The Woman of Christ Faces Daily Living

Introductory – Maintaining a Sincere Heart

Proverb 4:23; Luke 6:45; Ephesians 4:17-27

Lesson #1

At some point in our lives, many of us have become Christians. Can you recall your thought processes in the early days after your baptism? Had you really made a commitment to be loyal to Jesus, to be devoted? Had you considered behavioral changes as you sought to be as good a person as you possibly could be?

In our diligence to truly live for Jesus, we may have given up some things. Perhaps we became more careful about our language. We might have asked ourselves, “Should I have used that word or phrase? What does it mean?” Perhaps changes in the way we had begun to think caused us to be uncomfortable at certain movies which we attended; or with some of our clothing; or with other issues.

In those early days after baptism, our hearts were so convicted. We wanted to be good spiritual individuals. We sincerely dedicated ourselves to live faithfully. Are we living up to that commitment?

Following my baptism, my mother hugged me and said to me, “Remember that now your slate is clean.” I thought of my school room's blackboard with its dusty chalk and eraser and how clean it could look after a wipe down with a wet cloth.

What is your memory of that time in your life?

Now all these months or even years later, can we say that we have been faithful to our commitment to live faithfully for Christ? As time has rolled on, have our responses to challenges along the way given us difficulty in keeping our slates clean?

I can tell you for myself that with lofty ideals I set out to rid myself of all encumbrances as I sought to grow as a Christian but as life set in, I could see the need to understand God's will more clearly in order to grow in faith and to be able to help others do the same. I needed to move on from that point at which I was baptized. My heart needed help. There was work to do.

I would like to talk with you about some of the ways we can guard our hearts from sin

Traits of a good woman – Her heart belongs to God

Psalms 119:10 and 11

Hers is not a second-hand or hand-me-down faith. We must each be mindful of our own faith. Our parents had to do that for themselves. It's a personal matter. Traits such as those which follow are often found in a woman who keeps God's word in her heart and who has a personal relationship with him.

1. She's happy and gentle (Philippians 4:4) Her attitude is joyous. She's tender hearted to the degree that she feels real sorrow and weeps with others who are weeping. (Romans 12:15). She is forgiving of others' frailties, but she's not content to ignore their flaws. Instead, she courageously - yet kindly - addresses their shortcomings to them (Hebrews 3:13 KJV). She is trustworthy, and her associates know they can safely confide in her.
2. She is sincere (Ephesians 6:5&6; 1 Timothy 1:5; Romans 12:9). She despises evil. She thoroughly appreciates good and all that is implied: honor, honesty, integrity She speaks the truth. She is guileless. She's not a gossip. She asks herself, "Have I expressed myself foolishly and with tart and insincere words?" She is pure and respects propriety. She keeps promises and vows.
3. She seeks to prepare herself to be a mature Christian in all wisdom and knowledge as well as in behavior (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:15). I have a friend who after being baptized as an adult acquainted herself with scriptures by placing memory verse cards on her ironing board. As she ironed, she memorized the verses. Faithful women are on an open line with God. Prayer is a vital part of every good woman's life (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Colossians 1:3-12). She trusts her Lord to take care of her needs (Matthew 6:25; Philippians 4:6).

Many women teach Bible classes of all ages. Preparation for this work requires many hours spent reading the Bible; studying it; contemplating concepts that we hope to teach our students; and praying for the wisdom that we need to do that job. This is an excellent way to spiritually fortify ourselves. I can't recommend the work of teaching too strongly.

Development is a quality of all living things. We see growth all around us: land and sea creatures; birds; humans; and even trees and other vegetation. God has decreed that Christians must grow. Just as human bodies cannot continue to thrive on last month's nourishment, neither can our spiritual bodies continue to grow without regular Bible study. Our responsibility is an enduring renewal (Ephesians 4:23; Romans 12:2). We must be prepared for Satan's attacks. We must know in advance how we should respond. Let's not think, "At my age, I won't have troubling temptations."

4. She is patient and kind. She has her disposition and behavior under control (Galatians 5:23). She's not critical. She makes a concerted effort to live peaceably with everyone (Romans 12:18-21). She has a calm spirit (James 3:16). She isn't envious of others (Proverb 14:30; 1 Peter 2:1). She isn't self-seeking. She blesses those who persecute or mock her. She doesn't curse them (Romans 12:14). She's known for her righteousness, even by those in the world (Romans 12:17&18; James 2:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:12). Life isn't always easy when we are impacted by circumstances which" rock our foundations."

Do we become angry; express the unfairness of the situation; or pray for guidance to be what we should be in the midst of circumstances which we can't seem to control?

5. She has a sincere love and concern for the brethren (Philippians 2:1-8; Colossians 3:12-15; Romans 12:10). There's a place in her heart for those who are faithful (James 4:11; James 5:9; 1 Peter 1:22). God's people are her family. She honors the elders and under the elders' direction, she works with other Christians in a cooperative manner (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12). If she has a complaint with the elders, she speaks with them about her concern. She doesn't engender strife in the church by carrying those complaints to others. She earnestly serves the Lord (Romans 12:11).

6. She is busy (Ephesians 4:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:11) She's industrious and is respected in her chosen occupation, as was Lydia (Acts 16:14, 15, and 40) and Priscilla (Acts 18:2, 18 and 26). She's not lazy in her homemaking nor slothful in business. She is a good employee (1Peter 2:18). She practices good stewardship of those things with which God has entrusted her (Proverb 31). She is content with what she has (Hebrews 13:5). She shares with others (Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:16). We can depend on her. She carefully balances her focus on daily responsibilities and her commitment to things of the Lord.

If we compare ourselves to these six points, can we say our conduct sets a good example before our neighbors?

My grandmother had a wall display of Bible verses and sentiments on cardboard-crafted plaques, heavily sprinkled with glitter. One of them seemed to ask, "What Would Jesus Do? "Would you like to be doing what you're doing if Jesus came today." "Would you like for Jesus to find you where you are if he came today." "Would you like to be wearing what you're wearing if Jesus came today?"

Jesus said he would be with us always (Matthew 28:20). Perhaps we should ask ourselves, "Where am I taking the Lord?" or "What are we going to do when we get there?" or "Who is going to be with us?"

If we can remember lessons and sentiments from our childhood, such as Granny's wall plaques, what does that say about the keenness of the young people with whom we spend time? What will they remember of our lives and our sentiments? Let's be careful of ourselves and others (Romans 2:24).

We must not endorse a senseless way of life and the trends of people who have no respect for God. They live for the devil with their vileness; filthy language; and disgusting actions. We may have good neighbors and friends who are of a high moral character, but who have no interest in the Lord and His church. All levels of indifference to God can influence us and break us down spiritually. We may find ourselves enjoying their company and excusing their evil practices. Let's avoid the game of Simon Says by following their lead into immoral actions, dress, and

words. We must not be like the world. We must be different from the world. “Be not conformed to this world but be transformed,” (Romans 12:2). Maintaining a sincere heart requires daily renewal.

Do we wax and wane in our devotion to God? Ladies, we must be sincere in our lives and in our service to God. Are we keeping our slates clean?

Where are our hearts? Have they made good progress from the day that we made our commitment in baptism? We can achieve a sincere heart (Philippians 4:4-9).

Our examples may reach those who never read the scriptures. Our lessons in this quarter will be about those things which we confront in our daily lives. People of the world see how we cope with our challenges, and they identify Christianity by how we are impacted by our daily lives. Let's give this a lot of thought as we examine each problem against the backdrop of a woman who maintains a sincere heart for God (Matthew 5:13&14; 2 Corinthians 3:2).

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