



A 2020 VISION FOR RAISING GODLY KIDS Wendy Gunn

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"A 2020 Vision For Raising Godly Kids," Ebook by Wendy Gunn

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"For he satisfies the longing soul, and the
hungry soul he fills with good things."

Psalm 107:9

INTRODUCTION

You long to be loved, get married, have children, and then, once you have kids, your heart, as a believer, longs to raise Godly kids. This is God's desire for you, too. So, why is it so difficult? In this ebook, we'll take a step back and look at the big picture, first, to understand why it's so hard, and what we're up against, especially in this 21st century. Then, we'll look at the encouraging, practical, and helpful steps! First, let's look at a little background...why do we have all this desire, angst and longing, anyway?

Is there anything as universal as a longing soul? Does any description need be given?

The youngest child has felt it. The oldest grandmother knows it well. You and I have experienced it in a hundred ways, for as many reasons. But have you ever asked yourself why? Is this the way it's supposed to be? What is the purpose of all this hunger and longing in our souls?

CHAPTER 1: GOD'S PURPOSE FOR LONGING AND HOW IT RELATES

IS THERE A PURPOSE TO ALL THIS LONGING?

I believe God's purpose in our hunger and longing is to lead us to Him for filling and satisfaction, because:

The ANSWER to ALL of our longing and hunger is Jesus Christ:

- Having a relationship WITH Him,
- Growing in love FOR Him,
- Being faithfully obedient TO Him,
- Bearing fruit in our lives that is produced BY Him (created out of our union with Him),
- And, bringing others to know and love Him, too.

ANALOGIES

God intends for the physical world to point to and help us understand spiritual truths. Some of the analogies He explains outright in Scripture, "This is a picture of that." For instance, in Ephesians 5:22-32, He describes marriage as a picture of Christ's union with the Church.

Analogies to spiritual truth abound everywhere in our world. There are two premier analogies God has given us, which everyone on earth can relate to in life.

First: The analogy of physical birth to spiritual birth

Second: The analogy of marriage--one man married to one woman--to the union of Christ and the Church--the Body of Believers.

Man and Woman



Christ and the Church

Having a relationship with God and union with Him, through faith in Christ Jesus (His blood shed for us in payment for our sins, death on the cross and resurrection), is pictured in the physical world by a man and woman falling in love and getting married. Our longing for love and marriage represents our longing for a relationship and union with God through Christ. Our Union (represented by marriage) with Christ is meant to produce spiritual fruit (represented by the married man and woman bearing children, which are the fruit of their love and marriage union). (When we are united with Christ by faith, the Holy Spirit comes into us and spiritual fruit results. This is a clear analogy of a man and woman who marry and bear children and makes it evident that God intends marriage to be between a man and a woman.) These analogies are no accident, but God was purposeful in preparing them.

A Chart showing how:

The Marriage Union of a Man and a Woman Represents the Spiritual Union of a Believer and Christ.

	Physical	Represents	Spiritual
We Long For:	Love from someone of the opposite sex.	This Represents:	Longing for the Love of God.
We Long For:	Union with the one we love in marriage.	This Represents:	Salvation: Longing for Union with God through belief in His Son, Jesus Christ.
We Long For:	Children to be reproduced through this union.	This Represents:	Our longing as Christians for others to be saved through sharing the gospel with them, which is planting seeds of truth that will produce new baby Christians (which is called being “born again”).
We Long For:	Our children to grow up and mature to adulthood, and to have grandchildren produced from their marriage unions.	This Represents:	Our longing to make disciples. To teach and help other Christians grow to maturity, with the ability to reproduce themselves by leading others to Christ out of their union with Him.

We women especially, it seems, long for love, marriage, children, (and later, for our children to marry and give us grandchildren!). These longings are not random and meaningless but planned by God. These longings are not sinful. They are part of being human. God created Adam and Eve, and before the fall, Adam experienced longing. He had no idea for what, because Eve hadn't been created yet! Longing and hunger within, in itself, is not sinful. However, it can become a sin when the object of our longing and desire is corrupt or immoral, or we take action to satisfy ourselves in the wrong ways. We'll talk about this more later.

God created us with longing and validated hunger and longing in Psalm 107:9. Before we even ask, God tells us what to do with these feelings. He points us to Himself to satisfy us. He alone can fill us and promises to do so. Our longings represent longings for Him and what He has for us, so we should let them lead us to Him.

He is not only willing but **WANTS** to satisfy and fill us.

He **PROMISES** to satisfy and fill us.

He is sufficient to satisfy and fill us.

No one, and nothing else, on earth **CAN** satisfy our longings and fill our hungry souls with good things.

When we try to satisfy ourselves or fill our hungry souls with other things, we need to be sure we don't cross the line into sin.

If it isn't the Lord Jesus Christ satisfying and filling us, our substitute is, or has the potential to be, an idol, and therefore, sin.



CHAPTER 2: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF OUR LONGING

God tells us we're going to long and be hungry, but He is the answer.

He doesn't say, "Knock it off! Shape up! What's wrong with you? You should never feel longing. Don't ever be hungry."

No. God says in His Word (Psalm 107:9), "I will satisfy your longings. I will fill you up. Come to Me." Indeed, He has longings: for a relationship, to be united, and to bear fruit out of union with us.

All of the things we long for in life are really only a picture and an indistinct shadow of all that Christ offers from a relationship He desires to have with us.

Here are some truths to remember:

- Hunger is universal.
- We experience hunger and longing repeatedly all through life.
- Hunger and longing are to point us to God, first, for salvation.

- He allows us to feel hunger and longing all throughout life to draw us to Himself.

THE SOURCE OF ALL SATISFACTION

The foundation of a relationship with God must be established through faith in Jesus Christ and surrender to Him--believing that Jesus' death on the cross paid for our sins in full and that He rose again. There can be no hope for our souls to be satisfied or filled until that foundation is established, for He is the Source of all satisfaction and filling. It is evident, therefore, that the first step in being satisfied and filled is accepting God's offer of a relationship with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ.

If you have not yet believed in Jesus Christ, or have believed, but only in your head, and you haven't surrendered your heart or trusted Him with your life...If you're still trying to sit in the driver's seat and have control, you need to trust Christ and surrender your life to Him for salvation.

When you are saved, Jesus enters your heart by His Holy Spirit entering you. God makes you alive in Christ. The Bible calls this being "born again." You become a new baby Christian and have a new relationship with the Heavenly Father through His Son Jesus Christ. All who have been born again are called the "children of God."

Do you see, again, how this spiritual terminology is reflected in the physical world? This time it is in the analogy of physical birth to spiritual birth. It is vital to look for these analogies, for God has created our physical world with examples all around us to help us understand spiritual truths.

We've briefly talked about the analogy of marriage to Christ's union with the Church, and we will come back to it. Let's now look at the analogy of spiritual birth to physical birth.



CHAPTER 3: THE ANALOGY OF PHYSICAL BIRTH TO SPIRITUAL BIRTH

IF YOU'RE ALIVE, YOU'RE HUNGRY

We've said that the Bible calls belief in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior being born again. Following physical birth, a baby doesn't have to be told to be hungry for milk. (A baby may need to be encouraged at first, maybe even shown how, to nurse, but, generally speaking, a baby has a hunger for its mother's milk.) Likewise, in the spiritual world, Christians are instructed to crave the pure milk of God's Word as newborn babes, as it says in 1 Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

NO LIFE OR NEW LIFE

I was raised in a religious home. I was raised going to church. My mom was the organist, and my dad was an usher. In church each Sunday, I heard about faith and God. We sang many hymns that proclaimed the Truth of the gospel and are beloved to me today. I professed my faith in God. I believed that there was a God and believed in prayer. But, I didn't have saving faith in Jesus Christ. Instead, I had faith in religion. Our family had a knowledge that God existed without knowing the True God of the Bible. We knew that "Jesus Christ died on the cross, the

third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and was seated at the right hand of God, the Father," as we recited in the Apostles Creed every Sunday. But, we had knowledge without the power of salvation, without accepting His gift of eternal life, without repentance or surrendering our lives to His Lordship, without having His Holy Spirit living within us.

MY STORY

My parents had experienced much sorrow before they married each other. Mom and Dad were each married and widowed previously, and each had two children. Dad was a landlord to Mom and her first husband, and their two children, Jimmy and Diane, who rented the top floor of his duplex. Dad and his first wife and their two children, Joyce and Kenny, lived on the first floor. Mom and Dad were both widowed within a short time of one another. Mom's husband was an alcoholic and drank himself to death, and shortly after he died, her 4-year-old son, Jimmy, lost his fight against kidney and heart disease. Both families had been enduring severe illness in their families, as Dad's wife had been seriously ill for quite some time before she died. Both these families lost a spouse and a parent. After the death of her husband and son, Mom moved with Diane to a small house of their own.

A couple of years later, Mom and Dad began dating and eventually married. I was born a year later, making the number of children four. Bringing this broken group of people together, Mom was determined to make us all one family. Nowadays, you hear much of stepmoms and step-siblings. There was never any mention in our family of stepmom, stepdad, stepbrother, or half-sister. I struggle to this day with the correct definitions of those words. All we knew was that we had a mom, dad, a brother, and two sisters, or three sisters, in my brother's case. That's all that was ever talked about in our family. We were just a family.

We all considered both families' grandparents, aunts, and uncles, and all relatives, whether related through the deceased parent or the living one, to be ours. Mom lovingly nurtured relationships with the deceased spouse's loved ones, (I'm sure for the sake of both the child and the relative) and they became aunts, uncles, and grandparents to all of us kids, and it never occurred to us that it should be any other way.

LONGING

My mom tried her best to make our family and home life as "normal" and happy as possible during those early years. However, from a very young child, I can remember feeling deep longing.

I have memories of happy moments and joy-filled times--but only a few from when I was very young. Mostly I remember longing and sadness, unfortunately. As a child, my mom told me that I should be the most secure of all of us because I had both my parents. I hadn't lost a parent, it was true. But, I had lost so many others.

Every year, from the 3rd grade until my sophomore year, someone I dearly loved died. The first loss I took very hard. Joyce, my oldest sister, longed, for nothing else than to be a wife and mother, but she had kidney disease, and the doctors warned her that she should not get pregnant. Her desire to have a baby was so strong that she didn't care about the dangers and became pregnant. She gave birth to a baby girl who was born two months premature. In those days, there weren't the medical advancements we have now, and the baby only lived two days. The doctors warned Joyce not to have children.

A year earlier, I'd listened to the concerned voices of my parents as they talked in the living room to Joyce. I couldn't understand why they weren't happy that she wanted to get married. To my 7-year-old mind, it seemed like a fairy tale and beautiful! What could be better than falling in love and getting married?

Joyce was the oldest of us children, from my dad's family, and she was 14 years older than me. She was like my second mom, best friend, and role model, all rolled into one! I adored her. She was warm, affectionate, kind, and loving, creative, artistic, and musical. She loved babies and children and was thrilled when I came along. All she ever dreamed of was becoming a wife and mother. Big-hearted, emotional, and impulsive, she also tended to swing from one extreme to the other. She and her biological brother Kenny had inherited the kidney disease that had played a part in their mother's death. Unfortunately, she was undisciplined and didn't take care of her health, which caused my parents great concern.

When I was born, Joyce was already a teenager. She was hugely influential in my life. It was the late 50's and early 1960's, so while other toddlers and preschoolers played with dolls, I listened to rock and roll music and learned to dance with my teenage sister, Joyce. I knew all the words

and could sing along to every hit song on the radio when I was 5 years old. For my 5th birthday, I asked for the record, "Goodbye Cruel World," by Jimmy Darin.

During the early years of my life, romantic comedies starring Sandra Dee, Bobby Darin, Doris Day and Rock Hudson fed my longings for love and romance and my understanding of them. I learned well that you fell in love at first sight, got married, and lived happily ever after! So, when Joyce, a 21-year-old woman, albeit with kidney disease, wanted to marry Duane, an 18-year-old young man whom she was madly in love with, I didn't understand why my parents were concerned. All this 7-year-old knew was they were in love, and it was beautiful!



MY FIRST LOVE

I idolized Duane. His boyish charm totally captivated me. With his sparkling eyes, devilish grin and big dimples, when he smiled at me, I was totally smitten. Best of all, and miracle of miracles, we shared the same birthday!

Joyce was immature and idealistic and determined that her disease was not going to rob her of experiencing what to her was most important in life: love, marriage, and children. I grew up hearing that I was just like Joyce in many ways.

What my mom said was true. I had not lost a parent. But I had lost so many other loved ones who were, arguably, equally important to me, and almost as close as a parent. The year after Joyce's baby died, my grandma died, and a year later, my grandpa died. This was just the beginning. The next years were filled with death, funerals, and hospital visits, as Joyce's kidneys failed. She endured dialysis treatments, infections, and more than one unsuccessful kidney transplant. My parents tried to shield me from it all, so I didn't spend very much time at the hospital, but they did. They went to the hospital every day. In fourth and fifth grade, I came home from school every day to the care of my high school sister and brother, who were both much older than me and in serious dating relationships, which meant they didn't really want me around. These were troubled and lonely times for me.

DEVASTATED

In the spring of 6th grade, my world fell apart when my sister, Joyce, passed away. Duane had been exempt from being drafted and going to Vietnam because of Joyce's illness, but immediately upon her death, he was drafted and sent to Vietnam. Just a few months later, he was reported missing in action.

When I lost my sister, Joyce, and then Duane, so shortly after, my world cracked. It was more than I, as a child, could handle. I experienced emptiness and sorrow at such a deep level. I had a longing and hunger inside that was indescribable. It seemed that there was no one who I could count on, or who really loved me. I waited, wondering who would die next. I began longing with all my heart and soul for someone who would tell me they loved me, who would love me forever, and who would never leave me. I didn't know it at the time, but the One I was longing for was Jesus.

I became obsessed with this longing. I was raised to believe and naturally assumed that my hunger for someone to love me would be satisfied by a relationship with someone of the opposite sex (and, for sure, all the popular music of the day told me this was true).

I felt a huge, aching void inside. I was lonely and so empty. I had a hunger for something, but what, I didn't know.

This feeling of hunger and longing are not unique to me. In fact, these feelings are universal. The plethora of sad, love songs shows that hunger, longing, and desire are pervasive and widespread feelings. What's sad is that we don't know the True One Who can satisfy this hunger and

longing. When God says that He will "satisfy our longing soul and fill the hungry soul with good things," in Psalm 107:9, He validates these feelings within us.

As I've gotten older, I have come to realize that feelings of hunger and longing happen over and over during one's life and that, even as Christians, these recurring feelings won't go away until we leave this earth and arrive in the presence of our Lord in heaven. I believe God allows them for a purpose.

A couple of years after Duane's death, when I was in 9th grade, I met some new friends who talked about "Jesus." I had grown up going to church, as I said, and had heard people talking about "God" and "faith," but no one I knew had ever talked about "Jesus." Definitely, no one spoke about Jesus as though He was a real Person Who had any impact on your day-to-day life, as these new friends did. I believed in God in my head (but it could be argued, I didn't know the True God of the Bible). In any case, my head knowledge hadn't translated into heart knowledge and saving faith in Jesus Christ. I hadn't given Him my life. But, God was at work.

It was a long process for me to come to the place of fully surrendering my life to God. But, God was at work long before I realized it. He placed Christians in my life to tell me about Jesus Christ and live out what it meant to be a Christian. Their lives impacted me immensely. One of them was my Godly third-grade teacher. Another Christian God placed in my life was the youth leader who I met through my new junior high friends. Another important person in my life was a childhood friend who I knew prayed for me consistently. She also spoke truth into my life when I needed to hear it. God planted other seeds, too. But, it took a long time for those seeds to take root in the soil of my heart and the fruit of salvation to spring forth.

LOOKING FOR LOVE IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

Though my childhood was full of sadness and loss, God used the heartache, grief, hunger, and longing to draw me to Himself. The emptiness I felt was there for a purpose.

I tried to fill my longing with boyfriends, activity, busyness, popularity, and even clothes. There were brief emotional highs, but nothing that lasted to fill my hungry soul.

I was so lonely and thought I'd only be happy when I had a boyfriend. Of course, even when I had a boyfriend, I was not satisfied. I wanted to meet "someone who would love me and never leave me" and counted on that changing my life. I was searching and longing for that someone, and I

was sure that meant love and marriage. After all, that's what I'd learned from all those Hollywood movies and love songs. I was desperate for a relationship.

The summer after graduation from High School, I turned 18 years of age, the legal drinking age. I began to go to bars because I loved to dance and was looking for a lasting relationship (and we all know that you find significant relationships in bars!). Drinking wasn't a part of my bar experience, strangely enough. At least, at first. I didn't really care for drinking. I was just there to dance and meet my "someone." Eventually, I gave into temptation, refusing alcohol over and over with others all around me drinking. I had no idea I have an extremely low tolerance for alcohol. Until I picked up my first beer or mixed drink, I didn't know I would get drunk every time I drank, and all it took was a couple of beers. I was about to find out there are consequences to sin.

One night, driving home drunk at two in the morning, after the bars closed, I fell asleep at the wheel of the car. I woke up with the headlights of oncoming traffic blinding my eyes. My car's left wheels were up on the center median, my vehicle heading straight into the oncoming traffic, going 65 mph. Do you believe in angels? In God's intervention in your life? Now stone sober, I got control of the car and brought it back onto the right side of the road without hitting anyone else's vehicle or losing control of mine and drove home. God had my attention. I knew without a doubt that He had just saved my life. I never took another drink. But, I didn't get the whole message from Him. I didn't surrender my life to Christ. I continued to focus on the wrong things and looked in the wrong places to satisfy my longing and fill my hunger! I kept searching for that "someone who would love me forever and never leave me"--in bars.



CHAPTER 4: POSSESSING OR MERELY PROFESSING

We can be so blind at times. I had no idea how empty my life had become, and how far away from the Lord I was. The previous 5 years had been an up and down spiritual rollercoaster. At 14, I had discovered that Jesus was a real Person Who I could know. At 15, a youth leader in a Folk Group I attended and a Young Life group in my high school had taken me the next step to where I had made a profession of faith in Christ. At 16, the term "Jesus Freak" was occasionally applied to me, and I liked being so-called, meaning I was, to them, obsessed with Jesus. I even tried persuading others to believe in Jesus Christ. I thought I was a Christian.

At 17 and 18, my companions became increasingly more un-Christian in belief and behavior, and no one would have dreamed of calling me a "Jesus Freak." Now, at 18 and 19, I didn't even recognize that my behavior was sinful or consider that the fruit evidenced in my life didn't demonstrate any belief in Jesus Christ whatsoever! The truth of the matter was that I had just been acting the part back when people called me a "Jesus Freak." It was a role. I had professed, but never possessed, faith in Christ.

Shortly after my 19th birthday, I hit rock bottom. After a particularly devastating breakup with the latest boyfriend in my life, I was so lonely, so hungry for something--I didn't know what--and so very lost, spiritually. I spent evenings listening to sad music and crying my eyes out. It was fall, and to celebrate my brother, Kenny's birthday, my whole family went out together for

dinner to a nice restaurant. Kenny was an avowed atheist and looked down on anything connected in any way to Christ, but he always respected my right to believe whatever I wanted. At that time in life, we were very close friends. During the evening, Kenny and I conversed, and I casually referred to "my Christianity." His response shocked me. He looked at me and scoffed in my face, "Ha! I thought you'd given up on all that."



CHAPTER 5: MY SALVATION STORY

Even though Kenny was an atheist, and I considered myself a Christian, my brother and I were very close. He knew me better than anyone else in the family, and at that time, we were extremely close friends as well as brother and sister. It shook me to the core to hear those words. I realized he didn't see anything in my life reflecting Christ—not a hint, not a speck of Christianity there.

I don't know how I could have been so deceived about my spiritual state. I had thought that assenting to the truth that Jesus died and rose again--even trying to persuade others to believe in Him--associating with friends who were true Christians, attending Bible Studies, and Christian events—all meant I was a Christian.

The sad truth was that I had never been born again. I was still dead in my sins. In Matthew 7:22-23, Jesus says, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?"

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

He goes on to say that obedience to His Word--doing it, not just hearing it--will cause your house to stand when the winds and waves beat on it.

Clearly, I wasn't living in obedience to God's Word, and I didn't have His Spirit living in me. It should have been so apparent to me, as it was to my brother, but it wasn't. I was so broken. It was such a sudden shock and a slap in the face for me. I didn't look like a Christian to others? Wasn't I a Christian? The most amazing thing to me was that my brother, a non-Christian, could see it clearly and was the one to point it out to me.

That night, as I drove home to my apartment, sobbing, I confessed to God, "Lord, I've been trying to run my life, and I've made a mess of it! I want You to take control. Please, take over my life. I give myself to You." I was heartfelt and meant every word. Suddenly, I felt an overwhelming peace come over me, and it felt like someone was in the car with me. Startled, I stopped sobbing and looked up and around. I knew something had happened. God had heard my prayer, and I knew He'd answered. God had saved me! He'd taken over Lordship of my life, and through the Holy Spirit, had come into my heart.



CHAPTER 6: NEW BABY

I was a new baby Christian and Christ was the answer to my longing heart! As a newborn Christian, I immediately had a voracious appetite for the pure milk of God's Word. I couldn't get enough of it! Every spare minute of every day, I devoured the Scriptures.

Just as a baby desires its mother's milk, a sure sign that spiritual birth has taken place in a person is the presence of a strong desire for God's Word. If you're not alive in Christ--spiritually born again--you won't hunger and thirst for His Word, any more than a dead man experiences hunger and thirst for food and drink.

If you don't have a desire for God's Word, ask yourself, "Am I really born again? Am I a Christian? Have I believed, and have I completely surrendered my life to Jesus Christ?"

1 Peter 2:2 states, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby."

Just as a baby moves to solid food, newborn Christians need to move to spiritual meat. If you've called yourself a Christian for years and you're still drinking milk alone (that's all you can handle) and unable to handle the meat of God's Word, there's something wrong with your growth

process. In 1 Cor. 3:1-3, Paul scolds the Corinthians because they're still drinking milk when they should be eating the "meat" of God's Word. We all know that it's not cute or appropriate to be acting like a baby when you're the age of a teenager or adult! We're responsible for what we feed ourselves as Christians. What have you been feeding yourself? Is what you're eating causing you to grow?



CHAPTER 7: THE ANALOGY OF OUR APPETITES AND THE CENTRALITY OF THE HOME

When my husband and I have the privilege to go out to eat at a restaurant and try to decide where we'd like to go, we often ask each other, "What are you hungry for?" The implication is that you'll know where to go to satisfy that hunger if you know what you're hungry for.

What are you hungry for, spiritually speaking?

WHAT ARE YOU HUNGRY FOR?

If you ask a person in South Korea, Spain, Australia, or the United States what they are hungry for, you will get very different answers! Our appetite for certain foods is developed. Factors such as what we were fed as a child, what foods are readily available in the area we live in, and what part of the world we live in, all impact what we're hungry for.

From a young age, we learn to love the specific foods we are fed by our mothers, and we become accustomed to the cuisine of our culture. However, our appetites can change and be developed in a different direction.

A child born in one country, but adopted by a family in a different country, will develop an appetite for the foods his mother cooks for him in his new country. He will learn to hunger for formerly unknown ethnic specialties. If you move to a different locale, you will no doubt taste and grow to appreciate some of the local dishes and specialties of that region. If you'd been born in a different country, or even in a different home, you would have an appetite for and prefer other foods than you do now.

Just as our physical appetite can be developed and trained, our spiritual hunger can be developed and trained.

A child can be trained to have an appetite for spiritual food and get used to eating meat.

What this says to me is that you, as a mom and your home, are hugely influential in your child's spiritual life!



CHAPTER 8: WHERE WILL YOUR CHILDREN BE SAVED

Deut. 6 says:

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

I don't think it's any coincidence that 3 out of 4 of the locations mentioned here are in the home!

STAY HOME

Whenever I get the chance to talk to busy moms, I repeat this mantra: "Stay home!" Isn't it amazing that this even has to be said? I know personally how hectic life can be, and all the many

and various pulls there are away from home! Also, I was a stay-at-home-mom and Homeschooled my children beginning to end, and I, too, struggled to stay home. Why is this so hard? Why is it so hard for women to stay home? I believe it's because there's a spiritual battle involved. It says in Ephesians 6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Satan does not want you to stay home! Why is it essential for him to remove moms from home? The answer lies in Deuteronomy 6. It is because we are commanded by God to teach our children diligently His Truth in the home throughout our day. The majority of the teaching, training, and discipling of your children will take place in your home.

When you're together in the home, relationships can be built, and teaching and training that God commands you to do is possible. The home and relationships within marriage and family are pictures of spiritual realities. The longing for close family relationships relates to our longing for salvation, union with Christ, and desire for spiritual fruit.



CHAPTER 9: FRONT AND CENTER: GOD'S WORD

We said our spiritual appetites, just like our physical appetites, can be trained and developed. And we said that the majority of the spiritual discipleship of our children will take place in the home.

Because communication is how a relationship grows and stays healthy, reading and studying God's communication to us in His Word and talking to Him in prayer need to be at the center and core of our day, our family and our home.

The Word of God and Prayer are our communication with God as our Father. We are also called the Bride of Christ, so it is our communication, as that Bride, with her husband. You naturally hunger and long to spend time with, and talk to, the One you Love and have a relationship with. Just as you wouldn't have much of a marriage relationship if you never spoke to your husband, your relationship with God needs communication with Him through the Word and prayer, for it to be close and deep.

The home and the spiritual teaching that take place there are eternally significant. Therefore, you need to create an appetite for being in the home, for family, and for God's Word in obedience to Scripture.

We've been saying that you can change and develop appetites. You don't want to nurture a taste for being away from home. You don't want to create a longing to be busy somewhere else, a desire to be doing something else, and a hunger for being just about anywhere but home.

Proverbs 7:11 speaks of a wayward wife whose feet never stay at home, and she's a wicked woman. ("She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house.") You don't want to be like her.

Are you creating an appetite for home, family, and God's Word?



CHAPTER 10: ESTABLISHING A ROUTINE TO KEEP GOD'S WORD AT THE CORE

We are commanded to diligently teach our children the things of the Lord and talk of them throughout our day. The Word of God must be central in our day as well as our home. This takes intentionality and a plan. Do you have a bedtime routine and a morning routine that include reading the Bible and prayer with your children? I encourage you to start if you haven't. It's never too late or too early to start reading the Word of God to your children.

I recommend having a schedule for your days. As a Homeschool mom, I always had a written schedule. I never followed it exactly, but I still had it written down. Then, I would plan time in God's Word first thing in the day. It was a framework that I could return to and line up with to get me back on course. We need a solid structure and a strong foundation. Scheduling time in God's Word and prayer at the beginning of our day ensures that it gets done.

A key that I have found useful is to put in the most important things first, and they will always get done.

Beginning our day with Bible reading and prayer set the tone for the rest of the day, also, and eased us into our day, rather than charging into it. Not being a morning person, this was helpful for me.

HOW TO BUILD HEALTHY HABITS IN GOD'S WORD

- 1) Have a plan: I encourage you to use a Bible-reading plan. [Discipleship Journal Bible Reading Plans](#) offers more than one. (I use the first one linked to on this page.) I use the one that gives you 5 days at the end of each month to catch up and assigns reading from 4 different places, in both the Old and New Testaments, each day. Many years I've read through the whole Bible in a year. Other years I've gotten close. There is no perfect method. The important thing is to be in God's Word daily. There are many different methods, so just choose one and then use it.
- 2) Have a place. In the book that I read as a young wife, "What Happens When Women Pray?" Evelyn Christiansen encourages readers to have a chair or area in their home that is their "dedicated place" to meet with God. I have found this to be extremely helpful. Your body and mind are automatically tuned in to do certain things in certain places. So, have a special place to read your Bible and pray. Keep your Bible there, a notebook for writing down your prayers and thoughts. As convenient as an app is, please have a real Bible that is precious to you. (And, especially if you're having trouble controlling your online time, don't use a Bible app for your time with the Lord. Open up the Book.)
- 3) Have a particular time. Set aside a specific time in your day—preferably first thing—to spend with God.

What you put in first:

- doesn't get skipped, and
- affects everything else you put into your day.

When you put in the important first, then the little urgent things will fit in around it.



CHAPTER II: TRAINING CHILDREN DILIGENTLY

Remember that we're training and developing appetites in our children for home, God's Word, and things of the Lord as we do this activity each morning. At different ages and stages, we used various tools. Sometimes we would read a story that was based on a single Scripture verse and illustrated that Scripture.

When our children were little, we read the "Wisdom and The Millers" book series.

When they were 9-12 years old and older, we used the "Character Sketches" (a three-volume set). They focused on a Biblical character quality and illustrated it with a story of a Bible character and by facts and stories about animals from nature. This did double duty as Science and Language Arts and was a fascinating study.

One of my absolute favorite memories of this reading time was when we read "Tiger and Tom," "The King's Daughter," and "Stories Worth Rereading," which are delightful old books that have been reprinted. These gems should be in every home library. Through stories set in the 1800s of victories and failures in individual lives, the Truth of God's Word is brought home and made real.

Children and adults alike will find themselves caught up in the story, and thinking about it, and the lessons taught, days, months, and even years later.

Other times we read a verse, verses, or a chapter from the Bible. The children were encouraged to memorize and would recite their verses on some mornings. Then we would pray, everyone taking a turn. Here are some things that even a small child can pray for:

Your children can pray for Daddy. They can pray for your school day. They can pray for those family and friends who need salvation and for physical needs you know of, health concerns, and missionaries worldwide.

This routine of Bible reading and prayer in the morning makes it easier for your children to establish the habit of having their own Quiet Time later on. And it develops an appetite for God's Word and prayer. It's amazing how it also makes your day go smoother to start it in Bible reading and prayer. I think it's because God changes attitudes through communication with Him.

WE'RE DEVELOPING APPETITES

Our Appetites (what we're hungry for) are trained and developed from an early age. Think about what you expose yourselves and your children to.

Be aware of what you're getting into the habit of watching, listening to, and reading, because you're feeding your soul, and your spiritual health is determined by what you supply yourself.

As a mom, you need to realize you're training and developing your children's spiritual appetites from a very early age and establishing habits in their lives.



CHAPTER 12: HARD QUESTIONS

So, let's ask ourselves some hard questions about spiritual appetites:

1. Are you developing desires in your home for the Lord, His Word, and for spiritual things?
2. As a mom, are you feeding your children the pure milk of the Word every day, and gradually moving them on to solids, spiritually speaking?
3. If you've called yourself a Christian for years, are you still drinking only the milk of the Word?
4. Is your family spiritually malnourished? Are you more concerned with your physical body and food than your spiritual life and feeding?
5. Are you growing in maturity, able to handle spiritual meat: digging into difficult Bible passages, and chewing on meatier portions to study and try to understand them?
6. Are you savoring the Word of God, taking time to taste it, or just gulping it down as fast as you can? "Check! That's done."
7. Are you able to digest more substantial portions of Scripture?
8. And are you feasting on the Bible periodically?
9. Are you training your children to apply the Bible to everyday situations in life (by example and teaching)?

10. Are you training your children to exercise their faith, in obedience to His Word, thereby growing spiritual muscles?

What are you developing appetites for in your home? The soul is the mind, will, and emotions. What are you feeding your mind and emotions and that of your children? Are you feeding your thoughts and feelings from the internet, from Facebook, YouTube, and Netflix? Are you feeding your emotions from romantic comedies, chick-flicks, and romance novels

It's essential that we put the spiritual into our lives first and the Word of God, most of all, strengthening our relationship with God by communicating with Him.



CHAPTER 13: WHO ARE YOUR COMPANIONS?

Be a companion of the wise, for Proverbs 13:20 states that a companion of fools is destroyed.

Don't be afraid to cut yourself off from friendship with people once you perceive that they lack wisdom! Teach your children to recognize the characteristics of a wise person. Talk about Godly character, and identify it when you see it in others and praise it. Train your children to make thoughtful decisions, with the Bible as their guide, prayerfully, and to develop Godly character.

Praise wisdom and Godly character in them when you see even a little. They will want to do more of what you praise

Focus on the positive characteristics of wisdom and love it so much that you will be simply drawn to those who display it. Pray for it in yourselves, study it in Scripture, and work to develop wise character qualities.

Don't soak up foolish ideas, or take on a fool's attitudes. Follow the ways of wise people. Never covet a fool's temporary success. When you need advice or counsel, search for a Godly older Christian who embodies wisdom. Don't live as the fool does. Choose the Godly, wise companion to walk with through life. Choose to walk on the same path as those who love the Lord, are walking in obedience to God's Word, and encourage you to do so.

If you do this, you will not have to avoid fools. Instead, they will stay away from you! They won't want to spend time with you! You will be very dull to a fool! The wise person will be drawn to you, and you will be lovely and attractive to those who love God and wisdom deeply. Identify foolish talk and ideas periodically when you hear them online, in the news, on the radio, or elsewhere, but focus on the positive: wisdom. Ask your children questions to get them thinking critically and Biblically about knowledge and understanding and choose wise companions.

Be careful to place yourself in situations that build up your spiritual life.

What are your surroundings, and who are your friends? Are your friends wise? Even Christian friends aren't always wise. God says to desire wisdom above everything else! Pursue wisdom in yourself and your companions, not causing others to be brought down by being with you.

Is what you watch on a screen, or listen to, compatible with the Word of God? What do you find entertaining? Have you trained yourself to find the base amusing, and coarse, or vulgar humor funny? Do your children see you laugh at what the Bible condemns? Do you allow people into your home through screens, who would not be allowed through your front door? Be wise and realize your example is being taken note of by your children and will be copied, in heart attitude, if not actions!

Not only our time, but our hearts and affections are taken by what we watch and listen to. I've noticed that the use of our electronic devices is something that we are unaware affects us because everyone's doing it--continually! Christians, non-Christians, all ages. It's not

uncommon now to see a 2-year-old swiping a screen. Remember, too, the good is the enemy of the best, especially regarding time.

The Bible tells us to, "Set your heart, mind, and affections on things above!" Are your actions and activities, or your friends', stirring up appetites for the wrong things? Your companions should be strengthening your relationship with Jesus Christ, increasing your hunger, and longing for spiritual things and causing you to love God more. And you should do the same for them!

Evaluate your life. Don't just assume an activity is ok, just because someone else is doing it! Are you making choices, or are you involved in activities, based solely on what your friends are doing? Don't look at others to decide what you should do!

Ask yourself: Is this what God wants for my family and me to be doing? Be intentional, look to God and His Word for guidance and wisdom, and make wise decisions.



CHAPTER 14: COMPARING

It's so easy to fall into the trap of comparing ourselves to others and then beginning to copy their lives. You know, most of us are basically really insecure. I know how easily this can happen

because I really struggled with comparing and copying. I needed to make homemade whole wheat bread because my friends did. My style and choice of clothes were dictated by what they wore. I even thought that we must memorize the same portion of Scripture that their family did. And there were a whole host of other things.

I admired their family, and don't get me wrong, they were Godly people! Many of the things I wanted to copy were good things. But, I was trying to be them, not ask God who He wanted me to be. I was trying to make myself and my family be just like theirs to gain God's favor, and in order, I thought, to have my children grow up to be Godly. This is setting up an idol, and, also, husbands don't like this very well. Most importantly, it's not God's plan.

We need to be led by the Lord. The activities you copy from someone else may be beneficial, but there's only so much time. You can lose your children while doing many "good things." You need to be following what God wants for your family. God has a particular plan and desire for you and your family. Let God lead through your husband. We moms clamor and have longings for so many things, and we're so sure we know what is best for our families! And our husbands love us and want us to be happy. So they let us lead and listen to our suggestions.

I was absolutely sure I knew what was right for myself, my children, my husband, and even my friends in my younger years. I knew it! As I've gotten older, I realize that I was wrong many times. It wasn't my job to lead our family anyway!

Also, be aware that Satan will be more than happy to have you busy with good things that are not the way God wants your family to live. And beware of being so busy doing things for God, even church activities, that you're too busy to spend time with Him.

God wants to write a testimony in your family's life that's unique. He's got a particular plan for you, and will write your story using the problems you face, your trials and joys, and how you've found Him to be your satisfaction and all in all!

Follow Him. Listen to Him. Choose intentionally, obey His Word, and have a hunger, passion, and longing for Him and His Word!

There's a little book called "Tyranny of the Urgent," by Charles Hummel.

In it, he talks of the "important" things (such as reading God's Word, prayer, and memorization) and how often they get pushed out by what we would call the "urgent"! This is because the urgent things have to be done now, while the important can wait!

Life is going by so fast. We don't want to get to the end of our lives and have regrets because we filled our lives with busyness, not with what was truly important. If the important is going to happen, we're going to have to be intentional about it, plan it, and put it in first.

The most important thing in life is our relationship with Jesus Christ and spending time with Him in His Word and in prayer. David tells us in Psalm 138:2, "Praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." God honors His Word even above His Name!

If you don't have a plan for your Bible-reading time, there are many online. Just get one and read the assigned reading for today!



CHAPTER 15: HABITS AFFECT WHAT WE HUNGER AND LONG FOR

Now, it's effortless to establish a bad habit, and very difficult to break one. If you have an appetite for something that's competing with God for your time and attention, your love and affection, and reinforced by your habits, then it's your habits that have to change

Remember that the marriage relationship represents our relationship with Christ.

Just as we must not let anything come between our husbands and us, so we must not let anything come between the Lord and us. God is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5).

The internet has taken over our lives. Is there anything on the internet that you're watching, reading, seeing, hearing, or listening to that God is not happy with? Did anything pop into your mind? Or maybe He would just take issue with the amount of time you're spending on it.

If there's sin, we need to confess it. We can't walk the fence. Our relationship with the Lord is the most important thing. If you're hungering for something else, and something has come

between you and the Lord, it has to go. It will affect your spiritual life. If we have a relationship with Him, we will long for Him--for time with Him--and to talk with Him.

ARE YOU RUINING YOUR APPETITE BY WHAT YOU'RE SNACKING ON?

Moms understand that giving a child candy before a meal often will ruin his appetite for the good, healthy food that is going to be served. What are you snacking on spiritually? Is it ruining your spiritual appetite? Can 5 minutes of Bible-reading in the morning compete with the hours you spend:

- On Facebook
- On Twitter
- On Pinterest
- Reading blogs and articles
- Checking your favorite watchdog group's update, or
- Watching Youtube videos, TV, or movies?

Many years ago, I got into the habit of sitting down at the computer to check my email while I ate my breakfast and drank my coffee in the morning. This was before laptops, Ipods, Ipads, and smartphones, and we had a desktop computer

Then, one day I realized that this habit of checking my email was often turning into a couple of hours sitting at the computer. You know how it goes: you answer an email, check Facebook, click on a link, read an article, respond to a comment, and so on.

I had to retrain myself. I had to walk past the computer and not allow myself to feed on other "food" until I'd had my spiritual food of the day. But, for quite a while, I had to think about it and even found it so difficult to walk past the computer, that I had to start going into another room to read my Bible because the pull was so strong. I had to establish a new habit, a good one, to replace the bad habit.

It took a surprising amount of time to retrain myself and establish a new habit. I had to build that longing for God back into my life.

This was years ago. Technology has made it even easier to establish bad habits and put other things first ahead of God and distract us from spending real time with Him in His Word and prayer.



CHAPTER 16: WHAT IS IN YOUR HAND

What is in your hand? For some of us, the internet is literally in our hands all day long. "Put the phone down and interact with real people" is a common theme. Our devices are affecting our relationships in real life. But, how much more are they impacting our relationship with the Lord—the most Important Relationship! We have to be intentional about it, or it won't happen.

I had to ask myself why I wasn't hungry for the Word of God and why I had to "make" myself read my Bible before doing other things?

I realized that habits become ingrained very quickly, and I noticed that something as simple as the placement of our furniture, and especially as to where the computer was, affected my time with the Lord! Again, this was in the days before smartphones, but it may apply to your other screens.

Here is a list of ordinary, common, everyday things that affect your relationship with the Lord: choices that can reinforce habits, and so, I suggest we should think about them.

- The way your furniture is arranged
- Where screens, computers, and other electronics are in your home
- Where you charge your electronic devices
- What pictures you put on the wall
- The noise level of your home
- The music or other things playing in the background during the day (or in your earbuds)

What are you allowing into your mind? What are you spending time with? Is it consistent with Scripture? Is it what God wants you to think about and do?

Is it causing you to love God more, to be more hungry for Him and His Word, and to be more obedient?

Be intentional to establish habits that will build up your family's strong relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.



CONTROL YOUR DEVICES. DON'T LET THEM CONTROL YOU.

Make your primary spiritual food the Bible. Set goals for reading it (start now, if you didn't in January). Plan how much and when you're going to read and follow a Bible reading plan. Make it your first priority.

What you're feeding yourself may be useful, but is it the best? Is it nourishing your spiritual life, or are you ruining your appetite for a healthy, meaty meal from God's Word?

Think about "junk food" you may be feeding yourself every day! Write down what you're reading and listening to, and for how long each day, until you know precisely what your mind and emotions are fed. Just as you may have no idea how many empty calories you're taking in each day, so you may not know how many hours of useless reading and listening are in your day that's not suitable for growing a healthy spiritual life. You need to purpose to listen to and read that which will build you up and make you a strong, healthy Christian!

Shut your phone off sometimes. Don't be controlled by it.

Stay off of the internet until a specific time of day, and make sure it's after you've spent a planned amount of time in God's Word. At first, it will seem legalistic, but you're retraining your appetites.

Be intentional and purposeful about what you're reading beside the Bible: We read so many words each day that we can become unaware that we're even reading!

Take a fast from whatever you "can't go a day without." Stay away one day a week, or one week a month. Spend extra time in the Word during your fast. Set a timer when you get on Facebook, or online, in general, or keep a log sheet to log in the start time and end time you're online, and total the amount of time each day.

Replace the habit of getting online with spending time in the Word instead or have a Bible-reading time with your children (the little ones can color, or play quietly). Train them early to respect the Word of God.

We may not realize that those seconds and minutes add up: keep a record, reduce or eliminate some of them and replace them with Bible reading, prayer, and other activities that set your mind and heart on things above (e.g., Some examples might be when we're on our phone or laptop online):

- checking email
- on Facebook
- on Pinterest
- commenting
- reading links
- reading blogs
- checking out articles
- doing research
- reading a chapter here or there from the newest book out by one of our favorite authors
- watching another cat video on YouTube
- following the thread that popped up
- watching a contestant on Britain's Got Talent
- reading a post on a blog we follow

- or visiting the latest "liked" thing on Facebook.

Use those minutes-turned-into-hours each day to build up your faith and set your heart and affections on things above.

Instead of checking your phone for messages, and immediately responding, or getting online multiple times a day, plan ahead when you'll respond to all your messages. Let your thoughts be interrupted by God's Word. Place Scripture around your home to catch your eye. Put it on your window sill, counter by your sink, on the fridge, on your medicine cabinet mirror, and wherever you spend at least a few minutes a day. Cause your mind to feed on the Word of God. While driving, listen to sermons downloaded, and tape Scripture to your dash. Play the Bible on your iPod or MP3 player while falling asleep, while riding in the car, while cleaning, etc. Whenever you usually play music, play Scripture instead. Let God control your thoughts.

Whenever you're reading something, ask yourself,

- 1) "Is what I'm reading truth (according to the Word of God)?"
- 2) Will it build up my faith?
- 3) Is it necessary to read it right now?
- 4) Am I the one to read it (or pass it on)?
- 5) Am I obeying the verse, 'I will set no vile thing before my eyes'?"
- 6) Even if it's true, am I guarding my heart, or will this affect me emotionally or manipulate me for no useful purpose?
- 7) If there's a need, can I pray for it without knowing all the details?
- 8) Am I violating Scripture, which tells me not to know the details of sin?
- 9) Am I being a Godly example to my children and others by watching or reading this now?
- 10) Am I neglecting other responsibilities while doing this?

If you determine that you are doing a good thing, ask yourself:

- Am I doing a good thing, but at the wrong time,
- in the wrong way,
- too much or
- with a sinful heart and attitude?

If you have the habit of watching or reading the news daily: If you are in the habit of doing so at the beginning or end of your day, ask, "Is this a spiritually healthy activity to start and end my

day with?" Can I trust the source? Can I copy their example as a person? What example am I setting for my children?



CHAPTER 17: A COMPANION OF FOOLS

Remember, Proverbs 13:20 says—"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." And those fools may be real or virtual.

My husband says, "Be careful who you allow to stand before you and teach you."

You're being taught when you don't even realize it. Most of us have the internet available all the time. Many of us have become ruled by our devices.

HAVE YOU OPENED A DOOR FOR SATAN TO COME IN

Are you letting Satan have little areas of your soul (mind, will, and emotions) thinking it's not affecting you?

I still occasionally have a bad scene from a movie I watched 30 or more years ago suddenly come into my mind. If it's not in there, Satan can't use it.

Are you stirring up appetites and causing images to appear in your mind forever because of things you've watched?

Do you have thoughts that keep coming, which are not the truth, or helpful, because of the music you listen to or what you read?

Do the catalogs and magazines you look at, and the sites you go to online stimulate you to be content, or are they tempting you to covetousness, by making you want things that you don't need?

Are they causing contentment or discontentment with how God made you?

Are they causing discontentment with your husband or your life?

Are you stimulating hunger for things that are not only not good for you, but also are poisoning your mind and have the potential to destroy your relationships?



CHAPTER 18: THE POWER OF IDEAS AND THOUGHTS

We must realize the power of ideas and thoughts to determine and direct our actions.

1. Are you stirring up lusts and desires?
2. Are you coming to accept sin, because you "entertain" yourself with it? Do you think, "It's not reality, so it doesn't matter?"
3. Would we condone in real life what we allow in our homes through a screen? Or earbuds?
4. Are we allowing people to influence our children and our homes who we wouldn't allow through our front doors (because of their language, lifestyle, or the falsehood they're spouting)?
5. Are we becoming like the world little by little?
6. What is the example we're being to our children, to our family, to our neighbors? (Through real life, but also through what we post on Facebook, blogs, twitter, etc.)
7. Ask yourself: How is that chick flick or romance novel feeding me and making me more content and obedient to God's Word to respect my husband? How does that movie about zombies, aliens, and mutants cause my mind to think about things that are true,

honest, lovely, and of good report, and set my mind and heart on things above? How will what I'm watching and listening to help me grow in Christ?

8. God's desire is that we hunger and long for Him, for spiritual growth, for reliance on Him, for Christlikeness, and that we feed ourselves spiritually healthy food. If we have a relationship with Jesus Christ, we must remember that sin comes between us. We must hunger and thirst after righteousness.
9. Be intentional about your spare moments, your hobbies, and your entertainment. Are your emotions and affections turned to God or are there idols and competing affections that you are flirting with. Remember that marriage represents our relationship with Him. Faithfulness in marriage is a must because it represents faithfulness to God. Are you being faithful to the Lord in your thoughts and emotions?

It's common when we feel lonely, empty, restless--we long for something, and we don't know what--we're unsure of what to do, and what our purpose is, (and these feelings happen all through our lives)--it's common when we feel this way to get introspective and start thinking, "What is it I want?" "What is it that will make me feel better?" "What is it that I am hungry for?" We analyze and overthink. Then we try to fill ourselves up.



CHAPTER 19: IS IT AN IDOL

Trying to fill our hunger and satisfy our longings is something we've been doing since we were little girls, and we have built up solid habits. You know that comfort food you turn to every time you're feeling blue, that chick flick or feel-good movie that you watch? Some of you know what I'm talking about.

We have habits. Some of them are pretty harmless (like maybe going to the freezer for a little scoop of your favorite ice cream), but some aren't very good!

Time fails to list all the ways people try to fill themselves up and satisfy their longings. But, do you think that, maybe, anything we try to fill ourselves up with instead of Jesus Christ and His Word is really an idol, or has the potential to become one?

THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS:

Did you know that not everything has the same impact on us? My adult children remember certain things from their childhoods and have forgotten others.

My daughter was telling me in detail about something that I wouldn't have called a really impactful, "important" event in her life, and she explained that she remembered it because, for her, it had a lot of emotion attached to it. This was an eye-opening revelation for me because I realized that it's true for all of us!

Strong emotional attachment associated with anything means two things:

It is easier to remember it, and it is easier to become addicted to it.

We are commanded to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life," and Philippians 4:7-8: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.") Our thoughts and emotions have a powerful influence on our actions and attitudes.

And let me just say, because it seems to be a problem we women have: It's not a good idea to care too much about how you feel or what you want. Don't focus too much on that. All that advertising says, "You're worth it!" and, "You deserve it!" Forget it. Much of our longing could be ignored if we'd stop thinking about it and get busy, "doing the next thing," as Elisabeth Elliot says. If we'd obey the Bible when it says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:4), we'd be far better off.

Our thoughts may reflect our hunger for the wrong things and reveal our discontentment. Are we thinking about the things we want and covet? The Bible says covetousness is sin. Even our prayers are affected by our thoughts and lust: It says in James 4:2-3—"Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

This kind of longing and hunger is sin. It is lust. Though God says to hunger and thirst for some things, we should ask ourselves, "When is hunger and longing sin?"

It is a sin when it is ungratefulness, complaining, murmuring, doubting His love and care, and questioning His wisdom. It is a sin when it leads me to something other than Him for my filling and satisfaction, and for my answers. When my hunger and longing is for something directly contrary to what the Bible says, it is a sin. You don't even have to ask.

The murmuring and complaining of the Israelites in the wilderness was cause for them to miss the Promised Land. God took it so seriously that tens upon tens of thousands died. God punished them when they repeatedly brought their disbelief, their questioning, complaining, and disrespect of those God placed in leadership over them, to Moses. God gave them their request but sent leanness unto their soul. (Psalm 106:15) There is never a right time for murmuring and complaining.



CHAPTER 20: ENDING IN PRAISE

We should imitate David, who had a heart after God's own heart. Whenever he began a psalm with longing or even what may sound very much like complaining:

- ❑ He ended with praise for and expressing faith and confidence in God.
- ❑ He praised the specific character qualities of God.
- ❑ He encouraged himself in the Lord.

- ❑ He strengthened his faith by reminding himself (and God) of what God had done and promised and proclaimed his faith in God's care for him.

We need to do the same.

If God is in control of everything, and He is, then His withholding something we are longing for or hungry for, even something good, means:

- ❑ He knows it is not good for us.
- ❑ It isn't the right time.
- ❑ He has something better for us, OR,
- ❑ We are not ready for it yet.
- ❑ We need to trust in His wisdom and timing.

Volumes could be written if I were to tell you about all the times that God withheld something that I wanted, I prayed for, I thought was the right thing, and He didn't give it to me, and later, I praised Him with all my heart for not giving it to me. Because, afterward I saw that He had given me something better, or He gave me a strong testimony through what He taught me while I was waiting.

God's withholding what we're longing for may give us a powerful testimony that will be used in others' lives in the future when we're able to share what He taught us through not getting what we wanted and finding out how He spared us so much heartache and pain. Then we can praise Him for how He grew our faith and that He knows what is best for us.

- ❖ God's withholding what we're longing for may be the answer to our prayers.
- ❖ God's withholding what we're longing for may strengthen our faith.
- ❖ God's withholding what we're longing for may give us a powerful testimony that will be used in others' lives in the future



THE BENEFIT OF HUNGER AND LONGING IN OUR LIVES:

- ❖ It causes us to grow in faith
- ❖ Scripture verses and passages come alive that we never noticed before
- ❖ Spiritual growth and maturity come through them: Hunger and Longing are like the "turning of the soil, fertilizer, and rain" in the garden of our spiritual lives, causing us to grow and be fruitful, just as in a vegetable garden.
- ❖ We learn spiritual lessons, and our trust in God increases. We're better able to respond in faith the next time. We learn to trust Him more, and we can teach others what we've learned and help them to believe in Him and love and trust Him more.

Even Jesus had to learn obedience from the things which He suffered (why should we think we should be any different!):

I believe that Jesus had to suffer basic human conditions and universal feelings and that He had longings, too. He had to suffer the same things we do. He experienced having to submit to His parents, live with brothers and sisters, experience the limitations of a body, get along with

people, wait to grow up to be able to do things, at times disagree with His parents, be falsely accused by others, and all the daily trials and difficulties that every human being experiences.

I am speculating now, but He probably experienced wondering what He should do while He waited for God's timing for His public ministry to begin. He may have suffered a lot of well-meaning people asking, "When are you going to get married? What are you doing with your life?" (We sometimes forget that Jesus was a real person.) He definitely put up with "clueless" disciples and indeed suffered knowing one of the people closest to Him was going to betray Him.

He suffered all the frustrations, longings, heartbreak, and much more that we do...these things were all things He suffered, as well as what He suffered on the cross.

In other words, He knows what you are going through. He lived on earth, yet He did not sin. And He paid for our sins on the cross, taking our punishment, and He lives in heaven, having triumphed over death and the power of sin. He is interceding for us, and because of His Holy Spirit in us, we have the power to obey Him and live a life pleasing to Him. He is a very personal, powerful God.



CHAPTER 21: THE KEY

What we do with our thoughts and emotions is crucial to our success. God's Word says to take our thoughts captive to the Lord Jesus Christ. There's one aspect of that that I've only learned in the last few years, but which has been very helpful to me and may help you.

I have learned that there are over-thinkers and under-thinkers, and I'm an over-thinker. We all need to think more, in the sense of being wiser and more discerning, and thinking before we act, but then there's obsessing and going over and over things in your mind, and that's over-thinking, which I am guilty of.

I've learned it's vital for me to "turn off my thoughts" at times. It does not help me--it's not helpful in general--to rehash and go over and over in my mind:

- A conversation
- A situation
- How hurt I am
- How justified I am
- How right I am

- How someone wronged me or wronged someone I love
- How something I did, or someone else did, wasn't right.
- Or, to go over in my mind scenes from my life that were painful, or remind myself of times when I was hurt.

It is not Biblical.

I can waste a lot of time and emotional energy by over-thinking. Now, I turn my thoughts off. Here are some helpful tips.

WE MUST ESTABLISH NEW HABITS BASED ON GOD'S WORD:

1. We must take our thoughts captive to the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 10:5--"5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;")
2. We must practice thankfulness. (1 Thess. 5:18—"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.")
3. We must trust in the Lord. (Psalm 37:5—"Trust in the Lord and do good.")
4. We must forget what is behind and press on for the prize. This is where remembering, rehashing, going over in your mind is not helpful. Forget what is behind and move on. Satan wants us to stay and live in the sins of the past. He wants to trip us up in our thoughts because then actions follow.

Phil. 3:13-14—"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

5. We must cast our cares on Him, believing that He is in control of everything and that He can and will turn even the bad to good to make us more Christ-like and produce fruit in our lives. Remembering that His Spirit is interceding for us. 1 Peter 5:7

Romans 8:24-29—

"For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?"

25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

-
6. We must pour out our hearts to Him. We should wait on Him and have our expectations in Him. Find in Him your strength, comfort, fulfillment, and satisfaction every time you have a need, problem, or trial.

Psalm 62:1-8—

1 "Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.

2 He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.

5 My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.

7 In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.

8 Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us."

We must do what the Bible says, and not listen to our own hearts and the world!

Also, don't dwell on your feelings and your longings. This just gives Satan an open door to plant a seed of doubt, envy, or bitterness.

I have so much more joy and peace by shutting down my thoughts at times. Sometimes I even say out loud, "Un uh, I'm not going there." Here are some ways I accomplish turning my thoughts off:

Do the next job on my list, get busy working with my hands, put into my mind, and speak out loud thanksgiving to God for anything and everything I can think of. When I do this, Satan flees.

God says that He satisfies the longing soul, and HE fills the hungry with good things. Yet, we turn to everything else to try to satisfy ourselves! Why?

Because we don't believe Him.

We don't think He can fill us.

We don't believe He's enough, or that He's wise enough, powerful enough, good enough, loving enough.....

We need to trust Him, take Him at His Word, and take that check to the bank.



CHAPTER 22: RETRAINING OUR THOUGHT LIFE

We must get our thought life under control!! It's the key to everything else. Train your mind to repeat what is the truth from the Word of God.

Much of our longing and hunger is because we have preconceived notions and expectations, and we're continually feeling letdown. We must give our expectations to God, and be thankful for whatever He then gives. Psalm 62:5 says, "My expectation cometh from God."

We must retrain our thoughts to be thankful and believing, trusting, and loving God.

What we allow our minds to think significantly affects and influences us, our homes, and our families. We must forget what is behind: the offenses, and the past that we are repeatedly rehashing. Forgive past offenses and move on. Forgiveness is a choice of the will. I will forgive because God has forgiven me and if I don't forgive, neither will He forgive me! (Matthew 6:15)

Let God be responsible for turning your feelings around. You just decide to forgive. Don't waste time and emotional energy mulling over what someone said to you or about you that hurt. Also, forgive yourself. Don't "camp out" on your imperfectly-lived past

Don't let your thoughts keep going over those painful things. Be joyful, and remember God's goodness to you. ("As the heart thinketh, so is he." Prov. 23:7)

As a mom, have you thought how going around your home with a face that clearly says, "I am not happy," impacts your home and family? You've heard the saying, "If mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy." That's because "The heart of the home is the woman." Choose to show God's heart and mind to your family, which is to show mercy and grace and to forgive. Make your home a place of forgiveness.

Cast your cares on Him. Psalm 62:8 says, "Pour out your heart to Him." Trust in God. Believe His Word. Romans 12 tells us that our thought life must be transformed by the Word of God. Don't just read it. Pray it, memorize it and think it—putting it in the 1st person. Example: "Thou wilt keep me in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee because I trust in Thee." Isaiah 26:3

We must tell the truth in love—TO OURSELVES!! Please, let's stop lying to ourselves. Let's stop listening to what the world says and repeating it in our minds as though it's the truth! Listen to God's Word instead!

And don't listen to your own heart. You hear this lie often in movies and everywhere in the media! "Listen to your heart." No! Just because your heart longs for something doesn't mean it should! Just because you think it, doesn't mean it's true. We can't trust our emotions and our hearts! Our hearts are desperately wicked. Our feelings are subject to whims and hormones!

Let's stop causing ourselves to lose faith in Christ through our thoughts and emotions. Let's put an end to stirring up unbelief in His abilities to help us and to be all for us. When that first thought creeps in, STOP! Slam the door shut! Speak truth back! I will rejoice in _____. I can do all things! I will thank God for _____.



CHAPTER 23: DO YOU KNOW WHO GOD REALLY IS

*Psalm 107:9 tells us that He satisfies our longings,
and fills our hunger.*

The Bible tells us that our Heavenly Father is:

- all-sufficient
- all-powerful
- all-loving
- all-wise

He loved you so much, He sent His Son to die for you to save you from your sins.

If you believe in Him and surrender your life to Him, you will be saved from your sins and

He will never leave you.

He is over all things

He created all things and has control over all things,

including His enemies.

There is nothing He can't handle in your life or mine.

Is that what you're thinking throughout your day and telling yourself?

DO YOU HAVE YOUR ARMOR ON

There is a battle going on and a real enemy. There is a WAR raging for our minds because Satan knows that if he can get our thinking off, the rest will follow. We must go into the battle armed.

Plan your nighttime routine so that your mind and thoughts are on things above, on Scripture, as you fall asleep.

Ask forgiveness, if necessary, before going to bed. Listen to Scripture, pray, and be thankful.

Before you step foot out of bed in the morning, think through and pray on God's armor.

"Lord, I put on the whole armor of God, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, my loins girt about with truth, my feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, taking up the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying without ceasing."

Use the weapons that God has given you to fight this spiritual battle!



CHAPTER 24: EXPERIENCING FILLING AND SATISFACTION AND GROWING IN FAITH

Our faith in Him will grow every time we turn to Him with our emptiness, our longing, and our hunger, and He fills us, comforts us, and helps us! We need to picture in our minds holding up our shield of faith and enlarge it to completely cover us. When you experience hunger, longing, emptiness, and don't know what to do, I encourage you to literally cry out to Him, "Help!" The cry of a drowning man isn't very complicated!

And, sit down and read God's Word. A lot.

Expect Him to speak to you. Think the Word of God, and tell yourself the Truth.

He has never failed to help me when I have done this!

When you feel yourself longing for something, hungering for something, needing something...

- Go to God and find your fulfillment--your completeness--in Him.

- Run to Him!
- Cause your heart to incline--lean towards--and go to Him.
- Read your Bible more.
- Cry out to Him.
- Ask God to bind Satan and his demons in the Name of Jesus, by the power that raised Jesus from the dead. Pray for a hedge of protection around you and that He would send His angels to guard and protect you.

Claim the promises that are found in Scripture on your behalf. Repeat them out loud:

"He will never leave me nor forsake me." (Hebrews 13:5)

"My God shall supply all my needs in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)

"He only is my rock and my salvation." (Psalm 62:6)

"I shall not be moved." (Psalm 62:6)

Affirm your trust in Him, and affirm your will to obey and rejoice in Him:

"What time I am afraid I will trust in thee." (Psalm 56:3)

"I will rejoice in the Lord." (Habakkuk 3:18)

"I will praise thee." (Psalm 86:12)

"I will glorify thy Name, for evermore." (Psalm 86:12)

"Who is like unto Thee?" (Exodus 15:11)

"I will trust in Thee, from whence cometh my help." (Psalm 91:2 and Psalm 121:1)

Put Scripture in the 1st person: "There hath no temptation taken me, but such as is common to man, but God is faithful, and will not suffer me to be tempted above that I am able, but will with the temptation, also make for me a way to escape." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

This is why you need to memorize Scripture and hide it in your heart. When attacked by Satan, you need the Word in your heart, so you can pull out your sword of the Spirit, which is the Word

of God, and attack back at any time. Affirm your trust in Him, out loud, and put up your shield of faith.

Know that God will act on your behalf. Do not give in to or follow your emotions! Do not wallow in self-pity; do not fear, but use the weapons of spiritual warfare which the Lord has given you!! Find in Him your all in all.



CHAPTER 25: IS HE ENOUGH FOR YOU?

He satisfies the longing soul,
And the hungry soul He fills with good things.

We find Him to be enough,
to satisfy all our longing,
through getting to know Him.

We get to know Him through reading His Word and obeying it, and through prayer.

We learn to find Him sufficient and

we experience Him satisfying our every longing and filling us with good things by

- applying Scripture to our problems
- by running to Him
- and by crying out to Him in our day-to-day crises and dilemmas, helplessness, and hopelessness.

Then,

- we find Him faithful, and
- we know He is there!
- We see His answers to prayer,
- we enjoy His presence and
- we can FEEL His strength.

This gives us confidence for the next attack or trial, and our faith grows.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

My desire for you is that after reading this book, you will know that God is Absolutely Faithful and entirely sufficient to satisfy your longing soul and fill your hungry soul with good things. He is enough! Himself.

When you think you're longing for something, hungering for something, needing something, go to God and find your fulfillment, your completeness. Let Him/ask Him to direct you and give you wisdom for your particular situation. Find in Him your all in all.

I have experienced this verse true in my own life over and over, and it is dear to me because I know I will long again. I will hunger again. I will feel empty, alone, and lost again, at times, as long as I'm alive on this earth. But,

He satisfies the longing soul,
and the hungry soul he fills
with good things.

Psalm 107:9

QUESTIONS TO ASK OURSELVES

1. Am I relying on God and waiting on Him to satisfy my longings and to fill me?
2. Do I see my trials as growing times? Am I practicing thankfulness in them?
3. Am I daily in God's Word and pouring out my heart to Him?
4. Am I seeing God at work in my life, and sharing with others what He's doing?
5. Am I resisting the temptation to listen to the world's answers (from Facebook, blogs, articles, friends, anything online, Pinterest, chat rooms, movies, and music) and resisting the temptation to satisfy my longings and hunger with second-best, or temporary fill-me-ups and "junk food"?
6. Am I going to God's Word for my answers?
7. Do I trust that what God offers is truly good? Do I believe that He can satisfy my deepest longings?

What are YOU hungry for?

Where are you going to go to satisfy your longing and
fill your hungry soul?



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Thank you so much for reading!
May God get all the glory as He changes
your home and
satisfies your longing soul!