

Married Women: Joint Heirs

My Dear Sister in Christ,

It is common when we discuss our relationship with our husbands to stress the need to respect and be subject to them. Ephesians 5:22-24 & 33 admonishes wives in this way because that is the instruction we need most. If it were easy and automatic there would probably not be so much said about it. 1 Peter 3:7 tells husbands to value their wives because of our equality in Christ. God does not place men in the position of leadership in the family because they are more valuable to Him. We actually know more about how God feels about the righteous demeanor of women than the strong leadership of men. The impression I get from verse 4 of that chapter is that we endear ourselves to God when we are gentle and calm. Self-control and quiet assurance come much more easily when we know our own value and are not trying to prove anything to those around us.

You have an intrinsic value to God that would motivate Him, like a shepherd, to leave a flock of sheep unguarded to save you (Matthew 18:12-14). You have a place in the Kingdom of God that is equal to your husband (Galatians 3:28). That does not mean the two of you will be doing the same work, but your value and your responsibility to please God are the same. Romans 12:3-8 discusses the variation within the body and how differing members serve different functions while their work is all toward the good of the whole. What I do does not give me the right to brag, or “think more highly of myself than I ought to,” because it is not my actions that give me value. My value is inherent. I am motivated to do whatever I can in service out of gratitude for what God has done for me.

Men and women do not have different levels of accountability. I must know the will of God to be able to please Him in my life. The responsibility given to my husband to lead our family does not relieve me of the need to know what is true and apply it in my life. If our personal judgments differ, I must be cautious about the attitude I display in discussing those matters, but I am not honoring God if my convictions on a topic are only a reflection of what my husband thinks. I must be humble and open to fair persuasion, but I must not be too lazy to evaluate the truth of a matter for myself. God gave you a brain. It functions with a different focus and perspective, but you are absolutely capable of understanding the contents of Scripture. Just as it is not spiritually healthy for children to blindly ride along on the faith of their parents, women need to remember that they stand on their own before God, independent of their husbands.

If you honestly discuss topics with anyone with whom you disagree you can reasonably expect to

come to a common understanding or at least a functional agreement. How much more should this be so for the one you trust as a partner for life? Some have noted that the longer a couple lives, the more they begin to look alike. This is bound to be the case with our spiritual outlook. We tend to become like those around us. Their ideas, interests, tastes, and concerns rub off on us. That is why it is so dangerous to surround yourself with bad influences. It is only natural that a couple will, over time, come to common conclusions. Let that be a conscious choice, not the easy way out.

As a wife, I must always see myself as the helper, not the leader. I yield to my husband's judgment when we reach an impasse. The reason for yielding is not insufficient value. It is simply an indication of trust. I trust my husband to have my best interests at heart, and I trust that God knew what He was doing when He set things up this way. Our worth before God is that of those who will inherit His Kingdom equally.

Your loving friend,

Laurie Moyer

"You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way ... and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life..." 1 Peter 3:7

Married Women: My Husband, My Friend

My Dear Sister in Christ,

I consider you my friend and confidant. There are so many things I can bring to you and I know you will understand me and want to help in my moments of trouble. But as much as I value our friendship, I trust you will understand when I say that another is my best friend. Jesus is the best friend any of us can have, but only second to Him is the friendship I have with my husband. He does not hold that place in my heart because he always understands what I feel. We often think differently and hold varying opinions. Our friendship is a bond of the will to be closer to each other even when it takes effort. We must carry through on the promise we made when we married to

forsake all others. That is not just a determination not to let another man come between us, but that no one would occupy his priority in my life.

Most of us think of our fiancé as our friend. We went through a process of getting to know them that will only deepen as your married life continues. You talked about what is important to you and wanted to hear what matters to him. You set goals that align with each other's. You planned a future of being together and helping each other go to heaven. You must not lose that when you get married. Too often the familiarity of his presence or the little oddities we used to find endearing become less enchanting. It is easy to gravitate toward our female friends to have hobbies independent from our spouse. Girl-time is not wrong, but it can corrode our marriage if it is not limited.

Children have a monopolizing claim on our time, and it is easy to allow their urgent needs to take precedence over the needs of a loving and selfless husband who understands and shares our concern for their welfare. I beg you to fight against allowing this to replace him. Children require our time, but you must make the time to show your husband by your actions that he is important. This can be clarified in simple ways like who gets served first at dinner time, or not allowing children to interrupt your conversations if it is not an emergency. Love your children, but don't sacrifice your love for your husband. Not even for their sake.

You need to spend time with your man. When you were dating you had many things in common that drew you together. Please be cautious about past times that will pull you apart. Both of you can help this continued bonding process. You can learn to like the things the other has interests in. You can find new activities you both enjoy. Better yet, your family can do bonding things. Camping, board games, reading out loud, and joint activities, are all good ways to have fun as a unit- But we also need to have our "alone time." You need time to yourself, but also as a couple. A get-away for just the two of you may not be practical on a weekly basis, but make it happen when you can. That is an investment in your closeness and your future. It may just be spending time talking together behind a closed (locked) door. While 1 Corinthians 7 emphasizes the need for physical intimacy between you, the traditional expression of "knowing" a spouse is revealing. Your physical oneness is supposed to teach you about each other in ways that create a link that is like no other relationship. You did not marry just to have children. You married him to be his helper- not a slave who does not interact with the master, but a helper. How can you help him if you don't know him? How can you know him if you don't elect to spend time together

Even though men and women are very different in tastes and attitudes I can always spend time with my husband and find things to talk about and enjoyable things to do. I will not replace him with other women because they are more like me. What God has joined together I must not

separate.

Your loving friend,

Laurie Moyer

“His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend...” Song of Solomon 5:16

Teen Girls: Friendship

My Dear Younger Sister,

“A friend loves at all times...” (Proverbs 17:17). Do you have a friend like that? I’m talking about the kind that even when you grow up they still hold a special place in your memory because they have been part of forming who you will be as an adult. If you are around more people you may have many friends, but that is not always guaranteed. Proverbs 18:24 can be understood to say that too many friends can lead to ruin. That is especially true if you are always trying to please all of them. It is also possible the verse is saying that to have friends you must first be friendly. There is a play on words used there that makes both translations possible and they are both true. If you wish you had more friends, you should start by asking how friendly you are to others. What is a true friend, though? It is not just someone you spend time with. You genuinely care about each other and share your happy moments and your concerns. Maybe you know exactly who I am talking about, or maybe you are still looking for them. The ultimate form of this special friend will be the man you marry someday, but in the meantime your friends can be girls or boys, older or younger, the person next door or someone you do not see very often, but the common link is that you value and understand each other.

A friend will not ask you to do anything you both know is wrong. Instead, they will help you make the right choices that build you both up toward God. A friend knows the difference between something that is fun or exciting for a moment and what is a lasting source of happiness. Doing what is right will give you a reason to be happy and satisfied. Someone who selfishly wants you to

help them do what is wrong is not really concerned for your ultimate good. Pressuring you to stay quiet about something they did that was wrong is not an act of friendship. Even though it may seem that they will suffer if you reveal what you know, your concern must not be for how they feel right now- for a short time- but that they learn how to make choices that will enable them to be a godly and happier adult. A friend does not sit by and watch another choose to do wrong but fills the role of their conscience and warns them when danger is approaching. You don't need to be bossy about it, but that is exactly what you really would want them to do for you if the situation were reversed. If your efforts to warn them make them mad or reveal a part of their character that is not what you want to imitate, then you really do not want to support them in that.

Perhaps those hard choices would be easier to make if you thought of the people around you as your "second-best" friends. God is your best friend. He has given you many good things. The most important thing He gives is direction in how to live a life that is truly happy. God tells us to "Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister,' and call insight your intimate friend" (Proverbs 7:4) It seems strange to say of someone you cannot see, but you can be closer to God than anyone else on earth. He understands absolutely everything you feel and care about. (1 Chronicles 28:9) He even has your best interests at heart. With God there is no fear that you will be asked to give more than He has to your relationship. He has already done more for you than you can ever repay. All He asks is for you to rely on Him and be grateful for His blessings. People will disappoint us. Not always, but it does happen. We should not let the actions of other people make us bitter toward the life that God gives us. Instead we should draw closer to Him because He will be the constant friend in our lives who will not let us down.

your friend with prayers,

Laurie Moyer

"The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant." Psalm 25:14

Teen Girls: Worth

My Dear Younger Sister,

When you look in the mirror, what do you see? It is probably not what I see when I look at you. No matter how many times others compliment us and highlight areas in our character that are good we still seem to fixate on what we believe are our weaknesses. It would be worse if we were like the person James spoke about who saw his flaws and then walked away and forgot about them so nothing ever changed (James 1:22-25). Proud people are that way and I know you are not proud. Your humility is one of your precious assets that can enable you to grow into the woman God wants you to be. Please do not let Satan use your humility to convince you that you are not worth all that God knows you are.

From the beginning God made things that are good. We are made in His image and that, by itself, gives you worth. You have the ability to do great things, but it is not the things you do that make you great. Even if you never reach your highest potential, Jesus thought you are worth dying for. Even if you really mess up Jesus still wants to bring you back to Him and have you as part of His family in Heaven if you will repent and start over. There is something about the human soul that is precious to God, and if He values it we should, too. We should value it enough to try to protect it from sin and the consequences that would bring. We should think highly enough of ourselves to be holy and pure. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says we can look at the image of the Lord Jesus and allow His glory to become our glory. That means following His example to do the will of the Father and serve each other. Jesus did not serve others because He thought He was not worth very much. He died for us because He knew His blood was valuable enough to save us. The amount of effort God put into saving mankind shows us we are worth more than we realize.

No one will be able to measure up to the standards Jesus has given us. We will all spend our lifetimes working to perfect what we know we should be. When we find that we fall short of God's standards we work to make it right. Our growing maturity is a reflection of our inner selves and not the superficial value the world places on how we look. Our looks are not what reflect our true value. We say that, but it is difficult not to let our looks and how people see us effect our self-esteem. Sometimes, though, we assume others are thinking things they are not. Just because we think we have a "flaw" of some sort that seems big does not mean others even know it is there. Try not to allow others to affect what you do and how you think about yourself unless you are sure they are people who value what God says are the important parts.

For my part, I can say that you possess a heart that is precious to both me and God. I also know how tender that heart is. You would not look down on others based on their looks. You would give people who have made mistakes a chance to start over and you would forgive them once they repented. If you do not make superficial judgments about others, then you really should allow them to be just as kind and loving toward you. To say that love believes all things (as 1 Cor 13:7 does) is to give others the benefit of the doubt. You know you should love others as you love

yourself (Matt 22:39), but if you don't love yourself God would not want that. You need to love and value yourself just as you love others. Even better, love yourself as God does and according to the worth He has given you.

your friend with prayers,

Laurie Moyer

"I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid ... Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." Luke 12:4-7

Teen Girls: Enthusiasm

My Dear Younger Sister,

"I love your enthusiasm," Victor said to Emily, and he was right. There is something endearing and contagious about someone who is passionate about what they do and their prospects for the future. As we get older it is easy to become jaded and expect things to go wrong. It must have been an older person who invented adage we refer to as Murphy's Law ("Anything that can go wrong will go wrong."). Maybe people say that to keep from getting their hopes up. If they expect the worse case scenario then they will be pleasantly surprised when some things go well. That is not really a happy philosophy for life. I would rather see you as an optimistic realist. That means you would hope things will go well but can deal with it if they do not. Does God care which of those attitudes we have?

The Bible does say that our hope should be in God and that He has good plans for His people (Jer 29:11; Lam 3:24). Hebrews speaks a great deal about the fact that we should live right in this life because we have a hope for heaven. That is not wishful thinking. It is faith and trust that God will keep his promises. That is why Abraham is described as someone who hoped against hope that he would be the father of a great nation (Rom 4:8). He had no reason to expect it on his own, but God had promised it to him, so Abraham trusted that it would happen, and he lived his life with

gratitude that it was a sure thing. When the worthy woman of Proverbs 31 laughs or smiles at the future (verse 25), it is because she knows she has nothing to fear. She has made all the reasonable preparations to provide for her family and she understands that God will take care of the rest. Her optimism is based in her trust in God.

I hope your enthusiasm is also based on trust in the power of God to guide your life. He is in charge of everything and you know He cares for you. Jesus reminded us that God loves us more than the plants and animals in this world and if He provides for them, He will do more for us (Matt 6:25-34). But beyond that it is simply more common to see young people anticipating great things in their future and that is an incredibly encouraging attitude. It is optimism that dreams big and is not discouraged by small setbacks. So what if you have to work a little harder or longer to accomplish what you really want. That is better than giving up entirely. When well-intentioned people try to discourage you from setting your goals very high thank them for their concern, consider making adjustments, but do not give up.

A lack of ambition will leave you at the bottom of the hill. Persistence and dedication to your goals will bring many rewards. Maybe you will not end up in the place you hoped to be, but to not try at all only ensures that outcome. Romans 2:7 reminds us that we must keep working toward the goal of heaven if we want to receive it. Why would we only hope to be mediocre? Dream big. Be prepared to make adjustments if that becomes necessary, but after you have prayed for wisdom and that God's will be done in your life work toward what you find Godly joy in.

Your enthusiasm is contagious. It will motivate you and those around you. Many wonderful things in this life are attainable by those with average abilities but over-sized will. Be "all in" when serving the Lord and everything else you do, as well.

your friend with prayers,

Laurie Moyer

"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."
Colossians 3:23, 24

Teen Girls: Purity

My Dear Younger Sister,

I have no doubt many have encouraged you to be pure. Usually that is the talk about saving yourself for marriage and not being pressured into letting guys take advantage of you. While those things are true it is just as important to have a pure heart, which is dedicated to serving God. James says the double-minded man may want to do right, but he also wants to please himself (James 4:4-8). A pure heart is focused on one thing: doing what pleases God.

It is important for you to be sexually pure and I do not assume you want to do things that “cross the line” and corrupt your morals. This is just one of those areas where your mistakes cannot be taken back and completely undone. That means you must always guard against being pressured or tricked into doing things you would not normally dream of doing. That does not mean that once someone goes too far they cannot be forgiven. You can always be forgiven. Even something as extreme as murder can be forgiven, but you will have consequences to live with. Sometimes those consequences will last the rest of your life. You can repent and start over, but your new starting point will not be just the same as it originally would have been. That is why it is so important not to throw away your sexual purity and innocence.

But purity is about more than just the use of your body, it is also a measure of your morals and your mind. Your mind is a clean slate in the beginning and your character forms from the ideas you pour into it. Hopefully you have learned to have a humble spirit that accepts instruction from the trustworthy loved ones around you. You listen to them because you know they have your best interests at heart. Their guidance has come from years of their own study and application of the Word of God and you must respect them for that. At the same time, you are thinking for yourself and sifting through ideas to test them. Please remember that your evaluation will be more limited than theirs. Some day you will be making all these decisions for yourself, but not yet. Your parents see the consequences of your actions a bit more clearly than you because they have lived with these questions for longer. Ask for guidance and clarification but honor the position of your parents as your protectors for a while yet. They are not trying to spoil your fun and deprive you of opportunities to enjoy yourself. They just don't want to see you get hurt. One of the things that can hurt you and spoil your innocence is getting involved with people and activities that will take you away from God instead of binding you to Him. Even though you may not see the dangers please trust your parents and guardians when they warn you. You will be grateful later when you have reached their level of maturity and judgment.

Lastly, I beg you not to think that you can do things your parents have told you not to as long as you don't get caught by them. That is not having a pure heart. God knows all that you do, and often your parents know things you think you have hidden from them. No matter if you admit to them or not, your choices have an impact on your mind and bad choices will become part of your future character if you do not root them out. God asks for us to be holy because He is. Doing what is right is just part of who God is and it can be part of who you are when you make choices with all your heart that follow His standards.

your friend with prayers,

Laurie Moyer

“So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” 2 Tim 2:22; 1 Peter 1:15

Older Women: Change

Dear One,

What is it about our homes and our own things that make them comfortable? It is usually not the luxury or convenience, but the familiarity. The things we are accustomed to become like friends to us and help give structure to our days and routine (which produces its own level of comfort). We know what to expect from them. They do not startle us or force our attention to correct problems because we have learned their ways, and even their short-comings, and they are predictable. (I understand that these are the same reasons many older people find the presence of young children to be a bit stressful, because children are also unpredictable and demand our attention. I will try to help my young friends be more aware of this.) What do you do when you are unable to remain in your safe and protected surroundings? How do you cope with change?

I believe the first task is to understand that at times it must be this way. Change is one of the constants of life. We hold on to the hope that things can continue as they have, but that will not always be true. If we accept the need for the newness we can transition more easily and begin to

learn new patterns. It will not be easy, but it can be done. It takes energy to learn new ways of doing things. Usually help is offered from loving sources and you should graciously accept those offers. Change will bring some uncertainty but that will also go away as you become accustomed to it. It is too much to ask older individuals in transition to just look at it as exciting. They do not want excitement. They want stability. But change does not mean everything in your life is now unstable.

Hold on to the things that do not change. Jesus is the same “yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). Scripture does not change. We are not to be moved from the truth of the Gospel (Colossians 1:23). Our Christianity does not need to change. Focus on the comfort of truth, which will remain the same, and the rest of what happens can fall around that.

Do remember that not all change is bad. Sometimes there really is a better way than what we have gotten comfortable with. What will absolutely be the best change of all is the transition of our physical bodies to be like Jesus (1 John 3:2). We will not resist or resent that change. Just as we put off the old man when we became a Christian, the new person who gets to live in heaven with God will be very different, but it will be a welcome change.

your loving friend,

Laurie Moyer

“...We will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.” 1 Corinthians 15:51-52

Older Women: Peace

Dear One,

I have been struggling recently to remember that God is in control. I don't mean to say I forget that He controls the world and greater points in history. That is somehow easier to admit. What I

lose sight of is the fact that He is also in control of my life and the little daily things that can happen to me. Jesus told the crowds in Matthew 6 that since God provides for the birds and the grass we should know that He will also provide for us. It is easy to worry about the things that can go wrong, and there are a great number of things that can. In your lifetime you have no doubt seen many. The Lord may be saying that just because something can go wrong does not mean it will and worrying about it will not change tomorrow anyway.

We must not allow worry for tomorrow to rob us of the joy of today. Even when today is hard, there are still pleasures to appreciate if we look for them. God has given us what we need and there is much even beyond that for which we should be grateful. We must not allow ourselves to revert to the child who cried when she opened a present with a beautiful doll inside because it was not a pony. The apostle Paul faced many hardships, but he learned to be content with what he had, according to Philippians 4:11-13. Even when he suffered with a "thorn in the flesh" that he thought was slowing him down from preaching the Gospel the way he wanted to, he could use it to rely on himself less and God more (2 Cor 11-12). Your thorns can do the same for you, so perhaps we should learn not to resent and dread them. They can help us remember not to get too comfortable with this life. Every time we see our limitations we need also to see the home waiting for us where they will be taken away.

So, as sad as it would be, what does it really matter if bad things happen? I would not love you less and you would not love the Lord any less for letting it happen. As unpleasant as it is to endure trials, they do draw us closer to God, and prayer is our tool in getting there. This is casting our cares upon Him. Maybe He has a purpose for allowing problems that goes beyond our own personal strength. He might be using us to cause others to consider their spiritual state and wouldn't that be worth it!

The more we trust God, the less we worry. May your days be filled with the desire to thank Him for blessings and "blessings in disguise" which we tend to call trials. Then you will know peace—the greatest peace of all that only God can give.

your loving friend,

Laurie Moyer

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6,7

Older Women: Activity

Dear One,

“So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from His.” Hebrews 4:9,10 comforts us with the assurance that God will give us a rest from our struggles and labors of this life. I can only imagine how much you must long for that. As we all age we do tend to appreciate more the ability to take a deep breath and watch things happen instead of being involved in working them out. It can be physically and emotionally draining to be always on the go. Aches and pains make personal activity more difficult and less enjoyable, so it is understandable when age brings a more sedentary lifestyle. The degree to which this describes you, my mother, is not my place to judge, but may I encourage you to hold out against inactivity as long as you can?

When Ecclesiastes 11 and 12 advise us to enjoy life while we can because one day we won’t be able to do as we wish, I hope that you see yourself on both sides of that warning. You undoubtedly do find yourself physically hindered in comparison to what you did in previous years, but you are also not yet at the end of your journey. Every day you draw breath you prove to be capable of more than what you will some day know. Enjoy these breaths. Do not give up doing what you can just because it wearies you. Activity will keep your body stronger and your mind more alert. Do be careful. Do not try to do things that are not safe for you, but as you are able, look for the small and cautious ways you can use the abilities God still grants to you.

This activity will not be better spent than in mental action. Even when your body betrays you and you are prevented from engaging in the physical action you love, God may grant that your mind will still be there to “work” and “race” and “engage.” That is a muscle that will stay strong to some degree based on how much exercise it gets. Ecclesiastes 11:9 says to follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. It is speaking to you as well as to the teenager inside of you. If you will help me see your interests I can help. I can be your hands or your eyes to bring you new things and ideas, but you have to let me know how. I can read to you from the Bible and we can talk about it. Even when you cannot respond to those thoughts it seems a part of your mind will still hear and be comforted by God’s Word and that will be enough. If I sing the old songs with you will you sing with me? Together we can make the most of all our opportunities.

your loving friend,

Laurie Moyer

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:13

Older Women: Instruction

Dear One,

I need help. Surely that often shows. I can only imagine how some of my actions must seem to someone in your generation who has seen so much happen and the consequences of those actions. That must be why Paul instructs Titus to tell the older women to teach the younger ones (Titus 2:3-4). Not only have you had more accumulated teaching over your lifetime, you have seen the effects of different choices. I need your wisdom and experience to help me sort through my own applications of those principles. The circumstances are not the same. Each new age changes how things are done and the expectations of worldly wisdom, but the principles of God’s Word really do remain the same. Help me apply those principles in my modern setting. Help me see how we are the same more than we are different. I need that instruction because life is too short to make all the mistakes myself and I do not want to learn everything the hard way.

Perhaps you have tried and your advice has been rejected. Maybe you understand something of what Noah and Isaiah must have felt when they preached to people who wouldn’t listen. If that is the case I am truly sorry, but you must do as they did and not stop telling others what you know is right. God made Ezekiel a watchman over the people. His job was to warn them. God knew the people wouldn’t listen—or at least that most of them wouldn’t—but Ezekiel was going to be held responsible for at telling them what he knew. Please tell me what you know to be true. Even if my sisters and I do not take you as seriously as we should, I beg you to at least try. Maybe some of us will. When you teach us with your kind, sweet manner and gentle voice, the burden of rejecting God’s advice will be on us and you will have done your duty—but surely some of us will listen. I know that young people tend to value their own ideas before others, but if you will patiently and lovingly show us the truth we can be taught.

Do you feel limited by your opportunities and energy to teach as you wish you could or used to? Don't worry. God knows your limitations and He will not hold you accountable for more than you can do. If you will do what you can when the opportunity arises that will be enough. I would love to have you teach our women's Bible Class but if that is more than you can manage then just the word or two given to the person who really needs it can be passed on to others even when you may not be there. Your knowledge can travel beyond your ability to speak and the kind hearts of those who value it will repeat it to others who also need to know what you have learned from God's Word.

Your loving friend,

Laurie Moyer

"However, if you have warned the righteous man that the righteous should not sin and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; and you have delivered yourself." Ezekiel 3:21