives a life of modesty and humility.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 7:1-11, Ephesians 5:22-23, 1 Timothy 2:9, Titus 2:3, 1 Peter 3:1

Topics: "Christian Womanhood", "Marital Relationships"

Description

Helen Leibee preaches about the importance of following the teachings of the New Testament directed to Christian women, emphasizing the need for continuous evaluation of one's life in light of these verses. The sermon covers various topics such as marital relationships, headship order, modesty, obedience to husbands, and the significance of faith, charity, holiness, and sobriety. Leibee encourages women to love their husbands, develop a meek and quiet spirit, and trust in God, highlighting the power of a woman's behavior in influencing her husband's faith.

Transcript

Early in my Christian walk, I made up for myself this acrostic. It contains the basic teachings of the N.T. directed to Christian women, especially married women. Whether you're married or single, treasure these teachings--they can have so much application in your life and in the lives of those you may counsel later on. Memorize these passages if you are able!

Christ(1 Corinthians)

Expects(Ephesians)

Christians(Colossians)

To(1 Timothy)

Teach(Titus)

Purity(1 Peter)

Many of us began our Christian lives thinking we had a fairly holy walk. Years later, we think we aren't walking a very holy walk at all, and wonder, "What's wrong with me--was I really even saved back then?" The answer to that is usually yes, but as you get closer to Christ, you can see many flaws that you couldn't see before. So don't have the attitude of "I've already read those Scriptures," but instead continually

evaluate your life in light of these verses--even if you've been walking with God for years.

We'll begin with I Corinthians. Years ago, I was told that this book was for another time, a common teaching today. But imagine God writing Scripture and then saying later "I wish I hadn't written that!" When confronted with this lie, take them to the very beginning of the book:

"Paul, called to be an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is in Corinth" (Many will stop here and say that this was only for the church at that time) "to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (both theirs and ours). That clears the whole thing up for us--that this is written for all the saints, in all places at all times.

1. Defraud Not

In I Corinthians 7:1-3, Paul explains that it might be good to marry, also saying that if you are married, your body does not belong to you, but to your spouse. Verses 4 and 5 read:

The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

What does the word "defraud" mean? An older dictionary reads: To withhold wrongly from another that which is due to him, or to prevent one from obtaining what he justly has claim to have. To defraud is to prevent someone from having something that's already theirs. How does this apply? If you are one who, if offended by your husband, doesn't speak to him, then you're defrauding your husband. You may not be saying "No" to physical relations, but you really are saying "No" by making it very clear that you are reserved with him, and that affects every element of your relationship, including the physical. Purpose in your heart never to be like this. It's not a personality trait, but a serious offense to him, and it robs both you of peace.

2. A Saved Wife Might Save Her Husband

Continuing on in this passage, we now see Paul beginning to talk about the responsibilities of husbands and wives. See I Corinthians 7:13-14:

And the woman which hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

Having searched the New Testament, I've never seen any other passage in which an unbeliever is saved without the gospel or without some part of the Word of God. If Jesus has transformed your life, you must tell other people, even if you're the quietest person in the world. But this one exception says that an unbelieving husband can be won without the Word! Why is there an exception here? What it indicates is that a woman's behavior, in this instance, is as powerful as the Word. Know that your behavior with your husband is extremely powerful--God can use it to convert your unbelieving husband.

3. Headship Order

1 Corinthians 11:1-13: Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

Most of us understand the headship order. However, when we're very familiar with a teaching we can easily miss the depth of it. Many churches think that they have a grasp of a truth to the point where they no longer even teach it--and the next generation soon discards it.

The headship order is clear: God, Christ, man, and woman. One interesting thing about the headship order: Christ wasn't at the top of the list, and he never chafed at it. As Jesus walked here on earth, he looked up and said, I want to do my Father's will, never saying, "I'm the creator of universe--why would I have to submit?" Instead, He delighted to do the will of His Father. When He found that it was difficult, He made an appeal, saying, if it were possible, take this cup. But in the end, not my will, but Thine be done. In the same way, it's okay to appeal to our husbands, but only with the attitude of "I'll joyfully do what you say." You've never been asked to obey even unto death (as Jesus was), and neither have I, so whenever you have a struggle in your heart over the headship order, go back and say, I want to follow Christ's example of joyfully falling in line with His Father. The difficulty is that we have the world constantly screaming at us to go the other way--the devil is leading them with his screams of "You have your rights!" At the lot, Rick regularly has a man say the same phrases to him: "I'll have to ask the big boss whether I can buy this shed." "I'll have to ask the one who really wears the pants in the family." The world has made this attitude cute and faddish, but we want to fall in line with the headship order from the time we're very young, and stay under it.

4. Covering Your Head

1 Corinthians 11: 4-16: Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

During a recent trip, Rick and I decided to keep track of how many women's heads we saw covered while at Chicago's O'Hare airport, one of the largest in the United States. We saw one Muslim's and mine. This teaching is definitely a lost teaching and a very hard one for someone who has never heard it before. But the head covering is a constant reminder of headship--to our husbands, to ourselves, and to the world. The churches that drop the covering drop the headship order very soon after. The woman then stops being meek, gentle, and quiet, often takes over the home, often teaches in the church, and finds it unnecessary to submit. You may know one or two who don't wear the covering and maintain the headship

order in other respects, but you won't find an entire church that does so. I've seen also that as women drop the head covering in religious groups, such as the Hutterites, their daughters will not maintain the headship order in any respect--they are thrown into the world, and think nothing of the headship. Wearing the covering helps you to be humble, meek, quiet, and gentle. Before I wore the covering, I would go to family gatherings, parties, and even church gatherings, and carefully choose what I was going to wear so that I would attract attention. After I began wearing the covering, when I was the only one in our area of the state that did so, I was much quieter and meeker when I walked into a big room for a family reunion--I was very conscious of that thing on my head! The covering really, really does help. Some may say, "It's the heart that matters." This is true in a sense, but God understands how connected outward symbols are to the heart. Even the world knows that! Recently a local school system instituted a dress code for their students. They saw that as the students' dress shifted from regular clothing to more casual that their behavior became uncontrollable! They saw if the children wore uniforms, they would behave better! God knew that before those people did, and he knew that putting a covering on will change the way we are.

Note: Hair is a type of covering, but it is not the covering. The words here in the Greek (referring to "uncovered" in v. 13 and "covering" in v. 15) are two different words, though the English makes no distinction between the two. (Many words in the English have two substantially different meanings, so this shouldn't alarm us.) Reading the context with open hearts, we can quickly see God's intent in this passage. If "covering" was referring to hair, that "every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth himself" would mean that he needs to take his hair off each time he prays, and put his hair back on afterwards. There are various ways you can work through it to understand that hair here simply cannot be a replacement for the covering.

5. Long Hair

Looking again at verses 14-15, we see that God wanted women to have long hair. It is a serious thing to cut your hair when God said to wear your hair long. Long hair is a glory and God has a reason for doing this. If you were a princess, and the head of the castle came, and said, "I want to give you this gift--it's a silver service. Please care for it." (A silver service is a tray made of total silver with a coffeepot, a teapot, and other things. Because it is pure silver, it requires constant polishing to maintain its beauty.) Do you think a princess would complain about the time she would have to spend caring for it? No. But isn't it interesting that we are blessed of God, princesses in a way, yet what God gives to us as a glory we call a burden!! Do not call something that God has given to you as a glory a burden--especially in front of the younger girls in the church.

Isn't it funny that we're willing to be inconvenienced for our comforts! Look at beds, for example. Many people in other parts of the world sleep on pallets, not beds. They simply roll them up and put them in the side of their hut--it's merely a piece of cane or bamboo. We Americans sleep on nice, fluffy beds. What if someone would say, "You know, it would be a lot less trouble if you slept on a pallet. You wouldn't have to go through the trouble of washing and changing your sheets--not to mention making your bed every day!" None of you would say, "You're right! I want to be free from the bondage of sleeping on a bed!" You'd say, "I want to have a bed because it's nice and comfy!" It wouldn't bother us to take a lot of trouble if we like to do it. But because our long hair doesn't cater to our comfort, we complain. Be careful about this. The Lord says that he gave you long hair for your glory, so we want to keep it that way.

Just a thought here between numbers--beware of those who will misuse this verse: "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (I Cor. 11:16). It was actually

taught in some of the churches we attended early on that this verse means "we don't have any custom of covering their hair", but we can see that we must use context, and common sense, with this passage. To do a whole teaching on the necessity of the head covering and then say, "We don't do it!" makes no sense. The verse is saying that if any one is going back and forth, we have no custom of being contentious with Scriptures--if the command is in the Word, then we do it. So if you are contentious, simply repent. Even if we're neglected God's command out of ignorance, we should repent of it before God. If I unknowingly offended a sister in a deep way, I would need to go her and say, "I did something the other day that offended you. I didn't know I did at the time, but I want to ask your forgiveness!" It's the same way with God. Let us acknowledge our sins here, even our sins of ignorance, and seek mercy from the Lord!

6. As Unto The Lord

Ephesians 5:22--Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

Love your husbands, and please your husbands, as unto the Lord. I want to tell you my testimony of how God changed me in this area. Early in my Christian walk, I didn't have a good grasp of this. One night Rick called on the phone and said he was going to be late for dinner. It seemed to me that he had done this many, many times up to that point. I answered him, "All right," but in my heart, I felt resentment, saying little things such as, "The dinner's going to be cold--it's not as good cold. Why does he do this? He knows I'm fixing dinner, why can't he simply rearrange his schedule?" The Lord whispered to me, "Reread Ephesians 5:22." Well, I did, and I noted where it said, "as unto the Lord." I realized that if Jesus had called me on the phone and said, "I'm coming to your house tonight, but on the way I have a few things that I have to do," and then said the same thing the next night, I never would have said: "Why! Why don't you just come now?", but instead I would have said, "It doesn't matter when you come, just come!" And here, the Scripture says "as unto the Lord," and I didn't treat Rick like that at all! Is Christ the head of the church? Yes. So then, we need to submit to our husbands in the same way as the church must submit to Christ!

So let us do this--it's not hard; it actually takes pressure off. We may think, "What bondage!" But did you know that there's a lot of pressure in having tense, resentful thoughts? It's misery to be easily offended. Resentment usually means that you're thinking selfishly. In this instance with Rick, I was thinking that I deserved better treatment from my husband! But if you flip it over, thinking "as unto the Lord," you won't have that resentment--you're free!

7. In Everything

Now look at Ephesians 5:23-24: For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

That does it there--it takes all sorts of pressure off--for your day, for your week, for your life. We don't have any excuses when we read: "as unto the Lord" and "In everything."

While the Scripture doesn't explicitly deal with every issue imaginable, I wanted to speak broadly here. If your husband is asking you to do wicked things, don't violate God's Word--please get counseling from a mature believer in such situations. In my experiences, I've seen that if a woman seeks to be in subjection to her husband in other areas, he often will respect her to the point where he won't ask her to do wicked things anymore! On the whole, submit to your husband in everything, as unto the Lord, and consistently so

that he will respect you.

8. Ask Your Husbands!

Colossians 3:18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as it is fit in the Lord.

I Corinthians 14:35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

Ask your husbands (I include Colossians here because it placed the emphasis on "your own" husbands)! This is another very freeing command that women who are young in the Lord don't catch on to. They'll ask everyone else, including other men, all sorts of things, but they won't ask their husbands! One reason is their husbands aren't very mature in the Lord, so they think that he won't know the answer. He may not! But if you never ask him, he will never search them out. I used to ask my husband a lot of questions that he didn't know, and he would often search them out. But do give your husband time, especially if you ask a difficult question. Give him a few days or weeks to search for an answer, and in the meantime, don't nag him about it. When the days or weeks are done, ask meekly if he had a chance to find an answer. This gives him a chance to seek God and to study to find an answer, without putting him on the spot.

In these deceptive times, this verse is used as an excuse to cover worldly behavior and vanity. If you ask your husband about a particular verse, while making it obvious that you don't really want to please the Lord but rather want your own way, he might follow along and water down the Scripture in such a way that will cater to your flesh. Don't manipulate him. Often those who say "my husband doesn't want me to do that" use this verse conveniently, because they don't submit to their husbands in other areas! Your husband needs to know that you want to follow after God.

9. Modesty

I Timothy 2:9-15: In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

Later on you see some of the same things written in the book of I Peter. I think that it's wonderful that God put some of the same instructions in the Bible written by two different people. That's because he knows human nature--someone may say, "Paul looked down on women." I've actually heard people say that! God, knowing that, chose to speak these same things through two different writers! Also, don't ignore the teaching of holy dress because you already practice it! You must understand it in order to teach it to your girls. You must understand it in order to teach it to your boys, so they can find godly wives and teach these things to their children. Also, if you think you can overlook this simply because you already practice it, then soon you won't practice it.

There are two meanings for modesty. Number one is not revealing the body, or not enticing men to wrong thoughts. That's very simple--the Scriptures say to not cause your brother to sin. It's very simple to know that you shouldn't dress immodestly, meaning you shouldn't entice any man. Many might think that the

believing men aren't going to be enticed, but that's not always true! We want to spare our brothers.

The second part of modesty means being quiet and not seeking to be the center of attention. Once, I took my little girl Lydia to the doctor, and they left her in panties for a long time without giving her a gown. Lydia complained that she wasn't modest! That was exciting, but the nurse's response nearly bowled me over. She said, "I haven't heard that word in twenty years." Sadly, the concept of modesty is gone, so we must be doubly diligent in not seeking the center of attention--and teaching our children likewise. Children automatically like flashy things. If you don't curb this early on, you'll have a big problem with they're older. What is nearly every little girl's favorite color? Red! They even want to paint their rooms red. If you take them out to the fabric store, they'll pull out a big piece of fabric that has lions and tigers done in purple and orange and say, "Mom, this would look great on you!" But we as believers don't want to look better than the other person. But oh, how our flesh screams to be noticed by others!

Bold colors and bold prints are often worn by someone with a bold spirit. Yet Paul lifts up the virtues of shamefacedness and sobriety. Don't think of this as law, but know that he is wise, and knows that clothes reflect the heart--he's trying to help us out here. Many women think of this as bondage, but if we could only learn to trust God on these things, we wouldn't have a struggle. Sadly, many employees are more willing to please their boss than we are to please the God of the entire universe! Employers realize that dress reflects the attitude of the person. Think about it--doctors and nurses wear white (sterility), those in the military wear dark, serious colors (no soft pastels!), bank tellers wear nice clothes (to reflect prosperity), and these are just a few. The whole world understands that your dress reflects your heart. What do you want to reflect? Fashion? Prosperity? Sensuality? Young girls, simply being "cool"? Be a stranger and pilgrim, and delight to draw attention to Jesus Christ, not to you. Let good works adorn you. Don't be afraid to be "weird" in the eyes of a wicked world.

10. Not With Gold, Not With Pearls

Why does God specifically mention gold and pearls, and not diamonds, or rubies, or silver? He is wise. As an unsaved girl, I knew that when I had a tan in the summer, that it was time to put away my silver and get out the gold. Gold is sensual, it draws attention to you. Gold and pearls together create a very classy look. As pilgrims and strangers, we don't want that. If we dress prosperous and classy, we'll draw people away from Jesus, not to Jesus. Many will say, "What about all the gold worn in the Old Testament?" Have a good understanding of the new covenant that you live under. Christians aren't part of a favored nation with many material blessings. Our job here is not to maintain a set-apart nation marked by wealth and prosperity, but to live Christ-like lives and to draw people to Jesus. Christ came to set you free from the ways of the world, not free to follow the world. Don't allow yourself or your daughters to add gold and pearls to your clothing when the Bible plainly speaks against such things.

11. Learning in Silence

Read I Timothy 2:11-12. In this passage it speaks of learning in all silence, with all subjection. What that means is, don't argue your viewpoint, especially with men (even if they aren't sound in the faith), and neither should you directly or indirectly teach a man, nor have authority over a man. If you keep the headship order in mind, there's no problem here.

12. Faith, Charity, Holiness and Sobriety

Looking at I Timothy 2:15, we see a verse that is misinterpreted by many. However, it doesn't need to be a confusing verse at all, if taken in context. It simply means, "Don't have authority over men. Don't try to run the church. If you'll stay in your place, you'll do fine, if you continue with faith, charity, holiness and sobriety." It's not saying that if you're childless, you can't be saved!

Try focusing on these four words for a year--faith, charity, holiness and sobriety. A woman with much faith will help create an atmosphere of peace in her home. If she's counseling other women, she'll do so believing that God has the answers. The opposite is true--if you struggle in faith, your home will be full of fear and anxiety, while you're always wondering if the church is doing the right thing, or if you are in the right place. Charity is love in action. Sobriety is having the regular exercise of cool reason. It's not somber, which is melancholy and moody. Sober is joyful, but also calm and moderate, not being given to heated passion. Younger women, look to older women to learn sobriety. Older women, if you're not sober, then begin to be. If persecution comes, we'll need you!!!

13. Older Teach The Younger

Titus 2:3-5--The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things. That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

Are you older women teaching the younger women? Don't say that you're not gifted, because there's no restriction here. Young women, are you asking the right questions of the older women? Ask them about these things (v. 4): to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children. If you're single, ask how to love in a broad sense, or how to work in a household. It grieves me to walk up to a group of women who are more concerned about doctrine or the decisions of the ministry. Why aren't they asking me how to raise children? And if they're older, why aren't they telling me? Yes, we need to prayerfully discuss these other things with our husbands, but such issues should never make us a stirred-up group of women.

14. Disobedience Blasphemes The Word Of God

(Titus 2:5) Blaspheme means to speak irreverently about God, or to revile and speak reproachfully about God. Would any of us dare to openly curse God? The fear of God and the love of God would stop us. But when we disobey, according to this verse, we blaspheme God! This reminds us of another principle (points 2 and 16) which says obedience is more powerful than the Word--it's actually the principle in reverse. Blasphemy is a serious thing, but don't let this teaching discourage you, but let it bring you enlightenment and hope!

15. Love Your Husbands, Love Your Children

Would others say of you, "Oh, how she loves her husband!" Don't say, "Of course I do--I cook for him and wait on him!" You could hire someone to do this--would she be loving him! Those things are important, but do you really love him in your heart? I do not rely on my own nature to love Rick, though he's very dear to me. Don't think that I would need to pray that less and less as we grow closer. While we have grown so close, I pray for him more and more as the years go by! It's such a blessing when we trust God, and not our flesh, for our strength. Ask God fervently to help you love your husband, and you shall receive. The trials of marriage can greatly strengthen or greatly hurt the relationship you have with your husband. It all depends on how much you're walking with God and how much you're growing to love your husband more

and more by the grace of God. You should love him so much more than two newlyweds just starting out. But you must pray for the strength to love your husband.

16. Chaste Conversation

This is another passage that is written by two different writers.

1 Peter 3:1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.

Some may close the Bible here, but let's continue with verses 2-4:

While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God a great price.

Your husband can be won over by your behavior, if you are chaste. Many wives want to win their husbands desperately, but they look and act like the world, and love the world. This is why the Scripture says "while they behold your chaste conversation, coupled with fear." Why would he respect your faith when you look exactly like the world does? In much the same way, don't expect your husband to grow in his Christian walk if you're carnal. You must be chaste, or separate--do you know that chaste means "separate"? Chaste also means "pure, and free from obscenity." Never take part in obscenity. Recently, we were at a restaurant seated near a group of women--all shorn, all dressed like men. We soon realized they were professing Christians, but sadly we overheard them joking about the men in their church in a coarse and obscene way. Having dropped the veiling and headship order, they ceased being chaste women. Women of old hid their faces around vulgarity! We should too. Don't take part in or even acknowledge suggestive comments. Most vulgar men will refrain from vulgarity around a chaste woman (another benefit of the covering!). They realize that their vulgarity clashes with godliness. Be obedient, and chaste without fear, to win others to Christ.

17. Develop A Meek And Quiet Spirit That Trusts In God

What the Scriptures mean by "quiet" is the opposite of restless. There are plenty of quiet women that are not meek and they don't trust. Number 18 explains it a little bit more:

18. Without Fear Or Amazement

1 Peter 3:5-6: For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Do you have no other godly woman in your life to serve as an example? Take comfort--God chose Sara as an example for you! Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Fear and amazement are enemies to a woman desiring to be godly. Here is an example of fear: "Oh, no! If my husband does that, what will happen? It will ruin everything!" Almost every woman experiences fear at some point. Single women can experience it with the church. Young girls may experience it with their

parents. Simply say no to it. Amazement is a bit different. It says, "What is he DOING? I don't believe it! What will he do next?" You're not exactly afraid, but taken aback. Seek to be free from this as well!

IN CLOSING, I ENCOURAGE YOU TO TAKE THESE TEACHINGS, NOT WITH HEAVINESS AND CONDEMNATION, BUT WITH HOPE AND A WILLING HEART, TRUSTING GOD'S LOVING DESIRE TO MOLD YOU INTO CHRIST'S LIKENESS.

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