



Biblical Portrait of Womanhood

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Discovering and living out God's plan for our lives

by Nancy Leigh DeMoss

Introduction

Within my lifetime, there has been a sweeping revolution—a revolution of how women view themselves and their roles, how they view men, how they view their families, and how they function in our culture.

Whether they realize it or not, the vast majority of Christian women have bought into this “new” way of thinking. In the home, the church, and the marketplace, they have adopted the values and belief system of the world around them. The world promises freedom and fulfillment to those who embrace its philosophy. But sadly, millions of women who have done so have ended up disillusioned, wounded, and in terrible bondage.

For more than 20 years, I have listened to the heart cries of these women:

- women who are exhausted from trying to juggle the demands of job and family
- women who are desperately lonely
- women who feel trapped in unhappy marriages
- women who battle a pervasive sense of hopelessness and despair
- women who live under a crushing load of guilt and failure
- women who are struggling to find a sense of purpose in the midst of the “daily-ness” of life
- women who have never known what it is to have whole relationships built on mutual love and commitment
- women who live with crippling fears and chronic anxiety

I find that many women have given up hope that they can ever be released from their emotional and spiritual prisons. But over and over again, I have seen a light kindled in their eyes when they discover that the “abundant life” God promised truly can be a reality, regardless of their circumstances. The purpose of this booklet is to help us discover the path to that abundant life and to examine our lives in light of God’s design and plan.

Before you go any further, I feel I should warn you that what you are about to read is not politically correct. It flies in the face of what we have been taught as 21st-century, “liberated” women. It is contrary to our natural instincts. It will never be the majority position and is likely to make some women uncomfortable.

But I can assure you that it is the only path to true joy, peace, and fulfillment as a woman. You see, God made us, He loves us, and we can only be whole when we function according to His design for our lives.

If your heart longs to be free to fulfill the purpose for which you were created, I invite you to join me in seeking to know the heart and ways of God.

I am praying that God will orchestrate a counter-revolution in our day—a quiet revolution of women who are willing to pattern their lives, not after the world, but after the Word of God. I am convinced that the influence of an army of godly women will be incalculable—in our homes, our churches, and our culture. Will you be one of those women?

Part One

Examining our walk in the light of Scripture

“It is time for women of biblical faith to reclaim our territory. We know the Designer. We have His instruction manual. If we don’t display the Divine design of His female creation, no one will. But if we do, it will be a profound testimony to a watching, needy world.” –Susan Hunt

The verses on the following pages express God’s heart for women. Together they provide a biblical portrait of a godly woman.

The questions that follow each verse are designed to help evaluate how well you are applying the Word in your daily walk. The point is not to answer a simple “yes” or “no” to each question, but rather to *use the questions as a basis for personal meditation, application, and response to the Lord.*

Some of these verses are directed specifically to married women. Others apply more broadly to all women. Regardless of your marital status, ask God to open your heart and to help you see areas where He wants to mold you and make you a woman after His own heart.

To get the most out of this exercise, you may want to *focus on one verse each day*, asking God to show you how your life measures up to that particular aspect of His design. As you work

through this section, *highlight three or four verses that reveal specific areas of need* in your life, so you can memorize them and engraft them into your heart and life.

Why was I created as a woman?

1. “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’” (Genesis 2:18)

Have I embraced my God-created design to be a helper to the man?

Am I willing to sacrifice my own ambitions and aspirations in order to fulfill my primary role and calling as a helper to my husband?

Am I providing companionship for my husband?

Am I completing and complementing my husband, rather than competing with him?

How could I better help my husband fulfill God’s purpose for his life?

What kinds of words, actions, and attitudes on my part will help Christian men around me become all God wants them to be?

Am I promoting healthy, godly marriages in the ways I relate and respond to other women’s husbands?

Am I maintaining the kinds of boundaries in my relationships with men that promote biblical standards of purity?

2. “For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.” (1 Corinthians 11:8–9)

Do I recognize and accept that God created the woman to complete, complement, and help the man?

Is my life helping and blessing the men around me in ways that promote holiness and godliness?

3. “The woman is the glory of man.” (1 Corinthians 11:7)

In the way I talk to and about men, do I show their God-created worth and value?

Am I a responder (rather than an initiator) in my relationships with men?

Do I make it easy for men to fulfill their God-given calling to lead in the home, the church, and society?

Do I respond to men in ways that communicate appropriate respect and affirmation of their manhood?

Do I seek to protect and preserve God-created distinctions between men and women in the way that I conduct myself, in my dress, and in my various roles as a woman?

4. “And Adam called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.” (Genesis 3:20 KJV)

Do I recognize and accept my God-created calling to be a bearer and nurturer of life?

Do I consider it a high and holy calling to be a “mother,” whether of physical or spiritual children? Am I actively involved in bearing and nurturing life?

What makes a beautiful woman?

5. “Your beauty should not come from outward adornment . . . Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit.” (1 Peter 3:3–4)

Do others see in me an inner radiance and beauty that are the result of a grateful, yielded, trusting spirit?

Do I focus more time and effort on cultivating inner spiritual beauty than I do on matters of external beauty?

6. “This is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful.” (1 Peter 3:5)

Am I more concerned about being holy than about being happy?

Am I placing my hope and trust in God rather than in people?

7. “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.” (Proverbs 31:30)

Am I more concerned about cultivating my relationship with the Lord than about being fashionable, stylish, or physically attractive?

Do I live in the constant, conscious recognition of the presence of God?

Do I desire to please God more than I desire the approval of others?

8. “I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety.” (1 Timothy 2:9)

Do I dress modestly?

Do my clothing styles encourage men to think pure thoughts, rather than stimulating them to have sensual thoughts or desires?

Do I dress in such a way as to draw attention to the heart and spirit of Jesus within me, rather than to my physical body?

9. “. . . not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes.” (1 Timothy 2:9)

Do I avoid extreme or excessive fashions (hair, clothing, jewelry, make-up) that could call attention to myself or cause people to be distracted from focusing on the Lord?

Do I avoid extravagant jewelry or clothing that could flaunt my wealth or cause others to be envious?

Do my wardrobe and outward appearance portray a spirit of moderation, sobriety, purity, and reverence?

How does a woman of God conduct herself?

10. “All the city . . . doth know that thou art a virtuous woman” (Ruth 3:11 KJV).

Do I have a reputation for being a woman of moral virtue and godly character?

Do I keep myself pure from all influences that could defile my heart, thoughts, or actions?

11. “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” (Proverbs 31:26 KJV)

Do I bless my family, friends, and acquaintances by speaking words that are kind and wise?

Do I study and meditate on the Word of God so that I can know how to speak wise words?

Am I able to point people to specific Scriptures that apply to their lives and needs?

12. “Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone.” (Proverbs 25:15)

Am I willing to wait quietly for God to change the heart of an authority that I feel is wrong, rather than pushing, manipulating, or nagging?

Do I seek to influence others by means of gentle words, rather than controlling or intimidating them with harsh words?

13. “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.” (1 Timothy 2:11)

Do I have a teachable spirit?

Do I receive instruction with a meek, obedient spirit?

14. “It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.” (Proverbs 21:19 KJV)

Does my spirit make it easy for those I live or work with to be around me?

Do I frustrate others or make them want to stay away from me because of an argumentative or angry spirit?

What is God’s plan for me as a wife?

15. “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.” (Proverbs 31:11 KJV)

Can my husband trust me to walk with God on a consistent basis and to respond to life’s circumstances with praise, gratitude, and faith?

Can my husband trust me to be loyal and morally faithful to him?

Am I completely trustworthy in every area of my life—in my relationships with other men? in my spending habits? in the way I talk about my husband to others?

16. “She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.” (Proverbs 31:12 KJV)

Am I committed to support my husband in every way possible and to always act in his best interests?

Does my husband know beyond the shadow of a doubt that I am committed to him for life, no matter what?

Am I committed unconditionally to bless and serve my husband?

17. “She took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.” (Genesis 3:6)

Is my life setting a godly example to my husband, children, and friends?

By my words or example, do I ever encourage others to act in a way that is contrary to the Word of God?

18. “As the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.” (Ephesians 5:24)

Do I respond to my husband’s leadership in the same way that the church is to respond to Christ as its head?

Am I submissive to my husband in my actions, as well as in my attitude?

Does my response to my husband demonstrate to the world the beauty and blessing of

submission to Christ?

19. “For the husband is the head of the wife.” (Ephesians 5:23)

Have I ever agreed with God that my husband is my spiritual head?

Do I allow my husband to lead me, or do I resist his leadership, making it difficult for him to fulfill his God-given responsibility?

20. “. . . and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” (Ephesians 5:33 KJV)

Does my husband feel that I reverence and respect him?

Do others know that I reverence my husband?

By my words, example, and counsel, do I encourage other women to reverence their husbands?

21. “The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband.” (1 Corinthians 7:3–4)

Do I reserve intimate communication, looks, words, and touch for my husband?

Am I giving of myself to meet my husband’s sexual needs?

22. “If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home.” (1 Corinthians 14:35)

Do I motivate my husband to grow spiritually by seeking his counsel, input, and direction, or am I quick to run to my pastor or another counselor for answers to my questions and problems?

Does my husband feel that I value and respect his input and counsel?

How does God want to use me in others’ lives?

23. “I exhort therefore, that . . . prayers . . . be made . . . for all that are in authority.” (1 Timothy 2:1–2 KJV)

Do I faithfully pray for the leaders that God has placed in my life (e.g., husband, parents, pastor, employer, elected officials), asking God to bless them, to meet their needs, to protect them, and to make them godly leaders?

When someone in a position of authority fails, do I pray for them, rather than criticizing or attacking them?

24. “She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.” (Proverbs 31:27)

Am I a hard worker?

Am I attentive to the needs of those around me?

Am I faithful in fulfilling practical responsibilities in my home?

25. “. . . well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.” (1 Timothy 5:10)

Is my life characterized by compassion, sacrifice, and acts of service?

Do I have a reputation for reaching out to minister to the needs of others?

26. “Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.” (Romans 12:13)

Am I sensitive to the needs of other believers?

Am I generous in sharing with others who are in need?

Do I open my home to minister to others?

27. “Teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.” (Titus 2:3)

Is my life a godly example to younger women?

Am I self-controlled and temperate in the way I speak and in my lifestyle?

Am I actively involved in teaching younger women how to live their lives according to the Word of God?

28. “Train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.” (Titus 2:4–5)

Are my priorities in order?

Am I adequately focused on loving and meeting the needs of my family?

Do I model a selfless, sacrificial, serving love for my husband and children?

Is my spirit self-controlled, pure, and kind?

Is my life an illustration of the “biblical portrait of womanhood”?

Part Two

Building Our Homes With Wisdom

“A community is not likely to be overthrown where woman fulfills her mission, for by the power of her noble heart over the hearts of others, she will raise it from its ruins, and restore it again to prosperity and joy.” –John Angell James, Female Piety

*“The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.”
Proverbs 14:1*

Few women are aware of how much influence they have on their surroundings.

Regardless of our marital status or living arrangement, all of us as women have some type of “house.” That “house” may be our immediate family, our neighborhood, our workplace, our school, our church, or our nation.

Through our attitudes, our words, and our behavior, we have the power to bless and build the lives of those around us; we also have the power to tear them down and destroy them.

On the following pages, *you will find a series of contrasting statements that suggest specific ways we can build up or tear down our homes. Check the statements that best describe your attitudes, words, and actions toward those that God has placed in your life.*

Ask God to reveal whether you are wisely helping others by building them up, or foolishly hurting and hindering them by tearing them down.

Do not let the enemy discourage you by what you may see. Rather, *as you become aware of attitudes, words, or actions that are tearing down your home, agree with God, confessing your foolishness. Then, in each of those areas, ask Him to make you a wise woman and to help you build a home that will bring great glory to Him.*

Do my Attitudes “build up” or “tear down”?

I am committed to give to meet the needs of others, regardless of whether or not I get anything in return (Acts 20:35).

My willingness to meet the needs of others is determined by the love and appreciation they show to me.

I have a grateful spirit toward God and others for the blessings and benefits I have received (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

I chain people to my expectations and get hurt when those expectations are not fulfilled.

I “esteem all others better” than myself and demonstrate it by putting their needs and desires ahead of my own (Philippians 2:3, KJV).

I often selfishly insist on having my way and seek to meet my own needs ahead of the needs of others.

I have yielded all my “rights” to God and therefore can respond with meekness and forgiveness when others wrong me (Colossians 3:12–13).

I am easily angered when I feel my rights have been violated.

I realize that God is the “Blessed Controller of all things,” so I can respond to difficult circumstances with a spirit of meekness and trust (Romans 8:28).

I often resent and resist the circumstances that come into my life.

I trust God to work through the authorities He has placed in my life (Proverbs 21:1; 1 Peter 3:5).

I struggle with responding properly to authority because I don’t really believe that God is big enough to change the heart of “the king.”

I have a submissive spirit toward the authorities God has placed over my life. I am quick to yield and to follow direction that is given, even when it crosses my own will (Hebrews 13:17).

I have a resistant, stubborn spirit toward authority, and seek to manipulate or maintain control over my life, my circumstances, and those around me.

My life radiates joy, peace, and contentment, because I know God loves me and is in control of every detail of my life (Romans 8:37–39).

I often communicate a spirit of discontentment, bitterness, or fear regarding my circumstances.

I am quick to extend mercy and forgiveness toward those who fail (Matthew 5:7).

I keep a mental record of the offenses of others and seek for ways to get even.

I have an attitude of reverence and respect for my husband, as my spiritual head (Ephesians 5:22–23, 33).

I communicate an attitude of disrespect toward my husband.

I remain loyal to my husband, regardless of his failures or shortcomings (Proverbs 17:9; 1 Corinthians 13:7–8a).

I am openly or subtly critical of my husband when he fails.

I genuinely love other people and seek to meet their needs ahead of my own. I am more interested in the welfare of others than I am in my own (2 Corinthians 12:15; Philippians 2:4).

I really love myself more than I love others and seek to protect and defend my rights, my possessions, my time, and my reputation. I am more concerned about being happy than about making others happy.

I am easily content with whatever God provides for me (Hebrews 13:5).

I struggle with a spirit of discontent about my circumstances, my health, my physical surroundings, or my material possessions.

Do my Words “build up” or “tear down”?

I frequently express gratitude for the benefits that I have received from God and others (Colossians 3:15).

I frequently grumble about having what I don’t want or wanting what I don’t have.

I build others up with words of praise, appreciation, and admiration (Ephesians 4:29).

I often hurt others with critical, belittling words. I am quick to point out the failures of others.

I am quick to humble myself and seek forgiveness when I have wronged someone (Matthew 5:23–24).

I tend to defend or justify myself rather than admitting when I am wrong.

I am faithful in praying for God to work in others’ lives (i.e., my husband, children, friends, pastor, etc.) (Ephesians 6:18).

I spend more time talking to friends or counselors about the needs in the lives of those around me than I do in fervent, intercessory prayer on their behalf.

I seek to speak only wise words that point people to the Word and ways of God (Proverbs 31:26).

I am quick to share my own opinions about matters, rather than consciously pointing people to the Word and ways of God.

My words encourage others and minister health and life to their spirits (Proverbs 12:18).

My words tend to make others feel discouraged and defeated.

I am careful to speak words that are absolutely truthful (Ephesians 4:25).

I sometimes shade or exaggerate the truth for my personal benefit.

I am quick to hear and slow to speak (James 1:19).

I am not a good listener. I tend to dominate conversations and want others to listen to me.

When provoked, I generally respond with a gentle answer (Proverbs 15:1).

I am easily provoked and tend to respond with harsh words.

I restrain my words (Proverbs 10:19; 17:27).

I talk too much.

Do my Actions “build up” or “tear down”?

I set an example for my children and others by obeying my authorities with a right heart attitude (Titus 2:4–5).

I often disregard authority and do whatever I want to do.

I am diligent in serving and meeting the needs of others with a willing heart attitude (Galatians 5:13).

I am often lazy and reluctant or unwilling to serve others.

I am faithful in caring for the practical needs of my family and home (Proverbs 31:27).

I neglect many of the practical needs of my family and home due to lack of planning, discipline, or desire.

I take time to renew my mind with the Word of God so that I can be transformed into the likeness of Jesus (Romans 12:2).

I indulge my mind in suggestive books, magazines, television programs, or movies.

My behavior with men is discreet, chaste, and above reproach (1 Thessalonians 4:3–7).

My behavior with men is sometimes aggressive, bold, or flirtatious.

I look for opportunities to minister in practical ways to the poor and needy (Proverbs 31:20).

I am so consumed with my own needs that don't have time to reach out to the poor.

My home is a place of ministry and encouragement to others outside my family (1 Peter 4:9).

I seldom invite others into my home.

My behavior in the presence of others is reverent, sober, and self-controlled (Titus 2:3–4).

I often seek to draw attention to myself or to gain acceptance through loud, boisterous behavior.

I am actively involved in teaching and discipling my children and/or other women in the ways of God (Titus 2:4–5).

I am not personally involved in ministering spiritually to others.