

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 10 • Issue 3

IN PRAISE OF WOMEN

They've got it all!

Success in Marriage

12 things you should know

Romance, Romance!

The element of surprise



PERSONALLY SPEAKING

Overworked and underappreciated. It's sad whenever that can be said of anyone, but even sadder when it describes people who deserve extra appreciation for sacrificially giving of themselves day after day. I'm thinking at the moment of one group in particular—women.

It's a complicated and demanding business, being a woman these days. Women make up a large percentage of the workforce and account for more of the average family's earnings than they used to. More women worldwide are leaders in the political and professional sectors than ever before. At the same time, women are expected to continue to fill their traditional roles in the family and community—roles that in some ways have become tougher in these challenging modern times. An increasing number also carry the responsibility of raising children alone. In all, far more is expected of women today than even one or two generations ago.

Like other issues of such complexity and near-global proportion, there aren't any quick, easy solutions to the "overworked and underappreciated" problem that so many women face today. None of us have it within our power to effect universal change, but we can each effect change in our own little universes; we can change things for the women closest to us. We may not always be able to lighten their loads in a big way, but we can always be more understanding and show more appreciation, both of which have a buoying effect.

If you're not sure how to do that for the women in your world, I hope this issue will give you some ideas. It's our first issue dedicated to women, and it coincides with International Woman's Day (IWD) on March 8. IWD traces its roots to the first National Women's Day, which was observed in the U.S. on February 28, 1909. That would make this year's IWD the centennial celebration. Congratulations, women, and happy 100th!

Keith Phillips
For *Activated*

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36 Seconds

BY MISTY KAY

MY HUSBAND DANIEL and I live with our four children on the 13th floor of an apartment building in Taichung City, Taiwan. Needless to say, the elevator is a part of our daily lives.

It had been just another normal, busy day, with most of my time and energy spent keeping the kids happy, fed, and out of one another's hair. We had all been out together, doing what I don't even remember, and were coming home. We stepped into the empty elevator, and one of the kids pressed the button. The number 13 lit up on the panel, and the doors closed.

"Children, your mother and I have an important announcement," Daniel said in a way that commanded everyone's attention.

I had no idea what this was about. Daniel is a spontaneous man, full of surprises, and I never know what to expect from him. In a quick impulse I decided to play along. I moved next to him and put my arm in his to add authority to whatever he was going to say.

"Your mother and I want you to know that after fourteen years of marriage, we are still totally and emphatically in love." Then he turned and kissed me like a bride.

Wow! I hadn't seen that coming.

The kids laughed a little and asked, "Why is that an important announcement?"

Daniel replied that with so many marriage problems in the world and divorce so common, children need to know that their parents love each other. Then he looked our son in the eye and said, "When you get married someday, you need to treat your wife right."

A loud ding announced the thirteenth floor, and the elevator doors opened. When we walked into our apartment, the kids' chatter was punctuated by little giggles, and Daniel and I slipped into our room to enjoy a private moment together.

In 36 seconds between the first and thirteenth floors, Daniel had brought our family closer, put smiles on our faces, taught our son a life lesson, and put warmth in my heart that filled my whole being. ✨

MISTY KAY IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN TAIWAN.



"When you
get married
someday,
you need
to treat your
wife right."

HOLDING POWER

A braid appears to contain only two strands of hair. But herein lies the mystery: What looks like two strands requires a third. The third strand, though not immediately evident, keeps the strands tightly woven. God's presence, like the third strand in a braid, holds husband and wife together.—*Catherin Paxton*

Gender equality

BY MARIA FONTAINE

WHEN TALKING ABOUT equal opportunity or equal rights for men and women, the real question that is often on our minds, whether we readily admit it or not, is, “Who is in charge?” Competition, pride, jealousy, and discontent haunt many people’s lives today. What a relief it would be if in every workplace and in our personal lives we could simply recognize one another’s talents, skills, and strengths, and without regard for gender do the best we can to make sure each person is in the position where he or she will be happy and challenged and able to accomplish the most for “the team.” *But*, you’re probably thinking, *that’s more easily said than done*. You’re right!

People everywhere yearn to be liberated. The quest for freedom is not unique to women. Men, too, long for liberation. But where can one find it?—The secret to freedom is not in men dominating women or in women dominating men, but in every-

one working together in harmony, united, blended together in God’s love, all fulfilling their roles, all esteeming the other person better than themselves, all serving one another in humility.¹

This might seem unrealistic, a utopian dream that could never happen on this earth. Given the common faults in human nature, how in the world can we get around such things as contention, jealousies, divisiveness, backstabbing, dog-eat-dog competition, etc.?

In today’s world, many have seen the resources and talents of women being either underdeveloped or exploited. Some have sought to remedy this problem by force, by legislation, and even by domination. In so doing, they have perverted the grace and beauty that God has bestowed upon women. God has a way that is superior to this.



To begin with, it might surprise you to know that God doesn't extol the strength of an individual, whether male or female. The strength of the individual is very limited. The greater strength, the greater love, and the greater other gifts come from above, from God.² Therefore those who are most liberated, whether they be male or female, are those who look to God for their strength.

If you have received Jesus Christ, His Spirit dwells in you.³ As you give Him more of yourself, your own thoughts and your own will, you grow spiritually. Then the abilities that God has given you are multiplied many times over, so that you are not as you once were. You become a new person in Him, not with the strength of the flesh, but with the power of the Holy Spirit.⁴ Even if you have no strength of your own, He can empower you.⁵ It's not that you become powerful in yourself; He is the One working in you and through you. This is true of both men and women.

God's Spirit can work through both women and men. It allows women to exercise their gifts and talents, and men to recognize and appreciate those gifts and talents, without feeling threatened.

The key to true liberation is not seeking domination or power or having one gender rule over the other, but it is each one lifting up the other, the man helping the woman, and the woman helping the man, and each one giving what he or she is able to give. The solution is unselfishness and sacrifice on both sides, mutual acceptance of the gifts and talents of the other, and mutual recognition of God's Spirit in each person.

The more we yield to God's Spirit, the more areas we discover where there need not be a differentiation between the sexes. Jesus is in all who have received Him, and He empowers and works through them all, regardless of gender.⁶ As we grow closer to Him, we see more and more of His Spirit in each other. We stop thinking in terms of, "This is the opinion of a woman," or "This is the opinion of a man," because we will see God's Spirit at work through that person.

Love, respect, trust, mutual admiration, and appreciation for one another come from God. Only He can give us enough of those things to start us down the path to true liberating equality. ✨

GOD'S AMAZING DESIGN

The human genome is made up of forty-six chromosomes, the rod-like structures that reside in the nucleus of every cell. These chromosomes carry all of our genes, which, in turn, are made of DNA. Two of these chromosomes, called the "X" and the "Y," are different from the rest: they are "sex chromosomes." Men carry one X and one Y chromosome, while women carry two X chromosomes. All the obvious physical differences between the sexes ultimately spring from this humble difference in chromosomal constitution.—*H. Allen Orr, Professor of Biology at the University of Rochester*

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Women's Day (IWD), marked each year on March 8, is a global celebration of womanhood. It is also a time to reflect on progress made in advancing women's rights, to call for further change, and to remember the ordinary women who through their acts of courage and determination have played extraordinary roles in the history of women's rights and women's causes.

The idea of an International Women's Day originated around the turn of the 20th century, amid rapid world industrialization and economic expansion that led to protests over working conditions. In many countries today, the political and human rights theme remains central to IWD, while in others the day has become mostly an occasion for men and children to express love and appreciation to the women around them—a sort of Mother's Day and Saint Valentine's Day rolled into one.⁷

¹ Philippians 2:3; Galatians 5:13

² James 1:17

³ Revelation 3:20; 1 Corinthians 3:16

⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:17; 2 Corinthians 4:7

⁵ 2 Corinthians 12:9–10

⁶ Galatians 3:28

⁷ Sources: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_

[Women's_Day; http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/women/womday97.htm](http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/women/womday97.htm), accessed August 2008



Romance, Romance!

BY ROSE GAGNON

AFTER TWENTY YEARS of marriage and rarely spending so much as a night without my husband Bruce, circumstances had kept us apart for over a year. Our two teenage sons and I were doing Christian volunteer work here in the beautiful Philippine Islands, while he was in our home country of Canada, fundraising for our work here and helping our older sons get settled into new jobs and lives. It was one of those do-what-you've-got-to-do situations, but I missed Bruce's company and emotional support. So did the younger boys.

A few months earlier I told Jesus how much I wished Bruce could be with me for my birthday, but as the day approached I resigned myself, at least mentally, that it wasn't going to happen. Flying halfway around the world isn't cheap, and Bruce was working almost nonstop, as usual. But my heart didn't want to play along.

My birthday came, and I was getting ready for the small gathering we had planned with friends, when one of them told me to get dressed up. They had prepared a surprise, and someone would pick me up in 15 minutes! Puzzled, I quickly put on some makeup and my nicest blouse and ran out the door.

Another friend was waiting in the driveway, engine running. She drove a few blocks before telling

me where we were going. Because the volunteer center where I work and live is such a busy, often noisy place, my friends knew that opportunities to sleep in or get extra rest are rare. So in order to make my birthday special, they had arranged for me to stay at a nice hotel for a couple of nights. I could relax in a nice air-conditioned room, enjoy the hotel swimming pool and other facilities, and sleep all I wanted—my own personal oasis of peace and quiet. To think that they had gone to so much trouble for me made me feel very special and loved.

We arrived at the hotel, and she handed me the key to the room. No need to check in, she said matter-of-factly. That had already been taken care of. With a smile and a twinkle in her eye, she drove away.

I climbed the stairs to the second floor, put the key in the keyhole of Suite 9, and turned it.

The first thing I saw when I opened the door was

a table with a lit candle, a heart-shaped birthday cake, a bottle of red wine, and two wine glasses. *Could it be...?*

Bruce came waltzing out of the bedroom, wearing a big smile and a tropical shirt, singing "Happy Birthday." I jumped into his arms and we hugged for the longest time, stopping only occasionally to look at each other and for me to try to shake the feeling that it





MY GIFT OF LOVE

A message from Jesus

When you are with the one you love and feel warmed and comforted by his or her love, thank and praise Me for it, because this is indeed a gift from My heart to yours. The love that you feel through your loved one is a manifestation of My great love for you.

There is a time for everything—a time to be alone, and a time to enjoy the close company of another. To help make the road easier, I give the gift of companionship to most people at some point in their lives. When I give it to you, remember that it is a special touch of My love and care for you.

THE LIST

At a couple's golden marriage anniversary celebration, the wife told guests the secret of her happy 50-year marriage. "On my wedding day, I decided to make a list of ten of my husband's faults, which for the sake of our marriage I would overlook."

As the guests were leaving, a young woman whose own marriage had recently been rocky asked the grandmotherly woman what some of her husband's faults had been that she had seen fit to overlook.

"To tell you the truth, my dear, I never did get around to listing them," she answered, "but whenever my husband did something that made me hopping mad, I would say to myself, 'Lucky for him that's one of the ten!'"

was all a dream. It was such a romantic surprise! It also happened to be almost our 21st anniversary. All couples should be so blessed as to get a second honeymoon in a tropical paradise like the Philippines!

I felt so overwhelmed by the love that God showed me in answering my secret prayer, just to make me happy. I was awed by the thoughtfulness and love of our friends and co-workers who went so far out of their way to arrange such a nice hotel room and set it up with candles and wine, a birthday cake, a tropical fruit basket, and even romantic background music. They had not only thought of everything, but they also had managed to keep it a secret for weeks, ever since they'd started working out the details with Bruce. Dear Bruce! I felt overwhelmed by his love.

Bruce explained later that Jack, a businessman whom he had met in Canada, sponsored the entire trip. If it had not been for him, this very special and romantic time together would not have been possible. Thank you, Jack! Thank you, Bruce! Thank you, wonderful friends and colleagues! And most of all, thank You, God, for answering prayer!

God says in His Word, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart."¹ And He means it! ✨

ROSE GAGNON IS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE PHILIPPINES.

¹Psalm 37:4



BIBLE

HEROINES

BY RONAN KEANE

IN THE ISRAEL of Bible times, men's and women's roles were clearly defined, with the women's sphere traditionally being the household and everything pertaining to it, including the care of the children, the oversight of the servants, and often the managing of the family's finances. But throughout the Bible, God didn't limit Himself by gender when choosing who to use to accomplish His will, speak His words, or lead His people. In some cases, the tasks God gave women would have appeared daunting even to most men, but that didn't prevent these bold and full-of-faith women from answering His call.

Meet a few of the remarkable women in the Bible Heroines' Hall of Fame:

Sarah, Abraham's wife, has the honor of being the only woman in the Bible whose age (127) was recorded at death, which is an indication of the respect shown her as mother of the Hebrew people. When Abraham and Sarah were both old, God promised them a son, and she gave birth to her first and only child, Isaac, when she was 90. The apostle Peter cited Sarah as an example of the holy women

who trusted in God and possessed inward spiritual beauty. (Genesis chapters 11–23; Isaiah 51:2; 1 Peter 3:4–6)

Puah and **Shiphrah**, two Hebrew midwives during the time when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, disobeyed the Pharaoh's orders to kill all newborn male Israelites. (Exodus 1:15–22)

Jochebed waited until her baby boy, Moses, was three months old before "obeying" the Pharaoh's commandment to cast him into the Nile; when she did, it was in a floating baby bed. Because of her faith and ingenuity, Moses was found and adopted by the Pharaoh's daughter, was raised and educated in the Pharaoh's household, and later led his true people out of bondage to the Promised Land. (Exodus 1:22–2:10)

Deborah was a prophetess and judge. She rallied and organized the army that freed Israel from the occupying forces of Jabin, a Canaanite king. (Judges chapter 4)

Jael, another woman, ended that war by slaying Sisera, Jabin's general. (Judges chapter 4)

Ruth left her homeland of Moab and all she knew when she chose to follow God, and He blessed her greatly. She settled in Bethlehem and became an ancestor of both King David and Jesus. (Book of Ruth; Matthew 1:5)

Hannah was a childless woman who promised God that if He gave her a son, she would dedicate him to the Lord's service. God answered her prayer, and she became the mother of the prophet Samuel. (1 Samuel 1)

Abigail saved the lives of her servants and family, as well as her own, after her surly husband offended the future King David. Abigail rode out to meet David with a message from God, and David was dissuaded from exacting revenge. David also recognized Abigail's wisdom and good character, and after her husband's death he married her himself. (1 Samuel chapter 25)

The widow of Zarephath believed and obeyed the prophet Elijah, and saved three lives in the process—his, her son's, and her own. Through nearly three years of famine, her previously nearly empty supplies of flour and oil never ran out. (1 Kings 17:1–16)

Huldah, a prophetess and contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah, was consulted by King Josiah as to the authenticity of some scrolls that were found in the rundown Temple. Through her testimony, the kingdom of Judah was brought back to faith in God. (2 Kings 22:13–20)

Esther was a young Jewish girl named Hadasah when she caught the eye of the heathen Persian king, Xerxes, also known as Ahasuerus. After becoming his queen, in a chilling episode of court intrigue, Esther risked her life to save her people when the king's corrupt minister, Haman, ordered all the Jews in the kingdom to be put to death. (Book of Esther)

Mary, the mother of Jesus, conceived by the Holy Spirit when she was a virgin and faced the prospect of being stoned to death until an angel persuaded her fiancé, Joseph, to marry her. For her role as mother of the Savior of the world, she was called "blessed among women." (Luke 1:26–55; Matthew 1:18–25)

Mary and **Martha** were close friends of Jesus and often put Him and His disciples up in their home. Mary was commended by Jesus for listening intently to His teachings (Luke 10:38–42), and Martha was one of the first to identify Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. (John 11:20–27)

The woman at the well was both a Samaritan—a people hated by the Jews—and of ill repute even among her own. But after Jesus revealed Himself to her, she immediately led many of her townspeople to know Jesus. (John 4:3–30)

Mary Magdalene was a close disciple of Jesus, stood near Him during the crucifixion to try to comfort Him, and was the first person to whom He appeared after His resurrection. (Mark chapter 16; John chapter 20)

Lydia, a seller of cloth in the Greek port of Philippi, was the first recorded person on the European mainland to embrace Christianity. She also hosted the disciples in her house. (Acts 16:14–15)

Lois and **Eunice** were the grandmother and mother of Timothy, an early Christian leader, whom they trained from the time he was young in the knowledge of the Scriptures. They were renowned for their faith. (2 Timothy 1:5)

These women and countless others since rose to the callings God had for them, defied the odds, and manifested faith, courage, and love that continue to inspire us today. ✨

SUCCESS IN MARRIAGE

Quotes from David Brandt Berg

Lasting, genuine love is based on a more enduring foundation than mere fleshly gratification. It must be an unselfish desire to protect and to help and to make someone else happy.

As my mother used to tell me, don't marry the girl you can live with—marry the girl you can't live without!

Marriage should be as equal as possible, as sharing as possible. You should talk together, pray together, love together, discuss together, and then decide and agree together.

One very important thing that is often overlooked in a marriage is for both partners to have faith in God and Jesus Christ. When you have faith, everything is possible, and you can do all things through Christ.¹

In marriage you die to self, but you find new life.

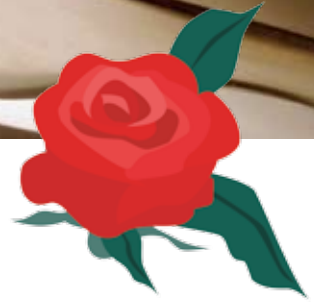
Don't forget to thank her; don't forget to thank him. Gratitude is a great thing in married life. Show appreciation!

Two of the greatest assets to a good marriage are honesty and a sense of humor.

“Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things!”² That applies to your spouse as well. Try to remind yourself constantly of his or her good qualities—the good things—and try not to think about the bad things.

Say “I love you” a hundred times a day!

Marriage is more than sex or friendship or a business partnership. It is the most intimate, humbling, loving, and self-sacrificial relationship between human beings in all of life. “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.”³ This is love, real love, true love—the willingness of a husband to sacrifice himself for his wife, the eagerness of a wife to lay down her life for her husband. This is supernatural love, divine love, God's love, more than human.



Marriage is so difficult in today's society. There are countless temptations—not just to cheat on your spouse, but to be selfish, to assert your independence, to insist on your so-called rights over another individual. All of these stem from people's desires to promote themselves, and they run counter to God's idea that self-sacrifice is the way to happiness.

Thinking of your spouse first is the secret to married happiness. You give up old habits, old preferences, and old ways in favor of the new, in favor of this wonderful person God has put in your life. In doing so out of love, you find great happiness because God blesses unselfishness; He blesses your sacrificially yielding to another person's needs and wishes and seeking their well-being, even above your own. ✨

¹Matthew 17:20; Philippians 4:13

²Philippians 4:8, KJV

³John 15:13

A group of social scientists asked this question to a group of children: "What does love mean?" The answers they got were broader and deeper than anyone could have imagined. See what you think.

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."

"Love is what makes you smile when you're tired."

"Love is when you kiss all the time. Then when you get tired of kissing, you still want to be together and you talk more. My mommy and daddy are like that."

"Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen."

"Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well."

"My mommy loves me more than anybody. You don't see anyone else kissing me to sleep at night."

"Love is when Mommy sees Daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redford."



Love, as seen through the eyes of children

"Love is that first feeling you feel before all the bad stuff gets in the way."

"When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You know that your name is safe in their mouth."

"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs."

"Love is when someone hurts you, and you get so mad but you don't yell at them because you know it would hurt their feelings."

"If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate."

"When you tell someone something bad about yourself and you're scared they won't love you anymore. But then you get surprised because not only do they still love you, they love you even more."

"There are two kinds of love—our love and God's love. But God makes both kinds of them."

"Love is when Mommy gives Daddy the best piece of chicken."

"Love is when your puppy is so glad to see you even though you left him alone all day."

"Love cards say stuff on them that we'd like to say ourselves, but we wouldn't be caught dead saying."

"You really shouldn't say I love you unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget."

"When they crucified Jesus, God could have said magic words to make the nails fall off the cross, but He didn't. That's love." ✂

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Gender differences

Q: My boyfriend and I normally get along great, but sometimes one of us becomes frustrated when the other one reacts differently than we expect or would like. How can we avoid those situations that put a strain on our relationship?



A: YOU'RE NOT the first to encounter this problem. In *My Fair Lady*, the musical adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*, Professor Henry Higgins raises the question, "Why can't a woman be more like a man?" That just about sums it up—from both sides. Men think women ought to respond to things like men, and women wish that men thought and responded the way women do. That's not going to happen, of course, but God does have a solution, as always.

The first thing to understand is that God made men and women the way they are, and for good reasons. A world where everyone thought and acted alike would be as boring and off-balance as it would be doomed. Gender differences also help make us more well-rounded people. It's usu-

ally easier to understand those of our own sex, but relating to the opposite sex causes us to stretch ourselves in the areas of humility, love, and patience, to name a few. If all of that is so, then neither gender is wrong for being the way they are.

The next key is determining to bridge those differences rather than letting them derail your relationship. For example, it could hurt your feelings to realize that the love of your life still needs time with his or her other friends. Or it could frustrate you when the one you love experiences emotional ups and downs that you don't. But once you understand these things, you'll be better equipped to accommodate your partner and not become resentful.

Here is a list of just a few common differences between the

sexes. Though generalized and of course not universally applicable, they provide food for thought:

Men are often more practical; women are often more emotional.

Men desire trust, respect, and acceptance; women desire words of love and endearment.

Men like to get to the point; women like to discuss things from every angle.

Men need more time to themselves; women need to express their feelings to others.

Men like practical gifts they can use; women like sentimental and romantic gifts that make them feel special.

Men tend to make decisions based on circumstances and practicalities; women are more likely to consider the emotional repercussions.

Men are more solution-oriented when it comes to working out marital problems, whereas women want understanding and reassurance first.

Not all men or women fit all these profiles, of course, because God made each of us a unique individual. So just because most men or women are a certain way doesn't mean that there's something wrong with those who aren't. Everyone is different! The idea here is not to put you or your loved one into a mold or to cause either of you to prejudge the other. It's to give you an idea of where your partner may be coming from, so you'll be more tolerant and understanding when differences arise. And remember: Love, humility, and prayer solve all problems. ❧



are women weaker?

"Traditionally, women have been considered to be 'the weaker sex,' and it's true that they are generally weaker physically, yet it is their qualities of love, concern, compassion, sensitivity, intuition, and understanding that strengthen relationships and add balance and stability to our world."—*Paul Williams*

"Women have more strength in their looks than we [men] have in our laws, and more power in their tears than we have by our arguments."—*Saville*

"Man is the head of the family, woman the neck that turns the head."—*Chinese proverb*

"I have an idea that the phrase 'weaker sex' was coined by some woman to disarm the man she was preparing to overwhelm."—*Ogden Nash*

"Man has his will, but woman has her way."—*Oliver Wendell Holmes*

"There is a growing strength in women, but it is in the forehead, not in the forearm."—*Beverly Sills*

"A sufficient and sure method of civilization is in the influence of good women."—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

"Men's minds are raised to the level of the women with whom they associate."—*Alexandre Dumas, père*

"Woman, you see, is an object of such a kind that study it as much as you will, it is always quite new."—*Leo Tolstoy*

"A man is given the choice between loving women and understanding them."—*Ninon de Lenclos*

"Women are women and men are men, and *vive la différence!* But for me there is no greater bore than a 100-percent male or female. Confronted by a massive two-fisted, barrel-chested he-man, or a fluttering itsy-bitsy, all-tendrill female, I run from their irksome company. The men and women I prize are a happy blend of male and female characteristics. A man who is masculine with a definitely female streak of perception, intuition, and tenderness is a whole man; he is an interesting man, a good companion, a complete lover. A woman who possesses a sufficient strain of masculinity to make her thoughtful, decisive, down to earth, fair, self-reliant, companionable—this is a whole woman. The feminine in the man is the sugar in the whiskey. The masculine in the woman is the yeast in the bread. Without these ingredients the result is flat, without tang or flavor."—*Edna Ferber* 🍷

IN PRAISE OF WOMEN

God's greatest work
of art, His crowning
creation, was a woman.

—David Brandt Berg



THIS DESCRIPTION of a virtuous woman, found in Proverbs chapter 31 and written nearly 3,000 years ago, bears some remarkable resemblances to many women today. The author was advising men on what to look for in a wife, so his praises are in that context, but the obvious implication is that these qualities are also to be found in single women. Some of the specific activities that he mentions have disappeared with the times—spinning thread and weaving by hand (verses 13 and 19), for example—and today many women spend more time in the workplace than the home, but this passage bears tribute to women's timeless wisdom, intelligence, diligence, foresight, energy, industry, tenacity, compassion, and self-sacrificial love. Now, as then, she is the consummate multitasker. Some things never change.

10. A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.

11. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.

12. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.

13. She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.

14. She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar.

15. She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls.

16. She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.

17. She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.

18. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.

19. In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.

20. She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.

21. When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.

22. She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.

23. Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.

24. She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.

25. She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.

26. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

27. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

28. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

29. "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all."

30. Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

31. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

—Proverbs 31:10–31 NIV ❧

Appreciation

A Spiritual Exercise

JESUS TAUGHT “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”¹ There are many ways to put this Golden Rule into practice; appreciation is one.

Think for a moment about your family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. Doesn't it make your day when one of them says or does something to show they appreciate you?

Everyone benefits from appreciation. Here's an exercise to strengthen your appreciation skills.

Pick three people that you interact with daily, and make it a goal to show appreciation to each of them at least once today. Be on the lookout for things that you genuinely admire about them or can thank or commend them for, and say or do something that tells them so. Take a moment at the end of the day to reflect on how it went. Did you meet your goal? What effect did it have on the recipients?

Repeat the exercise every day for a week, targeting some of the same people and some new ones as the week progresses. Make an effort to not choose only those people you like most or feel closest to. Even the most difficult people to get along with have some good qualities.

Showing appreciation will not only give the recipient a lift, it will also improve your own outlook by helping you view those around you more positively. It seems to be human nature to notice the bad more easily than the good, and it's often relatively minor things that sour our relations, such as idiosyncrasies that we find irritating. By making a conscious effort to look for things to appreciate in others, focusing on the good will override human nature and make you a more positive person.

Appreciation is contagious. It may not happen overnight, but in time it will nearly always bring about a remarkable change in any home, workplace, or circle of friends.



Love and appreciation are to the heart what sunshine and water are to a flower.—*David Brandt Berg*

Earthly loves can satisfy many of our needs, but only God's love can make us truly complete. If you haven't yet met the Lover of all lovers, Jesus, and received all He has to offer, you can right now by praying the following prayer.

Jesus, I want to know You personally and experience Your love, so I invite You to come into my heart. Thank You for dying for me, so I could be forgiven for my sins, find peace of heart and mind here and now, and receive God's gift of eternal life. Amen.



FEEDING READING

Why men and women need each other

Companionship
Genesis 2:18

Unity
Genesis 2:24

Procreation
Genesis 1:27–28

Intimacy
Proverbs 5:18–19

Family
Psalm 128:3

Success
Ecclesiastes 4:9

Security
Ecclesiastes 4:10

Comfort
Ecclesiastes 4:11

Motivation
Hebrews 10:24

Humility
Philippians 2:3

Understanding
Ephesians 4:32

Unselfishness
Philippians 2:4

¹Matthew 7:12

