



A THIEF IN THE NIGHT

By Claudia Engel (2001)

Introduction

Do you know the difference between a robbery and a theft?

Robbers come either by day or night, but always when you are awake or jolted to consciousness. They take from you in your presence, with your awareness, by force and usually with violence. Often injury or murder results.

Thieves, on the other hand come in the night or when you are away or asleep. They take from you when you are completely unaware. For instance a robbery could be compared to abortion resulting in the loss of a child, or fire causing the loss of goods, even your home— something very obvious. A theft on the other hand is more difficult to link to a cause. It can be compared to watching too much television or working long hours on your job resulting in less and less communication with your family. Lethargy may cause poor work ethics and a possible job loss. Laziness may result in unfinished goals. The results of a theft are more obscure and therefore the reason for these losses are harder to discern and *more difficult to correct*.

Between 1940 and 1945 the American Church suffered a theft made more serious because, for the most part, one was unaware we had lost anything! The culprit? In World War II, with a large portion of men gone to war, a *major* segment of women, for the first time in history, entered the workforce and our culture (which previously frowned on such things) was *dramatically* altered. The door opened for women to make money on their own. They left their homes for a good part of the day, and time given to the family was swallowed up by the industrial machine. To date this trend has

grown so that today women serve as lawyers, doctors, senators, and perhaps even the office of the president, given time.

This change has produced a present awareness that women are just as capable as men in many roles, much more capable than past history has allowed. Let us recognize that it was the Lord Jesus Himself who first included women in a larger way than ever before in history. It is the *true* practice of Christianity that leads the way, enlightening cultures where there has been and still is an element of suppression of women (i.e. the Islamic culture). (One need only to study the conditions of women in Greece at the time of Christ and the existing conditions of women in various oppressed countries today and see that women are sometimes treated little better than property or cattle.) In the life of Christ we see the birth of something new!

The gospel is initiated by the simple, yet profound stories of Elizabeth and Mary. Then we read about Mary and Martha, obvious close friends of Jesus. There is further inclusion of Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, and Susanna (Luke 8:1 & 2). And who can forget the woman who wiped His feet with her perfumed ointment and hair (Mark 14: 3-9)? The gospel's recognition of women alongside the early male disciples is a marked change from what was considered important to record in the *Old* Testament. In the New Testament there is a component of value in the women that can no longer be left out in full analysis of the message of Jesus Christ. The fullness of His character necessarily includes the unique qualities that He has placed in His daughters to display all that He is to a dark and dying world.

The word testifies that Jesus is much more in character than what a class, a nation or a natural distinction demands. His words and deeds were outside the established confines of the synagogue, moving instead into the homes of the rich as well as the poor. We find Him preaching on side streets, back roads and country villages. His reach extended to those in jail as well as to those in the jailer's home. He came to His own people yet planned for the inclusion of the Gentiles. He came for those broken, cast aside and worn out. Whomever was drawn by the Spirit of God and responded was His only, ultimate concern. And He took the time to reach out to women and little children as well as the men.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:28)

In those early days, women were sitting and listening at the Lord's feet, right alongside the men (Luke 23:49). They were also the first at the tomb to witness His resurrection. Further mention of Priscilla, Claudia,

Lydia, Phoebe and Philip’s daughters, shows that the early church valued the role of women and honored them. One could say that Jesus opened the door for women to be equally valued with men in His body, the church—different functions, but equal worth!

And so, the stature of women is undeniable in the Kingdom. The question is, “Could there be a deception and error involved when a woman’s primary function causes them to leave their previous role in the home? And why?” Using my life, this tract’s purpose is to address this question.

Changing of the Guard

I was previously married for fifteen years; most of this time I worked at various jobs, all part-time. After being saved, I left secular employment and devoted myself to marriage, my home and serving the church. I had no children. My lifestyle was consistent with Christian culture at that time (the sixties). Few women worked outside of the home.

Ten years later tragedy struck and my spouse left me due to his adultery which ended in our divorce. I won’t say much about this time-frame except that it was devastating. There was upheaval of all I held dear, destruction of the “American Dream,” the nice little house, the dream of little children all tucked into bed, the faithful, “Rock Hudson” husband, etc. All my goals were shattered and emptiness left me in rubble, a single, basement room of my soul.

There is much I could share about this time and the glorious work of the Holy Spirit to bring the small seed of my life, then buried in the ground, up into the sunlight again and a whole new me. However this is not the emphasis of this tract.

I immediately faced the necessity of finding a full-time job and again entering the workforce—albeit somewhat timidly. The Lord made a way as He did for Ruth to find a suitable job safe in “His field” where no one could harm.

*Then Boaz said to Ruth, “You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not **commanded the young men not to touch you?** And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.” (Ruth 2:8 & 9)*

And so, for 18 years I worked “in Boaz’s field.” I enjoyed success with my first job (a sales clerk in a jewelry store), advancing to head of a department with many increases of benefits and salary. I recognized the Lord’s direction to move me to an even better job, one which led to success after success! And ultimately the interesting finale (10 years later) when He actually brought me into *my own, successful business* as a computer-graphic designer and typesetter. Hard work and lots of prayer, with faith in Him, brought me out into a “broad” place.

In all of this I most certainly enjoyed the benefits of the increased recognition of women in the work force. I admire the ability of many of my colleagues and do not in the least deny the ability of the Lord to open-up doors even more in the corporate future. The creativity of God knows no bounds. Only man stays where it’s safe and thus limits his own destiny in the Kingdom. However, something happened lately that has led me to write this tract. *A great many women* inadvertently lose something in this process, that if seen, can be corrected. The church itself has lost the vital role of what women are meant to be. By holding on to what seemed good we lost the best. We lost the *deeper value* of what it means to be a woman, and this is not insignificant!

The mind-set of 1945 was that poverty and the need for more money could now be eliminated. Two “bread winners” would double the income and double the benefits. No more would one have to “go without.” I have talked with several people directly involved with this particular process and there was no thought that such a change could do anything but improve their standard of living. The error has now become evident. Upon closer analysis, fifty years later, we see something else instead—a deeper truth!

When the men came home from war the women did not return to the “nest.” Instead the greed of marketing personnel saw that a whole new area for profit had just been created: appliances were designed for the home that made the woman’s job easier, freeing her for more and more ventures outside the home. Washing machines, can-openers, and vacuum cleaners are all wonderful. But *do we need ALL these gadgets?!* Now, as a result of this process, children no longer come home for home-baked cookies; they have boxed ones instead. No one stays home with the children with an opportunity to teach and interact; baby-sitters and daycare centers thrive and TV is “king” — “Big Bird and Mr. Rogers.” No parent/friend waiting at the end of the school day; instead the guidance counselor or even worse: drugs, alcohol, sex, lack of understanding, or crime. Now we can recognize that the money problem wasn’t solved at all. Instead we have created many new problems. Children grow up and carry guns to school, “blowing their fellow classmates away.” And why?

The Heist

There never seems to be enough time or money to satisfy mankind. Why do we spend money for that which doesn't satisfy?

*Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen **diligently** to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. (Is. 55: 2)*

Why does more money only increase our appetite for money? Why does increase in sugary desserts increase our appetite for dessert? More and more availability of nice designer clothes fills our closets to over flowing, ending in garage sales and Salvation Army giveaways. Why does our need for more increase and increase and go on increasing?

The ultimate culprit of this “heist” is the *desire or lust in our flesh for more*; the desire for things, power, control, and freedom, all before the desire for the Kingdom and its King and the desire to live the way He wants us to, dying to ourselves—giving life to others. The devil will take opportunity of any loophole in our flesh he can find be it fear, insecurity, poverty, want, vanity, control, power, etc. Our flesh is his only “landing ground.” We are in a war for the earth. *Living in the Spirit is the “tank”* through the battlefield, that will conquer the enemy’s ground and bring us into real life, the “promised land.” But first, we have to eliminate the ground the enemy has in our own soul before we can take back the ground of the Kingdom.

There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. (Pr. 14:12)

For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mt. 16: 26)

*For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but **whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.** (Lk. 9:24)*

Recent circumstances of my life have opened to me new understanding. After 18 years of solitude the Lord has brought me into a relationship with a new husband, a wonderful, faithful man, who, aside from being the perfect person to balance all that I am, is also a great provider. This and other miraculous events brought me to a place of being relatively safe financially. I no longer “have” to work to survive.

My new home is all that I could ever want on this earth and the meager years have been swallowed up just as the Lord promises to all that are

faithful to follow Him first. All things are being added just as I had trusted Him all those years. He is faithful.

Just as I was in the days of my prime . . . when my steps were bathed in cream, and the rock poured out rivers of oil for me! (Job 29: 4-6)

And so (astonished) here I am in this “wonderland” wondering, “What is it Lord that You want from Your servant now?” I recently turned down an excellent job offer. Why? Because *the Lord wants me to see something wonderful that’s more valuable than money and He wants me to share that with you. Mammon can keep you from buying what’s eternal!* A job can bring in more money but *steal* your time. These are precious things that money cannot buy:

- More *time* for prayer and intercession for others (our husband, children, church, community, country, and worldwide needs)
- More *time* to do a lot of good works
- *Time* to listen to receive the Lord’s messages and give to the church (prophesy)
- *Time* to mentor younger women
- *Time* to talk on the phone to neighbors and friends; deepening relationships—divine appointments
- *Time* to relate to neighbors in a very meaningful way
- *Time* for moms to give to the family and their husbands
- *Time* to step back into the Spirit in the midst of the daily routine and the tyranny of distractions

If I had children, the list would be even longer and more significant. A loss of the mother in the home to the future of America and the church is hard to grasp fully, *but it is not irretrievable*. Nothing is past redemption to our Lord. He has a divine plan. He will alert us to our womanly sensitivity right where we are, be it job or home, and give wisdom by His Spirit, as to how to redeem what we have lost!

Through my circumstances I now realize we have been “thieved” of the *women’s greatest role* in the body of Christ.

*. . . And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and **good works**, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (Heb. 10:24&25)*

Our culture in 21st century America is “rush, rush, rush; push, push, push, buy, buy, buy!” We are either extremely *ambitious* as we give in, or

extremely *lethargic* as we “cop-out.” This past Christmas holiday I lost track of how many people I heard say that there had to be some way to simplify things. It is way out of hand.

We are bombarded with commercials, bill boards, “sight” marketing in the malls and supermarkets, television. The standard of living skyrockets higher and higher. Coveting in America is of much shorter duration since lust is gratified swifter than ever before: if you want it, charge it! Greed and lust have less and less bounds. And the “silken chains” get stronger and stronger.

A friend once said to me, “How many clothes are enough clothes? How many shoes are enough shoes, etc.?” Even food! How much food is enough food, “*O, America!*” Ten years ago obesity marked one in every nine persons. Today (2001), it is one in five. One only needs to go to the malls and their “food courts” in America to see and understand!

To date, children *have* to have every toy that is advertised! Mothers put their children in daycare centers to go to work—among other things, to essentially afford all the gadgets for their homes, the toys, the electronic games! What horrible fruit are we going to reap, if not already?

You may believe that I am advocating women to leave the work force. Not necessarily. Though I do believe that if possible, especially for mothers, this option should be considered. You might think that I am advocating not taking advantage of all the technological advancements. I am not. *I am advocating the decrease and discipline of our lust for things!* As always mammon and God war for our souls; the desire for things is depleting what and who we are in God as women in the body of Christ! Our desire for things pushes ourselves and our husbands to earn more and more. ***It is time to consider being satisfied with less and becoming more available for the Lord and His kingdom.***

The poor could say, “This doesn’t apply to me.” However coveting and greed also exist in ghettos where it breeds robbery, drugs, and alcohol abuse. Not realizing that the American dream of “possessing everything” is in reality a myth, we go endlessly on trying to achieve that goal or hopelessly give-up and lie in a dark puddle of bitterness and *selfpity*, angry with all those who seem to “have it made.” God’s word says:

*Listen, my beloved brethren: “Has God not **chosen** the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? . . .” (Ja. 2: 5)*

What does this mean? *There is a better way:*

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Mt. 6: 33)

The weapons against materialism, lust and greed are godly discipline and contentment which are developed by the Holy Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ in His kingdom.

*. . . but godliness with **contentment is great gain.***

For we have brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

*And having food and clothing, **with these we shall be content.***

*But those **who desire to be rich fall into temptation** and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.*

*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their **greediness**, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (1 Tim. 6:6-10)*

Fulfilling a Woman's Destiny

Here is a story from a sister in the church. She and her twin sister had an Aunt Annie. One day the sister received a “word” from a visiting prophet who did not know her. He prophesied that she had an Aunt Annie whom she was to go and see. This was indeed the truth, and she called my friend who relayed the tale to me. They decided to respond to the prophesy and called a relative who would know if Aunt Annie was still living. She was, and living in a nearby nursing home. The two sisters traveled to the nursing home and visited their aunt who by now was senile and did not even recognize them. They spoke soothing words to her and sang hymns. *They had no viable proof that their visit accomplished anything*, and they left. However, weeks later, the nursing home called and asked what in the world they had done! For since their visit, Aunt Annie had very noticeably changed. Whereas she had previously stayed to herself in her room talking to no one, now she traveled up and down the corridor, chatting away, bringing cheer wherever she went. This is no coincidence. The power of the Spirit of God is beyond all that we could ask or think. The prayers of the two sisters, through the power of the Holy Spirit, accomplished much! And the evidence of His power was being manifest!

God's Work is Alive:

In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold

*or pearls or costly clothing (only). . . but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with **good works** . . . (1 Tim. 2:9-10)*

*. . . well reported for **good works**: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every **good work**. (1 Tim. 5:10)*

*Let them do good, that they be rich in **good works**, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. (1 Tim. 6:18-19)*

*Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every **good work** (Titus 3: 1)*

*This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain **good works** . . . (Titus 3: 8)*

And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs . . . (Titus 3: 14)

*. . . in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of **good works**; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility . . . (Titus 2: 2)*

*. . . teaching us that, denying ungodliness and **worldly lusts**, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age. (Titus 2: 12)*

*. . . who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purity for Himself. His own special people, zealous for **good works**. (Titus 2: 14)*

Why are we so blind? There is so much in *good works* that is taken from us when we become caught up with goals and desires in the materialistic realm. On the other hand God, in His kingdom, *has made women to have tender, sensitive hearts* to see into others lives and lift up the downhearted, the wounded, the weary and the lost.

Now gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops . . . (Micah 5: 1)

An army of Love! Nothing can defeat God's love and the servants wielding it. We have become callused and sidetracked. Our tastebuds have eaten at so many different tables we can no longer taste or see the fullness of what He has set right before our eyes.

So how do we gain back the ground that lack of time and money have stolen from us? What can be done in the present reality? We have already purchased more than we need. We have aspired higher and higher on that ladder of materialism that was held out to us. Is there any way back?

Of course there is. All things are possible in Christ Jesus! The answer lies in our *faith and in the power* of God to provide for us. We must put to death lust and greed for more things, and prioritize our needs according to the wisdom from above, not according to what is constantly being fed to us through the different media. Would it be so terrible for mothers to return to their homes? How much better to simplify our lifestyles instead and focus on those things that are more enduring and more worthwhile—our children, our husband, our friends and neighbors . . . people, not things.

The Antidote

Let me share some examples from my own life concerning the ability of the Lord to provide.

Over thirty years ago, just before I came to know the Lord, I was working as a waitress in a local restaurant. I was young, strong and self-confident. As my newly saved sibling and his wife were praying for me, I was brought to my knees with a sudden illness. I lost my job and my husband took me to several doctors. They described my illness in many different ways (one analysis suggested multiple-sclerosis). At any rate, I was left in a very humble state, no job and feeling very isolated. I remember laying in the bathtub filled with very warm water, and drinking a brandy to steady my nerves, thinking, “Will anyone be at my funeral and who will care?” I wasn’t wondering just about death. Rather, I was concerned that no one would care. I was feeling ill and isolated.

Through many circumstances, I entered into a very real relationship with the Lord Jesus. I remember being at my brother's home shortly after my “cry for help.” Here I prayed, “Lord, Jesus, I don’t know who you are or what you’ve done, but please, I give you all my life; please help me.” I prayed this because of a vision I had just had as my brother was praying, of the Lord off in a distance, talking with several men and looking at a scroll in His hand. He turned to me in the vision and said simply, “Claudia.” That’s all it took. The Lord of the universe knew me! My life was changed.

The years that followed saw many miraculous answers in my relationship with Jesus. I remember once my husband had invited four of our neighbors over to dinner. We only had about a cup and a half of macaroni

and a half a pound of cheese in the house. I despaired. But in my newly kindled faith, I laid hands on the cheese and macaroni and thought of the multiplication of the loaves and fish and asked the Lord to multiply in the same way. I felt to break the cheese up into little pieces as the Lord had done. The little piece of cheese became a large pile under my knife. I continued with the recipe and ended up with enough macaroni and cheese for the company and *had leftovers!*

In those very early days of my walk, I developed over twenty warts on my hands. I prayed. All the warts “grew” away. They were gone! No doctors; no medicine. This led me to faith in healing from my symptoms of multiple sclerosis. It took a year and a half, but the illness left, no doctors and no medicine.

During that same time frame, after being out of work for a few months, I prayed for money; I believed for a specific sum of money. Very shortly I received the *exact* sum of money in the mail, money that was “due to me” from my last job which I knew nothing about. I will never forget how God answered me.

There were years of trials used as refinement of my character. One winter we had no money and an empty fuel tank to heat the house. We went down and laid hands on the gas tank and that tank’s gauge stayed where it was for over a month until the money came in (another 30 days or more) for new fuel.

On another occasion, we had no money to celebrate Christmas. I did not want to criticize my husband, so I prayed. When in prayer, I happened to mention to the Lord that I would like to have just three little candles for the three windows in our family room, at the time. Do you know what? My husband came home very repentant about not saving money for Christmas. He said that to make sure it didn’t happen again he had gone into a bank and opened up a Christmas savings club. However, they didn’t have one for \$20 dollars a week like he had wanted. But they offered him all they had left, one for \$10 and two for \$5, instead of one for \$20. A candle was offered for each of the savings clubs. In this way he ended up with three instead of one; he ended up with three candles instead of one . . . the exact number of candles that I had prayed for! God was showing me that He was listening and how He cared for me.

Thirteen years later, I was divorced and found myself in dire financial straights. Because of the Lord’s wonderful grace, He restored a love for drawing that had been latent in me for the past years. An anointing manifested which improved the skill dramatically, overnight. I made extra money drawing for many different clients. I also managed to live miracu-

lously; with the guidance of the Holy Spirit I lived on \$12.50 per week for groceries in 1993. Once I longed to just have a little furniture on my back porch to enjoy the view and relax. That next week I spied furniture laid alongside the road to be thrown out. I pulled over very quickly and scavenged it all. A little paint and fuss goes a long, long way in the Kingdom!

I learned to upholster furniture, sew and mend clothes. (The poor become rich in faith; and my faith grew and grew.)

Some years later I received a 1984 Toyota Tercel from an inheritance. I maintained this vehicle for many years, well beyond its normal life and regardless of how many times people told me it was finished! That car is serving a single girl today who cherishes it as much as I did.

I learned to shop well, use sales and bargains, and took good care of what I had. I mended what was torn, glued what was broken (even shoes). I prayed and then saw discarded items that could be fixed. I mended. I maintained.

Maintain! I know women who throw out a garment that has a simple torn seam and they buy new rather than to learn how easy it is to mend! *Buy a simple machine.* There are some sewing machines for under a hundred dollars that will save much more than they cost. Or form a clothing exchange with friends, perhaps within the church. Children outgrow clothing too fast to wear it out.

God does not throw us out when we are broken. He fixes what is worn; He restores what is old. God has no antiques. His life renews us into a wealth of wisdom for the generation coming just behind us. There is so much more creativity in God than we are using. Isn't He wonderful?!

God is not necessarily saying to live a life of austerity. He is not saying that we will never possess a nice home. Rather He is saying:

*Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in **good works**, ready to give, willing to share . . . (1 Tim. 6:17-18)*

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you (Mt. 6: 33)

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us. (Eph. 3: 20)

Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. (Mk. 10: 29 & 30)

Our lives are not for ourselves; they are for Him, vessels to show His glory—letters of God to a loved-starved earth. Indeed, one of the names of God is Jehovah Jireh, our Provider. And He gives to His beloved even in our sleep!

Many people in the church who seem so mature, so pure, so blessed, so far out of the black hole that you are now in, were also in a similar state a short time ago. They are simply farther down the path than you are and meant to serve as examples. “Follow me, as I follow Christ. I don’t have all the answers, but I know where I can get them.” Get ahold of one of these women. Ask them. They understand. They know how. They will come along side and make sure you make it, with the help of the Holy Spirit; they are the Lord’s hands, His eyes, His voice.

It doesn’t ever become easier, but we do get stronger and stronger in Him. And it will not stop until the last trumpet has been blown. These hard times are the birthing rooms for our faith! Faith is the **gift** of God for salvation. But it is also the **fruit** of the Holy Spirit. Faith is a *gift totally divine*. But it is also the *fruit* of Our Lord’s character forming and growing inside. (It is the only trait that appears as both a gift **and** a fruit.)

. . . how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? (Lk. 12:28)

He shall have whatever he says . . . whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. (Mk. 11:24)

. . . if you have the faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move from here to there.” and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. (Mt. 17:20)

. . . you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. (Jn. 15:7)

Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth? (Lk. 18:8)

Too many people and circumstances steal our dreams! Don’t let anyone steal your dreams in Him. *Devils do not cast doubt on things they do not believe in but on things they do*. This is what constitutes the “fight of

faith.” The adversary (for his own ends) seeks to make it difficult for us to believe what he thoroughly believes himself! The enemy works to keep us from seeing what are obvious truths.

Faith, rooted deep in God, ignores the years and human weakness and cries a loud, “Amen,” to the *staggering promises*. Faith’s operation is less spectacular than any other gift. It is manifested often *secretly, silently*, over long periods, but nonetheless surely and miraculously.

Have faith in God (Mk. 11:22)

Fanaticism kills faith!

“Name it and claim it.” This doctrine kills. Why? Placing such emphasis on *emotion as a foundation* only leads to failure. When we make loud claims from the word of God without having actually heard or been led by the Holy Spirit, we are in danger of *demanding from and trying to control* our Father God! When there is no answer, faith becomes dimmer than it was at the beginning. This kills our faith and the faith of those around us. It is absolutely essential to have a close walk and know the Lord intimately. Jesus doesn’t line up with our agenda. We must know what He is saying and what He is doing in our life and line up with that!

Faith is the essence of things hoped for, the substance of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1)

We stand as lightning rods in earth’s fields and we choose to believe against all odds. Our faith in operation splits the heavens and allows the swift effect of God’s plans to be fulfilled. We have so much to learn . . . so much to believe . . . so much yet to be birthed.

Conclusion

And so what was the thief? The marketing that said we had to just work harder and earn more money; let the women work in the job market, as well, to attain all the things we were made to believe were essential to living “*the good life*.”

I tell you *Hell* is where the “good life” came from! We need to learn to hate sin and see where it comes from. It always looks and feels and tastes good. That’s the point. It says “me” first. Jesus says the very opposite, “Him, first; others, first!”

Faith is the answer to restoring God’s plans for women, women with time to fulfill the call to *good works*. The thought to support others, the

thought for that little note in the mail, the time to spend that extra moment with the phone call, that neighborly need, even now, being aware of the coworker on the job. A dinner cooked for the ill. An offer to baby-sit. A smile, a tender word . . . love.

The church has suffered the loss of one of the biggest evangelistic tools it has. I call it “back-porch Christianity.” When the women are less burdened, they can be a powerful, powerful force in the Kingdom.

I never had the time for all those little, but time-consuming *good works* before I left the “work-force.” I resented every phone call to chat, even if it could have been a divinely appointed opportunity to help a sister or (God help me) to reach out to a neighbor. I worked 40 to 60 hours a week and was very important to those I served. But I never felt I had the time to say an extra long hello to the grocer clerk or give her an encouraging word from the Lord. I never took that extra half hour or so to stop over next door and see how they were doing; or take time out to visit the sick. Lord, help us; how are we going to visit the sick if we are too busy? I was too busy to LOVE people!

But now at long last (thank God for His work in my life), after recently seeing a need, I organized a neighborhood “covered dish.” At first there were mixed responses. But after the first time even the estranged bachelor in the neighborhood, who took a bit of coaxing . . . was the *first* to volunteer for the next get together. People were literally *starved* for what the modern world has kept from them: “back-porch Christianity,” *time to get to know your neighbors!* I need to say it again. People are *starved* for love, God’s love through His people. This is forgotten evangelism. It could seem impossible that in this day of so much affluence, such a thing could be left out. But it is. *Hands on and touch* is missing. The *woman’s touch* is missing for it has been stolen from the church! Women, can we hear the Holy Spirit even now?

That’s what women are made for—little things, compassionate, supportive, *absolutely essential*, hands-on caring things . . . That’s who we are in Christ; or better, who He is in us! There are many creatively different ways, but the same underlying current. The value of womanhood! We are more sensitive to others because He made us to be like Him in that. We can’t rest until we help others.

I would rather not have any other material improvement to my home. I am willing to make do with what I already have, than have my husband spend hours and hours of his time at work making money to provide for such things. I prefer less, enabling him to spend more and more time doing service and work for the church and for the Lord. *I believe the Lord*

would have all of us spend less time and money on ourselves and spend that time on effort towards His goals, His agendas.

“You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away, Why?” says the Lord of Hosts, “Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house.” (Haggai 1:9)

It can't be emphasized enough. O that we (men and women combined) would give up seeking financial gain and instead take a lesser job that would give us less money but more time towards developing His goals in the church and His kingdom. It is wise to stop buying things that eventually end up outdated, unused and in a garage sale! I know of a church that has covenanted together to do so. They are taking less advancements financially in order to have more time for the Lord's work. Just like the fishermen Jesus called away from their nets! What Kingdom advances would we have to make to hear Him say, “Well done, my good and faithful servant?”

Women need not give up their jobs. Nevertheless, we *have* to remember what we have overlooked. The godly wife described in Proverbs 31 shows that you can work beyond the basic home structure and still have a heart to undergird your family's needs. This woman does it all! (Not many of us are like her.) We don't have to do it all, but *we can decide* to include time for the kids, time for the husband, time for the neighbor, and not to forget, time to meditate with the Lord. Perhaps it is not the amount of time that's so important as much as—by the wisdom of the Lord, ingeniously, creatively, miraculously—*good works* from a good heart. We can do it all in Him and redeem what was stolen.

Learn to shop wisely. Learn when and where the sales are. Don't necessarily shop at Christmas time when prices are high. Think ahead. Don't throw out torn clothing. Learn to sew a hem, fix a tear and mend. Maintain a piece of furniture: keep it clean; paint the old; or perhaps reupholster; know the value of glue. Check yard sales and the Salvation Army. Use magic markers, stain sticks for faded spots; be creative. Do with an old car and save for the future. We don't have to have the latest. Ignore the marketing that wants you to keep up with the Jones'. If you don't see it, you won't feed it. If you don't feed it, you won't need it.

There are gifts of the Spirit to be released to the church, gifts of healing, miracles, etc. Let us have faith and pay the price necessary to exercise them. Don't give into the marketing trends. Be a Christian, embracing the cross!

Finally, I urge all of us to realize the *superb power* in compassion and good works, and how work outside the home (because of materialism)

has stolen so much from the body of Christ. Let us diligently aspire to do and be all that we are called to in Him.

Now gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops . . . (Micah 5: 1)

The most powerful army of all is His army of LOVE! The gates of hell cannot prevail. In Christ, our Lord! Amen.



Epilogue:

In President George W. Bush’s Inaugural (January 2001), Franklin Graham, having been asked to pray, stood to the podium and asked forgiveness from God for America’s sin of “Materialism.”