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## Chapter 3

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# A Gentle and Quiet Spirit

*But let it be the hidden person of the heart,  
with the imperishable quality of a  
gentle and quiet spirit,  
which is precious in the sight of God.  
—1 Peter 3:4*

Women today want to be strong and powerful. Though the world encourages this characteristic in women, did you remember that Jesus told us “*Blessed* are the **meeek**”? And, that a woman who has a “*gentle and quiet spirit*” is “*precious in the sight of God*”? (1 Peter 3:4).

I never knew that being gentle and quiet was “precious” to God; and just like every other Christian woman, without realizing how contrary to the Bible wanting to be strong was, I wandered onto dangerous ground. As we learned in chapter one, I built my life on characteristics that were nothing more than “sinking sand.”

We’ve all seen the boisterous and rebellious women who are common, accepted, and very often, even encouraged to be that way by their own mothers. Their less-than-meeek attitudes are applauded. We are all trained to be that way by watching hundreds and thousands of hours of television and movies. Isn’t it always the boisterous, rebellious, and contentious women who get all the laughs and climb to the top of their profession? Meekness is now regarded as weakness.

So then, when a wife has a husband who begins to stray, gets difficult to live with, or maybe begins to backslide from the faith, you will hear Christians advise the wife to use a “tough love” approach based on the book *Love Must Be Tough*. In this chapter, we will search God’s Word to find out the truth regarding “tough love.”

Is it still blessed to be meek and have a gentle and quiet spirit, or has the Bible become outdated? The answer to that question is very important since, once again, so many lives and marriages are falling apart. Remember, Jesus said, “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house *on the sand*. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall” (Matthew 7:26–27).

### Gentle Spirit or Tough Love

**Love is patient.** God, our Creator, gives us a description of love. Take a moment to see if you can find the word “tough” or any word even remotely similar. The Bible says, “**Love is patient**, love is *kind*, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is **not provoked**, **does not take into account a wrong suffered**, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails . . .” (1 Corinthians 13:4–8). Did you find tough? No, instead you found that to love like this is “tough” for us to do, but not the way we are to love others!

**This I command you.** Another new idea in the church today (along with the title of another popular book) is “love is a choice.” Read the following verse with me to see if God says we can “choose” to love, or does God *command* that we love others if we want to be true followers of Jesus? “**This I command you**, that you *love one another*” (John 15:17).

**Love your enemies.** Our family and friends warn us to “protect ourselves” and to “not love those, who are difficult to love.” So, what are we supposed to do? Are we told to love the unlovable, and those who don’t deserve our love, or not? Here is your answer. “But I [Jesus] say to you who hear, **love your enemies**, do *good* to those who *hate* you, *bless* those who *curse* you, *pray* for those who *mistreat* you” (Luke 6:27–28).

**If you love those who love you.** In this portion of the Bible, Jesus was even clearer when He warns Christians who only love the lovable. “But I say to you, **love your enemies**, and pray for those who persecute you . . . for **if you love those who love you**, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same?” (Matthew 5:44–46). During the days of Jesus, the tax-gatherers were the bottom of the barrel in society.

**Overcome evil with good.** The book that encourages us to be “tough” with a wayward husband or children also tell us that we should “confront” the other person in order to actually *cause* a crisis. In other words, we are told that we must take matters into our own hands. Strange, even though these are “Christian” books (written and bought by Christians) it is contrary to God’s instructions. The Bible doesn’t say that! Instead, scripture tells us that we need to **leave room** for God’s wrath. Here, read it for yourself, “Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer. *Bless* those who persecute you; *bless* and *curse* not. **Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.** Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing so you will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but **overcome evil with good**” (Romans 12:12, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21).

Wow, isn’t this the *complete opposite* from what Christians tell us, what we read in Christian books, and even what Christian counselors tell us? The choice to obey the Bible, God’s Word, is yours: will you treat the bad, cruel, and unkind people in your life the way God tells us you should, or what the world tells you?

**He uttered no threats.** I am sure you have asked yourself, “Why do I have to take this, and not even have the satisfaction of vengeance or paying them back for how they have hurt me?!” Here’s why: read God’s explanation as He powerfully answers our question of why— “For **you** have been called for this purpose, since **Christ also suffered for you**, *leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps* . . . and while being reviled, **He did not revile in return**; while suffering, **He uttered no threats**, but kept entrusting Himself to Him [God] who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:21–23). Jesus didn’t come to earth just to save us, but also to give us an example for how we are supposed to live!

**Blessed are the meek.** Let me warn you, if you choose to respond kindly and bless the people in your life that treat *you* badly or are doing the wrong thing, and *refuse* the “tough stand,” everyone, even your fellow Christians, will tell you that you are stupid, a doormat, and even blame you for “enabling” the other person to continue to sin or mistreat you. Let me remind you, once again, whom Jesus said are blessed. “**Blessed are the meek**, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). Jesus, too, was mocked and misunderstood, so how can we expect to be treated better?

**God’s wonderful goodness.** We are so deceived when we believe that confronting, or being unkind and firm, will change another person. If that worked, why would God use kindness to draw **us** to repentance? Do sinners go down to the altar to accept the Lord because they think that they are going to be criticized or punished? Of course not! Here’s proof “You surely don’t think much of **God’s wonderful goodness** or of his patience and willingness to put up with you. Don’t you know that the reason **God is good to you** is because He wants you to turn to Him?” (Romans 2:4 CEV).

**The righteousness of God.** People may even remind you of when Jesus turned over the tables in the Temple. They will cite this example to tell you that you have the “right” to be angry with others. But God also says that He is a jealous God... does that mean that it is okay for us to be jealous? When searching for the truth, the Lord led me to this verse that explains this fully, “Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. *Human anger* does not produce the righteousness God desires” (James 1:19–20 NLT). Righteous anger is never meant to defend ourselves, but will rise up in our spirits when someone else, the less fortunate, are being hurt. Even then you must be very careful to be sure that you are acting in the “spirit” and not in the flesh!

**That you may not do the things that you please.** Whenever we have an urge to do or to say something to another person that is not meek or gentle, then we usually are walking in the flesh and therefore we are not walking in the Spirit. “If you are guided by the Spirit, you won't obey your selfish desires. The Spirit and your desires are enemies of each other. They are always fighting each other and keeping you from doing what you feel you should. People's desires make them give in to immoral ways, filthy thoughts, and *shameful deeds*. They... hate others, and are hard to get along with. People become *jealous, angry*, and selfish. They not only argue and cause trouble, but they are envious... I told you before, and I am telling you again: No one who does these things will share in the blessings of God's kingdom. God's Spirit makes us *loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled*” (Galatians 5:16–23).

Have you ever heard the saying, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you”? This is truth, because this principle originates from the Bible, “And just as you want people to treat you, **treat them in the same way**” (Luke 6:31).

**The error of unprincipled men.** God has warned us that we should not listen to or follow anyone who tells us something that is contrary to the Bible. It tells us, “My friends, while you are waiting, you should make certain that the Lord finds you pure, spotless, and living at peace. **Don't forget that the Lord is patient because he wants people to be saved...**My dear friends, you have been warned ahead of time! So don't let the errors of evil people lead you down the wrong path and make you lose your balance. Let the wonderful kindness and the understanding that come from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ help you to keep on growing. Praise Jesus now and forever! Amen” (2 Peter 3:14–18 CEV). And, as we have said from the very first chapter of this book, when we **know** God's Word we are much less likely to accept error as the truth or to follow unbiblical advice. The Bible says that we “perish” or are “destroyed” by a lack of biblical knowledge (Hosea 4:6).

**You are to be perfect.** Some authors, and even some pastors, have told us that God does not expect us to be perfect. But what matters to me, and I hope what matters to you, is what God Himself says. And Jesus said, “Therefore, **you are to be perfect**, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mathew 5:48).

**No one will see the Lord.** Another extremely important reason for your kindness toward people who are unkind and undeserving of your kindness (people who get in your way, and even those who may want to “use” you) is that it gives us the awesome opportunity to let the enemy see Jesus in us! “Be at peace with *all* men. Live a holy life. **No one will see the Lord** without having *that kind* of life” (Hebrews 12:14 NLV). And as far as someone “using you,” Jesus told us that no one *took* His life—instead, He laid it down. So if anyone accuses you of allowing yourself to be “used,” remember Whose example you have decided to follow.

**The ministry of reconciliation.** Each of us are called to be ambassadors for Jesus in reconciliation. Read this, “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us **the ministry of reconciliation**, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are **ambassadors** for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; *we beg you on behalf of Christ*, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:18–20).

Anyone can be cruel to others—it comes naturally. On the other hand, when we choose kindness with those who do not deserve to be treated kindly, we get the attention of everyone—especially the lost, so that we can share Jesus and His salvation with them!

**You may be tempted also.** The following verse warns us about the real danger when we are not gentle to others especially when they have sinned against us—we open ourselves up to the very same temptation! “Christian brothers, if a person is found doing some sin, you who are stronger Christians should lead that one back into the right way. Do not be proud as you do it. *Watch yourself*, because **you may be tempted also**. Help each other in troubles and problems. This is the kind of law Christ asks us to obey” (Galatians 6:1–2 NLV).

**The Lord will see it and not be pleased.** Many Christians are so excited when they hear that their enemies, (even women are excited when their very own husbands) “get what they deserve” when God punishes them with financial difficulties or other trials. Yet, very soon, the difficulties stop and things turn around for the better. Why does this happen? “Do not be full of joy when the one who hates you falls. Do not let your heart be glad when he trips. The Lord will see it and will not be pleased, and *He will turn away His anger from him*” (Proverbs 24:17–18).

If your heart shouts for revenge, even if you do not take vengeance yourself, God is not about to continue His vengeance against your enemy. However, if your heart is right, you will be sorrowful for the other person. Yet, you know that whatever happens is for their good in order that they may come to know the Lord more intimately because that is exactly what it took to get your attention!

## Quiet Spirit or Contentious Woman

Right now, ask yourself, “Am I a contentious woman?”

Maybe that question is difficult to answer because you’re not exactly sure what a contentious woman is. If we check the Strong’s Concordance, the word contention literally means **a contest, a quarrel, strife, or a quarrelsome and argumentative spirit**.

Why do you need to know if you’re a contentious woman? Because it says, “A constant dripping on a day of steady rain and a *contentious woman* are alike; he who would restrain her restrains the wind and grasps oil with his right hand” (Proverbs 27:15-16).

Are your conversations with friends, your boyfriend, a coworker, or your siblings usually a **contest** to see who will win or get his or her way? What about authority figures like your mom or dad or teacher or boss, are they usually a power struggle? Let me ask you: do you win most of the time? *I love to confess that I had no idea that I was a contentious wife, and I usually won the arguments—but I actually lost big time in 1989 when my husband left me for another woman! Thankfully the Lord changed me as a young girl to be obedient to authority figures, but sadly no one taught me that a wife was to be subject to her husband.*

God warns us several times in the Bible about the dangers of being a contentious woman, but so few read the Bible, which also says that we perish for a lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). Were you aware of these warnings?

**Abandon the quarrel.** Let me ask this question: Do you *ever quarrel*? Because, “The beginning of strife is like letting out of water, so **abandon the quarrel** before it breaks out” (Proverbs 17:14). Funny that the Bible tells us to abandon the quarrel while the world, and the so-called “experts,” tell us that a good fight is actually *good* for a healthy relationship—even marriage! Now that you have read the truth, what do you believe? If we’re honest, we have seen how arguing slowly kills our feelings of love that we have for another person, right? And why we see so many marriages crumble within the first year!

**Full of feasting and strife.** Is there **strife** in *your* home? “Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it than a house **full of feasting and strife**” (Proverbs 17:1). “...let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable

quality of a **gentle** and **quiet** spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.” (1 Peter 3:4). Are you the gentle and quiet woman, spoken of in First Peter 3:4, who is precious in the sight of God? Or, again, are you a contentious woman?

So many young women today are out of control and out of their minds with contentiousness—spreading strife throughout their lives as they scream and demand their own way—which they ultimately get. Unfortunately, they are the most unhappy, depressed and despondent creatures on the planet! Am I right? It’s the same with children who demand, and get, their own way—they are miserable! Simply put it’s because the Bible tells us it is much better to give than to receive. *Getting* your own way, you will find, only brings you more frustration, bitterness, and emptiness. If this is you—it’s time you stopped.

**Do you have a quarrelsome spirit?** “But refuse foolish and ignorant *speculations* knowing they produce **quarrels**. And the Lord’s bond-servant must not be **quarrelsome** but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged” (2 Timothy 2:23). Are you a “know-it-all” like I was? Do you have an opposing comment when others try to make a point? When was the last time you said you were wrong and the other person, who had an opposing view, was right?

God tells us to “Settle matters **quickly** with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge” (Matthew 5:25 NIV). ***Why do you suppose that more than half of Christian marriages end up in divorce court?*** Hello? And let’s be honest, whatever way you are acting at home right now, the way you act up at work, and the way you act while dating is exactly how you will act when you are married. Being married doesn’t change it—it actually makes your stinking attitude worse! The proof is the epidemic of divorce, especially within the very first year of new marriages! Are you listening?

**Don’t talk back!** “Slaves must always obey their masters and do their best to please them. They must not talk back” (Titus 2:9 NLT). A slave, not me! But has Jesus bought you with a price—His shed blood? Then you owe it to **Him** to do your best to please anyone in authority over you. Any fool can quarrel, the Bible says so, but it takes someone led by the spirit to be agreeable!

## Living with a Contentious Woman

Now that we understand what it means to be contentious, let’s learn what God says about a contentious woman. Did you know that God says how horrible it is to live with a contentious woman? He tells us five times in His Word. Look.

**The corner of a roof.** “It is better to *live* in the **corner of a roof**, than in a house shared with a **contentious woman**” (Proverbs 21:9). Have you ever wondered why husbands leave their wives, and even the children they desperately love? Well, now you know. And let me let you in on a little secret, if your mother is or was a contentious woman, then you probably are, or are becoming one, too. That kind of behavior is extremely contagious. You can catch it from anyone you live, or associate with!

**Constant dripping.** Have you ever had a dripping faucet that drove you crazy? “And the **contentions** of a **wife** are a **constant dripping**” (Proverbs 19:13). Sometimes it takes someone calling attention to that drip (maybe a friend, an enemy, or your father-in-law like it did with me) for your family and friends to notice the dripping. But once that person hears that dripping—that’s **all** that person can hear!

**Desert land.** Again, the Bible says that it would be easier and preferable to live without water in the desert heat than to live with a woman who challenges authority and tries to control everything and everyone. “It is better to live in a **desert land**, than with a **contentious** and vexing **woman**” (Vexing is defined as exasperating!) (Proverbs 21:19).

**Again, it's better to live on a roof.** God is so determined that you hear Him—He repeats this same verse. Are you listening? “It is better to *live* in the **corner of a roof**, than in a house shared with a **contentious woman**” (Proverbs 25:24).

**Who would restrain her?** Here again, God tells us about the annoying dripping of a contentious woman. Can you picture how this would eventually become a leaking roof, causing the ones we love to finally move out or throw us out? But rather than move out, why doesn't someone just fix the roof? Because God says that it is impossible—it's like stopping the wind or holding onto oil that drips right through his fingers! “A *constant dripping* on a day of steady rain and a **contentious woman** are alike; he **who would restrain her** restrains the wind and grasps oil with his right hand” (Proverbs 27:15-16). Therefore, it is impossible for anyone else to change her.

As anyone can plainly see, living with a contentious woman is nothing less than a nightmare! So how did women get that way? Well, from another very popular destructive myth that is widely accepted, even in the church.

## **The Source of Contentions . . .**

### **Our Self-Esteem, which is simply Pride**

“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all **His** works are true and **His** ways just, and **He** is able to *humble those who walk in pride*” (Daniel 4:37).

**Why are so many women today extremely contentious?** Women are contentious because we, like the angry men, have bought the lie of self-esteem. Even Christian women have imitated the world and the world's thinking with this destructive mindset. The books we read, the counselors we seek, the teachers and classes we attend do not reflect God's Word, which is *pure* and *uncompromising*. Currently the church gives us a “Christianized” **worldly** view of what is right and wrong—not based on Scripture, but on the ideas and philosophies of man.

**Poison dipped in chocolate is still poison!** Don't be taken in: the world's views are actually *more* dangerous when they are dipped in Christianity (or chocolate) because we have no idea we are consuming poison! Without realizing it, Christians began to believe that “self-love” and “self-esteem” were what was important when in fact, they are completely opposite to God's Word.

Anything that encourages “self” is that place we climb that results in our fall. “Pride comes before being destroyed and a proud spirit comes before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18 NLV).

“Self-love” and “self-esteem” are the source of our contentious attitude. A “know-it-all” will argue and will demand her own way, because she thinks she is right. And even when she knows she is wrong, she foolishly thinks that her “self-esteem” needs to be protected; therefore, she could never say, “I was wrong” or “I'm sorry.” The contentious woman has been conditioned to think that to make an apology would be too humiliating. Pride then takes over and seduces her to continue to climb up on her pedestal, only to fall again and again.

**Is there a cure?** “And when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were *bitter*...” (Exodus 15:23). Moses threw a tree into the bitter water at Marah, which represents the cross of Calvary. You must also throw His cross into your sea of contentiousness. Jesus died to free you from all sin, including your contentions, your arguing and your prideful, self-absorbed, and selfish behavior.

**Here is God's prescription for all sin.** God told us that if we would *humble* ourselves, seek His face and turn from our wicked ways, He would heal us. Unfortunately, we ignorantly continue to “walk in the counsel of the wicked” (Psalm 1:1) and “trust in mankind” (Jeremiah 17:5). That is why we suffer the consequences: only superficial healing, never going to the source and root of our problems. “The brokenness of His people is healed *superficially*” (Jeremiah 8:11).

**Look at all the psychology in the church.** It is extremely dangerous for Christians to learn and accept man's ideas and psychology since it is totally opposed (or opposite) to God's Word. It is also dangerous to use God's Word to promote current worldly views in the church like when you hear "experts" tell you that you cannot love someone else until you love yourself. But God said, "The prophet who has a dream may relate his dream, but let him who has My Word speak My Word in Truth. What does straw have in common with grain?" declares the Lord . . . Behold, I am against the prophets, declares the Lord, who use their tongues and declare, 'the Lord declares'" (Jeremiah 23:28, 30, 31). What does psychology (straw) have in common with God's Word (grain)? "Self-love" and "self-esteem" was not a character trait of Jesus, and was totally contrary to the way He lived while on earth. Am I right?

**Have you been trained and encouraged to protect or foster self-esteem?** The word "self-esteem" is just another word for "pride," that was first found in the angel Lucifer, who later became Satan. Pride was the first sin ever committed! Look, "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I [God] cast you to the ground" (Ezekiel 28:17). Then Satan said, "I will make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14). On the other hand, Jesus chose *humility* and a modest life for us to follow. Who will you choose to imitate?

**"Self-esteem" is a lie formed by twisting Scripture.** Satan twisted Scripture when he tempted Jesus in the desert and not surprisingly, he uses it today. He just twists the truth a little by making it a half-truth. It was the half-truth of Abraham about his wife Sarah when he said, "she is my sister" (since she was his half-sister), which led to more lies (Genesis 12:19) and Sarah being taken as a wife to the Pharaoh when she was Abraham's wife! (You will learn more about Sarah and Abraham in a later chapter.)

Here is a popular half-truth, which is nothing more than a lie...

**"Love your neighbor as yourself"** (Matthew 22:39). People who believe in psychology will try to tell you that this verse means you have to love yourself before you can love anyone else. In other words, "self-love" is necessary because we hate ourselves. So, is this the truth or is it a lie? It is a lie! Why? Because it contradicts God's Word, which says, "For **no one ever hated** his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it . . ." (Ephesians 5:29). What will you believe? What you have heard, or what you are now reading that is straight out of the Bible?

**Selfishness or empty conceit.** "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with *humility of mind* let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3). "Blessed are the *humble* [gentle, meek] for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). These verses of Scripture are so contrary to the way Christians speak these days because of the widespread and dangerous influence of psychology. They have no idea that what they believe is a deadly lie.

**The last will be first.** We have been told, time after time, that being *first* should be our goal and that we cannot please anyone unless we please ourselves. But Jesus said, "But many who are first will be last; and the last first" (Matthew 19:30). "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all" (Mark 9:35). As a Christian we must try to be more like Jesus: living and sharing these kinds of truths rather than rambling off the foolish and deadly worldly clichés we hear, like...

**Be sure to speak well of yourself, but Jesus said,** "If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honored" (Matthew 23:12 CEV). You hear so many athletes and performers who love to brag about themselves even when they perform or compete badly. It offends me because I know how foolish it is, and often I find myself rooting for them to fall. On the other hand, when you hear a truly humble competitor or performer, you are drawn to them because the "meek" not the *proud* will inherit the earth!

**How can you brag?** "What is so special about you? What do you have that you were not given? And if it was given to you, how can you brag?" (1 Corinthians 4:7 NLT). How can we brag about anything that we can do, have done, or what we possess when we all know that it was *given* to us by God?

**Instead of pride, we are to die to self.** “For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3 NLT). “He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will *no longer live for themselves*. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them” (2 Corinthians 5:15 NLT).

**Deny himself.** “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him **deny himself**, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:24-25).

**Paul was a good example of how we must put Christ first.** “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21).

**Jesus should be our example.** “You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, He gave up His divine privileges; He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When He appeared in human form, *He humbled Himself* in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names” (Philippians 2:5–9 NLT).

## What shall we do if we have been prideful?

### Where should we begin?

**Learn from the Lord.** “Take My yoke upon you, and *learn from Me*, for I am gentle and *humble* in heart . . .” (Matthew 11:29).

**Boast in the Lord.** “But *he who boasts*, let him **boast in the Lord**. For **not** he who commends *himself* is approved, but **whom the Lord commends**” (2 Corinthians 10:17-18).

**Don’t praise yourself.** “Let *another praise* you and **not your own mouth**; a stranger and not your own lips” (Proverbs 27:2).

### And if you don’t humble yourself?

“**Woe** to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own eyes” (Isaiah 5:21).

“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (Proverbs 26:12).

“For anyone who thinks he is something when *he is nothing*, **he deceives himself**” (Galatians 6:3).

“Surely *God will not listen to vanity*, neither will the Almighty regard it” (Job 35:13).

“For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and *all our righteous deeds* are like a **filthy garment**; and all of us wither like a leaf and our iniquities, like the wind take us away” (Isaiah 64:6).

“An *arrogant man* stirs up **strife**, but he who trusts in the Lord will prosper. He who *trusts in his own heart* is a **fool**, but he who walks wisely will be delivered” (Proverbs 28:25-26).

“And He said to them, ‘You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is *highly esteemed* among men is **detestable** in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). “And He *humbled* you and let you be hungry . . .” (Deuteronomy 8:3).

Can you see anywhere in the Bible where God tells us to build up our self-esteem? Are we to “pride ourselves” in what we have done, made, or accomplished?



**Make it right.** Today, right now, make a list of each person you need to go to and make things right with, “If you take your gift to the altar and remember your brother has something against you, leave your gift on the altar. Go and *make right* what is wrong between you and him. Then come back and give your gift” (Matthew 5:23–24 NLV).

Make sure that you go through your list and begin with your parents and your siblings, then contact your friends, neighbors, your teachers, or your coworkers (beginning with your boss).

**Grace to the humble.** If you feel it may be too hard to do, remember this, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that *He* may exalt you at the proper time” (1 Peter 5:5-6). “Blessed are the *humble*, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

## Forgiveness

Lacking true forgiveness is another way we exhibit pride. Many women have chosen not to forgive their parents, a sibling, a friend, a previous or current boyfriend, or even a coworker, because their pride stands in their way. They may say they forgive, but because they continue to speak about it, it proves that it is still buried in their heart—and is now bitterness.

Many Christians don’t forgive because they do not fully understand the grave consequences of not forgiving. Let us search the Scriptures to see what God says about the need to forgive others.

**The question that we often ask ourselves is “Why *should* I forgive?”**

**Because God also has forgiven you.** “And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).

**So no advantage be taken of us by the enemy.** We need to forgive others, so that the enemy cannot take advantage of us. “For if indeed what I have forgiven, . . . I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, in order that **no advantage be taken of us by Satan**; for we are not ignorant of his schemes” (2 Corinthians 2:10–11). Too many Christians are ignorant of the enemy’s schemes and give him the advantage by not forgiving someone.

**Your Father will not forgive your transgressions.** Probably the biggest reason that we *must* forgive is because God said that He would not forgive us, but only if we forgive others!! “For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive men, then **your Father will not forgive your transgressions**” (Matthew 6:14–15). Make sure that the forgiveness is not just lip service—something you say but your attitude proves otherwise. “So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you do not forgive his brother *from your heart*” (Matthew 18:35). (Read all of Matthew 18: 22–35 for a greater understanding of this principle.)

The best test to see if your forgiveness was genuine is to see how you speak about the person whom you have said that you have forgiven. If you are still speaking about them negatively, then you still have not forgiven them.

**Instead of withholding forgiveness** “. . . You should rather forgive and **comfort him**, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by *excessive sorrow*. Wherefore I urge you to **reaffirm your love for him**” (2 Corinthians 2:7–8). This means that you cannot just say that you forgive and leave it at that, you must go the second mile, and reaffirm your love by telling the offender that you forgive him or her.

**But, wait, shouldn’t the offender prove they are sorry before I forgive him or her?**

**Father, forgive them.** Those who nailed Jesus to the cross didn’t ask for forgiveness nor did they appear to be sorry for what they were doing. Instead, they actually stood at the foot of the cross mocking, yelling and laughing at Him! In the midst of this cruelty, He said, “**Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing**”

(Luke 23:34). We also witnessed this same thing when Stephen was being stoned—he cried out on behalf of his murderers just before he died, “**Lord, do not hold this sin against them!**” (Acts 7:60). As Christians, we are called to be followers of Christ—that’s actually what the word Christians means—followers of Christ! Therefore, we must follow His example or stop calling ourselves Christians.

**But how often does God expect me to forgive someone? They keep doing it over and over again!**

**Seventy times seven.** When Peter asked how often he was to forgive his brother, Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to **seventy times seven**” (Matthew 18:22). That means 490 times!

**Remember no more.** Does forgiveness really mean that I forget that sin, even when I can’t help but bring it up in an argument when I have to make a point? “For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will **remember no more**” (Jeremiah 31:34). “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12). “Not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you *were* called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing” (1 Peter 3:9).

You must understand that the enemy loves to bring up old offenses in your mind over and over again—especially in a heated argument. When he does, you must choose to forgive again. But let me warn you, many of us who have forgiven our husbands for adultery often experience “flashbacks” of the adultery even after our husbands returned home. It is almost like a type of *spiritual* war trauma. We learned that to keep our hearts right, and not fall into bitterness (that by the way, destroys your health as well as every relationship) we had to walk each and every day in a spirit of forgiveness, and consciously forgive our husbands each time it came into our minds.

**How can I forgive as God has asked me to do in His Word?**

**God alone.** Only God can do it. You must *humble* yourself and ask Him to give you the grace to tell God to forgive Him because, “*Who can forgive sins* but **God alone?**” (Mark 2:7).

For most women adultery seems to be one of the hardest offenses to forgive. When I have shared my personal experience with women, I have been honest with them and I have encouraged them to be honest with God. When I learned of my husband’s adultery in 1989, I got alone with God and told Him exactly how I felt. I told God that I did not *want* to forgive him (He knew that). I told Him that I did not think that he *deserved* to be forgiven (do any of us deserve to be forgiven by God?). Finally, I surrendered, and I said that I could not forgive, but that I wanted to yield to Him and asked that He do it—forgive my husband through His power—and He did!

Remember, both Jesus and Stephen asked God to forgive those who were killing them! They did not say, “I forgive them” but “Father, forgive them” and “Lord, forgive them.” I believe this is very important and why so many people deal with ongoing bitterness because they are not asking *God* to forgive them—Who is really the One being offended. Read again this truth, “*Who can forgive sins* but **God alone?**” (Mark 2:7).

And as I said earlier, forgiveness is not a one-time thing, especially when adultery or any other sin is on-going. It also needs to be dealt with immediately when new things come up that are related to the same sin, or when someone tells you details about your offender. Each time this happened to me, I just kept relying on the Lord to forgive, since “Who can forgive sin but God alone?” (Mark 2:7). This has kept my heart clean and kept me safe from the enemy’s schemes. I guarantee that this method will work for any offense and anyone whom you need to forgive.

**When do I need to forgive those who have hurt me? Should I feel *convicted* first?**

**First be reconciled to your brother.** We already read this verse in another version, “If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; **first be reconciled to your brother**, and then come and present

your offering” (Matthew 5:23–24). Therefore, before you are free to go to church, Jesus told us we must first be reconciled to anyone we may have offended, or forgive someone who has offended us.

**Bitterness.** Not forgiving someone causes bitterness. The definition of bitterness is “poison”! “Let all **bitterness** and wrath and anger . . . be put away from you” (Ephesians 4:31). *Not forgiving your enemy is eating at you, not the other person.* “The heart knows its own bitterness” (Proverbs 14:10). “For He knows the secrets of the heart” (Psalm 44:21). Even medical experts will tell you that bitterness causes all kinds of cancer. Why hold onto something that will kill you, not the other person?

### **What if I am the one who needs to ask for forgiveness?**

**I am no longer worthy.** The prodigal son prepared what he would say after his decision to return home to his father. His words were words chosen, which were full of humility: “I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; **I am no longer worthy** to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men’” (Luke 15:18–19). He didn’t expect to be forgiven, nor was he going to demand it, and God saw His heart.

**A brother offended.** Here are some more scriptural guidelines when you are asking for forgiveness. I have heard many women who have said that things actually became worse when they did ask for forgiveness or that it did no good. I can speak from experience. At times, when I have asked for someone’s forgiveness, I stated it the wrong way, and in the process, further offended the other person. “A **brother offended** is harder to be won than a strong city” (Proverbs 18:19).

**Taking every thought captive.** Take your thoughts captive and look at *your* offenses as God sees them and from the eyes of the other person. “. . . we are **taking every thought captive** to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

**Men pleasers.** God knows our motives and our hearts. “. . . but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). “A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind” (Proverbs 18:2).

**Every idle word.** Every word that you speak must be carefully chosen. Prepare what you will say and what you shouldn’t say. “**Every idle word** that men shall speak they *shall give an account* thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36). Begin by writing down what **you** are going to say. Then read it “out loud” hearing it from the other person’s point of view. Does it sound accusing? Ask God to put the right words in your mouth.

**Many words.** “When there are **many words**, transgression is unavoidable” (Proverbs 10:19). “A babbling fool will be thrown down” (Proverbs 10:10). Only say what **you** did; do not start off with something like, “When you did this, and such and such, well then I . . .” Blaming the other person for their actions will only add to the original offense.

**He uttered no threats.** Very often the other person will lash out at you. Just don’t say a thing—except to agree! “And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering **He uttered no threats**” (1 Peter 2:23).

**Sweet to the soul.** Make your words sweet and kind. “Sweetness of speech adds persuasiveness” (Proverbs 16:21). “Pleasant words are a honeycomb, **sweet to the soul** and healing to the bones” (Proverbs 16:24).

The point of asking for forgiveness is not whether or not the person forgives you. You are merely doing it to obey God, and to keep your heart right before God. Rest on this, even if the person remains angry and refuses to forgive you. Just continue to love that person no matter how they respond.

## **Love**

“**Love** covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

“**Love** your enemies” (Matthew 5:44).

“ . . . to **love** their husbands” (Titus 2:4).

“A new *commandment* I give to you, that you **love** one another, even as I have loved you, that you **love** one another” (John 13:34).

“**Love** is patient, **love** is kind, and is not jealous; **love** does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the Truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. **Love** never fails . . .” (1 Corinthians 13:4–8).

## **Yes, They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love!**

**Personal commitment to desire and strive to obtain a gentle and quiet spirit.** “Based on what I have just learned in Scripture, I surrender everything I do to the Lord so that I may be quick to hear and slow to speak. I surrender my will and ask the Lord to forgive those who have offended me and show me what I should do to reconcile with those whom I have offended. And by the grace of God, I will no longer be a contentious woman.”

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_