

Chapter 3

What Kind of Woman Will I Be?

I have a question for you: who and what have you allowed to shape you into the woman you are today? Who has influenced you the most? And are you satisfied with the woman you have become?

Most of us are a composite of many role models: our mothers, women we admire, friends we love. We have undoubtedly absorbed some of the daily manna we are fed by advertising media and the incessant images put before us. Our souls are also deeply shaped as a response to the men in our lives, whether fathers, brothers, friends or lovers. By this I mean we often look into their eyes to see who we are, or should be, and try to conform to that image. In the space of one day we can make the dizzying journey from wanting to please God, to wanting to please ourselves to wanting to please mother or boss or husband or daddy, and all of these even change with the seasons of our lives. It does not make for a restful existence.

I know, because I started out wanting to be like my mother. Then adolescence changed my mind, and I tried on what would make me popular in school. Then as I grew into young womanhood I wanted to be like Ayn Rand, then Eleanor Roosevelt, then Jackie O, and finally Martha Stewart overlaid on the good looks of Natalie Wood. But none of these fit, nor gave me joy. My target kept moving, and all my efforts to reinvent myself ended up with mixed results and failed to produce the kind of character and goodness and strength I longed to possess — until I made my target the Word of God. It was like coming home.

God designed a woman with a certain beauty, a manner of conduct, a character, a disposition and purpose, that is meant to bear His image, regardless of her age or marital status. Do you know what it is? Have you searched the Word of God to discover it? Or like me, have you allowed the world we live in to determine what kind of woman you will be? The pattern

for womanhood revealed in the Bible is the opposite of that seen in the world, and often even dramatically different from what is seen in the church.

The woman God designed.

Scripture reveals God's blueprint for woman, designed to nurture those around her, equipped with the gift of drawing out the best in others through her loving care. He designed her for the incredible task of carrying and bringing forth children. She is intelligent, talented, and deeply creative. God created a woman to be emotionally strong and mentally wise, while remaining soft, tender and vulnerable. Possessing skills that are vital to leadership, yet not designed to carry the burden of leadership alone. We were made to seek beauty and to reveal it through trustfully receiving the leadership and protection of men: first fathers, then husbands, perhaps finally sons.

When a woman surrenders to and wholeheartedly embraces God's design, she enters a rest that is the strength of her soul and takes on a beauty that is deep and profound. She becomes satisfied, contented, and strong. As Proverbs boasts, she is clothed in strength and dignity, and she has joy.¹ But a world that has lost faith in its creator has taught women to abandon their God-given design and purpose.

The women's liberation movement of the 70's released a spirit of independence and discontent among women, a spirit still active today, showing itself in women who are determined to prove their equality and even superiority over men and throw off the restraints of patriarchal society. Women are being influenced through an absolute media onslaught to reject the pattern of femininity that God created. Women are trying to compete with men, be like men, and do jobs only fit for a man's strength and makeup. In fact, there is a move to make the sexes as alike as possible, devaluing the unique and profound differences which God built into his creation. Yet in spite of their success in throwing off the yokes of traditional womanhood, women in general remain a discontent, stressed and frustrated gender.

Most of the secular world blames God, the Bible and religion for the abuses often seen in a patriarchal society; however, what God created was in fact a wise "fathering" society designed to bless and protect women, not

¹ Proverbs 31:25.

subdue them, to offer their strength to women, not hurt them with it. Unfortunately what has evolved in many cultures has indeed become an overbearing, self-serving male domination that is too often cruel and abusive.

Yet this is not because of God, it is because of sin. The beauty of God's design for men and women has been perverted. The fact that even Christian men have misused the Word of God to dominate and oppress women does not make the Word of God wrong or rob His design of its power and wisdom. God is love. His will is the expression of that love, and his Word is the expression of his will — even the word that says, "*and the head of woman is man.*"² Shall we turn away from the ways of God because man has perverted them with his selfish, fallen nature?

God's way is right, in spite of how man has perverted it.

It was never God's intention for woman to be dominated, abused, or treated like a piece of property that has no rights. Even Christian women are often afraid to embrace God's design for them, because they have bought the world's lie that the Biblical pattern of femininity is a complete denial of their rights. To the contrary, it was God's will from the beginning that woman be protected by men and treated with equal respect. Jesus carefully demonstrated this when he walked on the earth. He talked to, touched and ministered to women when his peers believed it would defile a teaching rabbi to do so; he rebuked men for putting their wives away in frivolous divorces; he rescued from judgment a woman about to be stoned for adultery; he gave a woman the honor of seeing him first following his resurrection.

Indisputably, men have treated women badly over the centuries in most of the cultures of the world. Men have dominated women in an ungodly manner, used them sexually, valued them no better than animals and denied them equal pay for equal work. Most commonly, they have neglected their charge to protect, guide and tenderly love women. No doubt woman's rebellion through the years has helped to fuel this vicious cycle. Both men and women have developed a pattern of relating to each other that has evolved out of their fallen nature and tends to be defensive and demanding rather than loving and giving.

² 1 Corinthians 11:3.

Insofar as men have abused their God-given leadership roles, one cannot blame women for wanting to be liberated. The women's liberation movement is a knee-jerk reaction to the very real suppression of their gender, but it is the devil's answer to the problem, not God's. In their quest for freedom and equal rights, women are going after the wrong enemy. Man is not the enemy. He is only a tragic tool in the hands of an evil, angry, defeated devil.

However, in their desire to break free of oppression, women have ceased to pay attention to God and have become suspicious and fearful of His ways. In their quest for freedom many women have become a sad perversion of the glorious creature God made them to be. I believe God weeps over us, and that he sent Jesus to save us in every way, including liberation from the oppression of men. God's pattern is our liberation, and we just don't know it. Salvation brings us into a relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ, but in that salvation we are asked to lay down our worldly patterns and adopt the patterns that fit us for the kingdom of God. It is hard to do for a woman who fears that doing so will somehow narrow her existence and confine her to a lesser experience of life. I've discovered something about salvation that exposes what a lie such a fear really is.

Yasha: to be open, wide and free.

The Old Testament Hebrew word translated as "save" is *yeshua*, from which we get the name Joshua, or Jesus, "one who saves." But root word from which *yeshua* derives is *yasha*, loaded with the concept of being "*open, wide and free.*" In other words, to be saved is to be released into freedom. The word *yeshua* to the Hebrew carried the concept of a life that is liberated and expansive, without hindrance, oppression or limit. This is validated in the thinking of the Apostle Paul, Hebrew of Hebrews, who penned the words, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.³ Those who follow God wholeheartedly are actually the only truly liberated people on earth. True liberty only comes when one has both the wisdom and the power to be all one was created to be. Jesus, *Yeshua*, promises this kind of salvation to those who live by faith in his word and thereby walk in the Father's ways.

Women struggling with the men in their lives, are often in actuality wrestling with God. They are fearful of really surrendering to His Word, disbelieving in his goodness and ultimately living lives of quiet, life-robbing

³ Galatians 5:1.

rebellion. In these pages I hope to help the reader stop struggling against God and surrender to Him and His ways completely. I have wrestled with God and when he prevailed, I won. And the prize was the life I always wanted, and a shortcut to the abundant life Jesus promised.

Our greatest barrier is the mind. We must indeed be renewed in our minds in order to embrace God's ways. God's kingdom is powerful, but one cannot enter and enjoy it without fully resting in its truths, having faith in their goodness. We must let God shake us loose from society's concepts of how things should be and let Him put new ones in their place. Trying to live God's promised life while living by the world's truths is like trying to travel America by using a map of Australia: you just can't get there from here. We need orientation, and it needs to begin at the beginning: with our creation.

God's glory and ours, is revealed in relationship.

The Bible says that God's purpose for creating woman was to remove man's aloneness, so he could express his created glory in relationship to her. The woman likewise was created to express her glory through covenant union with a man. While each gender is whole in themselves, man and woman together reveal the image of God in a way that is not seen in one gender alone. This is because God's glory is revealed in relationship. Everything that is most glorious about God is experience and manifest in relating to who he is as a living person.

For instance, the Bible says that God is love, yet without someone for him to express his love to, this character trait would simply be abstract theory. I also believe this is why God is not one, but three. God's goodness is expressed in how he relates to the Son, the Holy Spirit and his creation. As made in the image of God, we display the fullness of who he is as we relate to another person in complete intimacy and faithfulness.

This is not to say that a single person is incomplete in himself or herself; God the Father is not incomplete. Yet His glory — by which I mean the fullest expression of who he is — can only be revealed in relating to his creation. So while a single person is not incomplete, their potential to express the best of who they are is also realized in relating to others. Character is revealed in us and even formed on the fly as we are tested by our responses to others. As a dear friend of mine likes to say, “The test of what’s really in you is what comes out when you’re mashed.” Because

marriage usually provides the ultimate in intensity and intimacy, it mashes us better than any other relationship.

In this context we can see that even apart from marriage, the truth remains that woman was made for man.⁴ We were created as God's gift to men. The fact is that man cannot have all his glory revealed apart from being around us. Of course, we don't have to live our lives as a gift to our husbands, brothers and sons; we were created, as men, with complete freedom of will. But every woman must answer the question for herself: what kind of woman will I be?

What kind of woman will you be?

Will we be women who try to pattern ourselves after the world and then expect to magically obtain the life God promises? The wisdom of the world is not the wisdom of God; in fact, by comparison, the wisdom of the world is foolish. We have a wisdom available to us that will build us a great life, so let us choose that wisdom, so we will not be like the woman who unwittingly ruins her own life:

*Every wise woman builds her house, but the foolish one tears it down
with her own hands. (Proverbs 14:1)*

The Bible often uses the word "house" as a metaphor for "life." This symbolism makes the meaning of Proverbs 14:1 even clearer: *Every wise woman builds her life, but the foolish one tears it down.* Every person has the freedom to tear apart their own life or to cooperate with the Lord in building it. A woman must accept responsibility for the quality of her inward life with God. Where a child of God is concerned, abundant life is a matter of choice, not chance.

For many years I lived the life of a victim. I believed that what was wrong with my life was mostly everyone else's fault, and that if they would change, I could finally be happy or reach my goals. The day I realized my own choices and weak character were responsible for the quality of my life, I threw my hands up and surrendered to God. It was a tough moment when the Lord shined his light of truth in my heart, allowing me to see that I was the problem, and not other people. But without hesitation I would say that was the greatest decision of my life. I remember it in great detail and will

⁴ 1 Corinthians 11:7-9.

treasure it forever, because it was the moment God set me free and rescued me from myself.

God's Wisdom is the best architect of a truly abundant life.

Unless we allow God to build our life his way, that life will fall way short of its potential.⁵ If we insist on design our own life, we end up with a mix of our wisdom and His, and then wonder why our house does not stand against the storms of life.

The voice of Wisdom speaks to us from Proverbs as the One who has always been at God's side and through whom all His work is accomplished.⁶ This is the Spirit of Christ, the Wonderful Counselor, teacher and guide that Jesus promised would come to live with us on earth when he returned to his father's side in heaven.⁷ Proverbs 9:1 implies that the Spirit of Wisdom has a seven-fold way to build life in us when it says, *Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars.*

"Hew" means to carve out a material, shaping it to specific use. Your personality, your circumstances, strengths and weaknesses are completely unique. In the next seven chapters of this book I will share with you what I believe are the pillars that will support the life God wants to build in us. These pillars are actually attitudes and motives of the heart; God has to change these in order to change you.

Keep in mind that this is the work of a whole season of study and interaction with God. You cannot instantly absorb these teachings. Take time to study the accompanying scriptures and allow the Holy Spirit teach you. Because each life is unique, we must learn to follow the Holy Spirit in His specific guidance for us, rather than imitate other people in their walk with God.

Part of the good news of the gospel is that the strength of your life depends only upon you and the Lord. Your ability to have a powerful and satisfying existence does not depend upon the other people in your life, but upon how you respond to God. Jesus is always the issue, not other people. The center of our universe is His faithfulness, His goodness, His power and

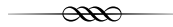
⁵ Psalm 127:1.

⁶ This voice is identified in Proverbs Chapter 8.

⁷ John 14:16-17; John 16:7.

His love. Our world must revolve around these things, not the weaknesses of others.

Building your life begins with the choices you make as to what kind of woman you want to be. The choice is always up to you. You may not be free at this point in your life to change any of your circumstances or the other people in your life, but you are free every moment of your life to choose what kind of woman you will be. My prayer is that you will use your freedom to fully embrace God's will for you and take delight in his design.



Reflecting on Chapter 3

This chapter asks you to consider how you have become the woman you are, and how your choices have resulted in the life you have built for yourself.

- ❖ *What or who do you think has motivated you as a woman and a wife? (i.e., a need for security, success, to be like Mom, etc.) Think and pray, asking the Lord to reveal the true influences on your heart. Journal the things that come to you.*
- ❖ *Are you satisfied with the woman you have become? If not, what do you want to change?*
- ❖ *Read Romans 14:17. What does this say about the quality of life God wants to give you?*
- ❖ *Ask the Lord to show you any attitudes and motivations that are unwise, and the connection between these things and the state of your “house” today. Ask him to help you let go of these and prepare you for change.*