

created to be
More Than
Cinderella



understanding biblical womanhood

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Introduction

Hi!

Thanks for downloading my ebook! I hope you are being blessed by this fall's Homeschool Summit. I'm Lucille Stekl and my blog is Life Well Inspired. Way back in 2012, God put the idea for the blog on my heart and I began to understand why I always loved writing. So, humbled by His request, I began blogging out of obedience. I had no idea how much I would grow as a person by sharing what I was learning through reading and studying God's word. It has been an incredible experience and one that has changed me.

One of the biggest catalysts of change in my life was having a child diagnosed with auditory processing disorder. Early on we had him in school but brought him home and began homeschooling when he was in 3rd grade. Both the years in school and then the years at home have been challenging.

Homeschooling family relationships are wonderful but they can also be incredibly difficult. I'm sharing some of my story here and it is my prayer that God uses this ebook to encourage other families traveling a similar road.

Thanks for downloading! Enjoy!

Inspired by Him,

Lucille

Chapter I

Hey Cinderella!

Ever feel like Cinderella? Work all day doing the same things then repeat the next day, and the next and the next? Do you find yourself chasing the end of the to-do list before doing something fun (going to the ball) only to have more and more responsibilities pile up?

I often found myself feeling like Cinderella while in the throes of raising littles and keeping the house. All too often, I have chased the end of my to-do list too many times, only to find myself exhausted and sporting a bad attitude.

Too many times I fought against losing myself and tried to talk myself into believing the theology that made motherhood and marriage my identity now that I had kiddos.

But God.

I think that might be my favorite phrase. God is always holding us while we wrestle with hard things and never letting go of us. He keeps drawing us close and showing us His heart, His plan for us. So many times, it doesn't line up with the ideas of the family and friends around us. Yet, he redeems and renews the impossible situations we face.

God gently began showing me who I was in Him and the purpose for which He created me. He opened my eyes to see that trying to make an identity out of one of my roles was wrong. That was never what He intended. Trying to find my identity in the role of wife and mom only led me to a barren wasteland. Seeking to please my husband instead of seeking God only led me to burnout.

Oh, it's a slippery slope and a path that's not well marked. It's so easy to lose our way if we don't keep our focus on Christ. But if we listen for the still small voice and the Holy Spirit's guidance, He will lead us to fulfill the purposes for which He created us.

Physical growth and development land us at physical womanhood, but we must reach another phase- Biblical womanhood. It is a place where we live surrendered to God and His plan for our life, a place where we are fulfilling the plans. He has for us, doing

the things he created us to do. It's a place where we are walking with Him and in a relationship with Him.

It's the place where our barren wasteland becomes fertile and abundant, where our striving gives way to trust. Not that we won't struggle or walk in our humanness. But there is a sweetness and safety in our relationship with Him.

Chapter 2

Restoring Barren Wasteland

Many times in the Bible, there are mentions of barrenness and wasteland. Often, the holy land would turn into a wasteland after the Israelite people were exiled, only to have abundance and fertility restored once they returned to the Lord and moved back to Jerusalem. That reminds me of the passage in Isaiah 43:

"Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

Isaiah 43:18-19

The Lord gave me this verse when we were struggling with my oldest and contemplating homeschooling. It's a promise I have hung on to and one that He brings back to mind every so often. Back then, I thought it meant things were going to drastically improve that first year. I foolishly thought homeschooling would be our savior.

Since then, I've learned just how wrong that thinking was. God's promises are usually not experienced quickly, and healing is often a journey, but spiritual growth takes place within that journey and allows us to experience those promises.

Scrolling through Facebook recently, a picture caught my attention. It was a desert with Isaiah 43: 18-19 on it. God reminded me of His promise to restore my family, but He also deepened my understanding. There are no streams of water in the desert. Yet God promises to make that happen. As I looked at that image and verse together, my mind shifted from my family to the promised land today. It once held fertile cropland and vineyards, but it is barren and desert-like now.

The Bible says that's the result of the falling away from Him. That cycle repeatedly happened as the Israelite people would turn away from God, end up in captivity, and stop tending to the ground God had given them. And just as he allowed the land to become a wasteland, so he would restore its fertility and abundance once His people came back to Him.

There is a permaculture project in the desert where someone created a lush garden in the middle of the desert within a couple of years. Sandy desolation for miles around, and yet fertility was there all along, able to be restored. Our lives are like that as well.

Sometimes winter seasons in our lives feel like barren wastelands. We women often get past the beginning of motherhood and realize we are not what we once were. It can feel like we've lost ourselves and our way, no longer in touch with our passions and talents because we have stopped using them. Who God made you to be got lost among the tasks and responsibilities of the early years. It's not a pleasant place to be. That's where I experienced identifying with Cinderella.

Just like the oasis created in the middle of the desert, the restoration of our own souls takes time. It also takes effort on our part. We have a part to play in our restoration, just like someone had to take the time to amend the soil, water the ground, plant the seeds, prune and care for the plants. The restored parcel of the desert didn't become a fertile oasis overnight. It didn't magically appear. It took learning, knowledge, understanding, effort, and hard work.

We often want our restoration to just happen instantaneously, like a miracle, but it doesn't. Instead, it's a journey of growth. Just as development occurs with a child over time, our own maturity takes time to fully develop.

Our journey into maturity doesn't just stop with womanhood as we step into our 20's and 30's typically adding in the roles of wife and mom. Instead, it continues to another destination: biblical womanhood. It is here that we find ourselves after we have been restored and renewed by God himself.

It is here the pendulum evens out. Our lives are like a swinging pendulum in a lot of ways. We first start to one side, self-focused as we grow up and develop who we are. Then our pendulum swings to the other side as we step into being a wife and mom as we seemingly forget who we are while we selflessly care for our husband and kids. But as we continue maturing and growing in our faith, the pendulum settles back to center as God restores us by merging what developed as we grew up with the person we became raising our family. Both sides are necessary to reach biblical womanhood.

We realize that our barren wasteland served a purpose. And we definitely are not ruined. Not even close! It was the chrysalis phase of our transformation into biblical womanhood.

Chapter 3

So What is Biblical Womanhood?

Biblical womanhood is the place a woman reaches after the fiery trials that God uses to renew and restore her. Restoration brings her to total surrender to God, and she desires His will over hers. Therefore, she seeks to do only those things God created her to accomplish and willingly walks away from anything not in God's plan.

Instead of focusing on the never-ending to-do list, she has developed the mindset of keeping her focus on Jesus, living Spirit-led. It is from this place that she can fulfill her God-given duties and become a Proverbs 31 woman. The more I study and grow in the Lord, the more I'm convinced that the Proverbs 31 woman is a template, a guideline showing us the areas in a woman's life where she can excel.

Biblical womanhood is the result of God's hand on a woman's life. She has heard God's call, specific to her, and is walking in the fullness of who God created her to be. Not perfectly, though, because we don't reach perfection on this side of Heaven.

It starts with repentance. When we genuinely repent and fully surrender our hearts to Him, God begins the process of shaping and molding us. A lot of times, this ends up running against the norms and conservative theology. But I've discovered for myself that we're looking at biblical womanhood all wrong!

Boy, have we been duped. Somewhere along the line, womanhood has become a list of things to do and roles to fill. We graduate high school thrilled for our freedom and excited to take our place at the table of adulthood. Maybe that looks like our first real job or independent learning on our own at college. Our first experience with roles and the to-do list is exciting, fulfilling even. Finally, we are managing our own lives, giving attention to our passions and interests. We add a special someone to our life and girlfriend to our roles list. Love makes it easy to handle friend, daughter, girlfriend, and student or employee. Sometimes it feels hard, but we can rebalance quickly.

But then there's a tipping point and our freedom becomes our prison. The list of responsibilities expands as we take on more significant roles. First, we become a wife, then a mom, all while juggling our own identity. At some point, we start to crumble and find ourselves questioning who we are and who God created us to be.

My journey took me on a quest to find the best way to manage all the things to fit them all in. Unfortunately, I spent so many years striving, and I completely missed the mark. I bet your story has a familiar ring.

In their book *Captivating, Unveiling the Mystery of the Woman's Soul*, John and Stasi Eldridge pull back the curtain on the devil's incredible work in deceiving the woman. He's still offended, as a beautiful angel losing his beauty and place while beauty still characterizes women.

The Bible says that those who seek will find. That promise is true. God brought me to a crisis of identity. As I began seeking God's will for my life, it became evident that there was a more significant issue than just managing myself or my time better. The answer wasn't in my actions or what I could do at all.

I found the answer in Matthew 11:28, where Jesus says, "Come to me all you who are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest." Oh, how I wrestled with that verse for months and months. Its meaning escaped me, and I sure didn't feel rested. In some ways, I still don't fully understand it. Maybe it will take a lifetime to understand. But, the striving of my heart and mind continually imprisons me.

When we come to Jesus, we find rest in embracing who He made us to be. It's not about our actions- what we do or how we dress. Biblical womanhood is about first losing yourself in Jesus. It's about letting Him show you who He made you to be and then following His lead. Everything will fall into place when we seek Him and follow Him with our whole hearts. Psalm 119:105 tells us His word will be the light to our path. We read in Isaiah 30:21 that His voice will instruct us which way to go.

When we see Jesus as our shepherd, the one who will lovingly protect and guide us, we find many blessings. I love how Stasi Eldridge puts it:

"Instead of focusing on our actions and the doing, instead of fretting over the how and the what, we need to be focused on losing ourselves more and more in the Lord. He will lead us into our calling as we do so but our first calling is to be God's daughter. He will then light the path before us and direct us in the way we should go. He will open doors, orchestrate opportunities, prick our heart with compassion, and light the fires of passion. Motivation, inspiration, and productivity are blessings from approaching biblical womanhood appropriately."

That was a foreign concept to me, an idea that totally shifted my perspective. It was

time to trade in my striving for seeking God. Mastering the to-do list wasn't serving me while throwing myself wholly and entirely into my roles was exhausting me. Even when I practiced the Sabbath, rest eluded me. I was in a complete and utter mess.

God, in His goodness, began gently leading me out of the pit I had found myself in. It was all justifiable by the world's standards. My first child was very challenging, and I spent most of my motherhood trying to help him. While nothing was diagnosably wrong, the chaos and trauma were still present just the same. There was much to learning and growth in the journey, but the striving just about wrecked me.

In some ways, it did, if I'm honest. I didn't do it in my own strength. I spent a lot of time praying, asking God for direction, and acting on the information he sent me. I stand in awe as I look back and see how God provided everything right when I needed it. But I somehow missed something, and the result was a burned-out, exhausted shell of a person who had lost sight of who God had made me to be.

From the world's perspective, I had done the right thing. Giving up all to pour into my son and my kids was what I should have done. Even the professionals at school said there weren't many moms who would do what I had done. But I found that where motherhood took so much, I had less to give in other areas.

Balance isn't giving everything equal time and energy but rather adjusting to the season. Each season will require more of us in some areas, which naturally will mean less of us in others. When motherhood requires more, friends or our own interests may get less. When motherhood responsibilities shrink some, our marriages may get a boost. Balance is a give and take.

In all honesty, I wouldn't do anything different in action. I wholeheartedly believe God called me to pour myself out for my son. He gave him to me for a purpose- I am exactly the right person to be his mama. He also orchestrated my motherhood journey to be one that taught me to submit to the Lord and His will in my life. My journey required me to pour myself out for someone else before the Lord.

But I forgot my first calling. I forgot that my first calling was pursuing who I was as God's daughter. Maybe it wasn't that I forgot. I had never heard that my passions and interests were a part of who I was as God's daughter. So somewhere along the line, I started believing the lie that those things didn't matter once I became a mother.

What a devastating lie!

Where I went wrong was in the attitude of my heart. I didn't have an authentic relationship with the Lord when I became a mom. I grew up in a Christian home and always attended church. I knew what to say and do as well as what not to say and do, but at that point, it was all head knowledge. I was still living in my parent's faith until it became my own.

One evening my hubby was working late. So after putting the baby to bed, I picked up an old Pamphlet called When God Saved a Baptist Preacher. I saw myself in his story- a person living the Christian life without actually having a personal relationship with God himself. The Lord touched my heart in those moments, and I could tangibly feel my head knowledge settle in my heart. It was a moment I will never forget, and it marked the beginning of my walking in my identity as a daughter of the King.

Chapter 4

Walking in Our Identity

In I Chronicles 10-14, we read about when David started walking in his identity as king. Of course, he had known for years that he was going to be king, much like I had lived my life calling myself a Christian. But when King Saul was killed in battle, it became time to start walking in that identity. That made life take on a whole new meaning for him.

David went from being a fugitive to reigning as King. From the outside looking in, it appears the abuse and oppression he endured at King Saul's hand was unfair. But make no mistake, it was all part of the maturity process that shaped him into the man who would be able to handle the responsibilities as King.

David needed to endure the abusive oppression to become the King that God created him to be. If he had given up and started a more uncomplicated life somewhere else, he would have missed out on incredible blessings. He wouldn't have had the deep relationship with God he is known for, and more importantly, he wouldn't have become King.

The same was true for Joseph and his journey from slavery into leadership in Egypt. Like David, he endured oppression and abuse, which refined him and opened the door to be the pharaoh's second command and save countless people's lives.

And the same is true for us. The process of maturing is painful, uncomfortable, and often unfair. We will experience oppression and abuse as God refines and prepares us to do His heavenly assignments.

Often through abuse, oppression, and unfair circumstances, we learn to die to self, surrender ourselves fully to the Lord, and discover our true identity. Like a butterfly who emerges from a caterpillar, we emerge into biblical womanhood after a process that transforms us from being worldly-minded and self-focused to heavenly-minded and others-focused.

This transformation happens at different times for each of us. Some people begin this process early, while others start much later in life. Most people start it somewhere in

between. Each journey of transformation is different, but it always happens in God's timing.

The beauty of this transformation is that we begin seeking more of God. He gives us a thirst for Him. We find our true identity when we lose ourselves in Him. He will work everything else out. He will repay the evil that we have endured. Like Mary, we need to be sitting at His feet and see that thirst as the most significant piece.

Our journey into biblical womanhood begins when we seek more of God and care for ourselves because we finally realize our worth in Him. Here we find the end of our striving and the beginning of living a Spirit-led life. It is from here that we begin to follow where he leads, set boundaries to protect ourselves, and begin to focus on what Ephesians 2:10 calls the "good works which God prepared in advance for us to do." These good works always involve loving ourselves and the people around us.

In an explosion of clarity, God begins to show us where our purpose, identity, passions, talents, gifts, and roles blend and how they all fit together. He lovingly guides us where we lost our way and restores things that life's circumstances took from us.

The journey into Biblical womanhood becomes our rescue story. It is truly a process of rescue, restoration, and renewal. We enter it as run-of-the-mill caterpillars, hungry and weary, emerging into biblical womanhood as butterflies- beautiful, empowered women walking in who God created us to be.

Chapter 5

Created to be Beautifully Complex

Our identity is complex as women. I used to envy men because they grew up and found a job within their passions and talents, which didn't change unless they wanted it to change. Sure, they usually add the role of father in there, but their focus is their career. Most men seem to have no problem maintaining their hobbies and friends. Women, on the other hand, are often taken over by motherhood. We seem to lose our passions, friends, hobbies, talents, and anything else we identified with pre-motherhood.

We must remember that God created us to have different roles play center stage during different seasons of our lives. That complexity is the beauty of a woman. That is part of how God made us and His calling on our lives.

Do you believe that raising children is part of the good works God has prepared in advance for you to do? If God blessed you with children, then there's no question there.

Do you believe that keeping your home is part of the good works God has prepared for you to do? If you have a place of your own, then I'd say that's something God prepared in advance for you to do. God is a God of order, and as we seek Him, we will become people of order, too.

Keeping the home and raising children are not just menial tasks but are incredible ministries God calls us to do. Those are part of the good works God prepared in advance for us to accomplish. What higher calling and purpose could we have? We have the unique ability to bring peace and refreshment to our family. We have a responsibility to spur them on to encourage them in their walk with the Lord.

Do you believe there's a place in the church for you to serve? God has given us each a spiritual gift that he has prepared in advance for us to use. He's counting on us to walk with Him and use our spiritual gifts for His glory and advancement of the gospel.

Philippians 2:4 says, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." God did not call us to be self-focused with our gifts, talents, interests, and passions. Instead, God gave them to us to use to encourage other Christians and advance the gospel. God intended that we would use our identity in

Christ as daughters of the King to accomplish the good works that He had prepared in advance for us to do.

One day we will stand before God and give an account of our lives. On that day, he will hold us responsible for the things we did and didn't do. I don't know about you, but when I get to Heaven, I don't want to have missed anything God had for me. One day we will stand before God and give an account of our lives. On that day, he will hold us responsible for the things we did and didn't do. I don't know about you, but when I get to Heaven, I don't want to have missed anything God had for me.

In Matthew, Jesus speaks of the ten talents. And there is a lesson there for all of us. While it was a currency in Jesus' day and we can apply it to money, we can also apply talents to the gifts and talents God has given us. In the parable, the men who received the talents were judged on how they invested the talents the master had given them before he left. One invested them all and earned a significant return. Another invested, but not as bravely, and he made a smaller return. The third buried his talents in the ground and gained nothing. He simply returned the talents when the master returned.

How does that apply to us? What if we viewed the talents not as money but as the strengths, talents, and gifts God has given each of us? We have been created uniquely and fill a place only we can occupy in this world. We have a life story, point of view, and experience that no one else has. And we have a different circle of acquaintances unique to us as well. That means that the good works God prepared for us in advance for us to do are specific to all of that.

Once we have arrived at Biblical womanhood and are fully surrendered to God, seeking to do what God has created us to do, we will find we have earned that 10-fold increase on the talents God gave us.

If we live in the shadows of the fear of man in an identity crisis of sorts and only live half surrendered to the Lord, we will be like the man who only received a 5x return on the talents he was given.

Sadly, some women will live a self-centered life and miss the mark entirely, not using their talents for the Lord and will not earn a return on them at all. Instead, they will find them taken away from them.

So how does this all get applied to us?

We are responsible for becoming who God created us to be. The person who developed through childhood, all the interests, passions, and things we naturally excel at and are internally motivated to learn about all play a part in our identity. That requires surrender to the Lord and allowing Him to show us where the middle of the pendulum is for our purpose. We can't do that in our own will. Our identity isn't in our roles like daughter, wife, mother, relationships, or employee. Those things are essential pieces of our life, but they don't define us. They aren't who we are.

One of the first questions in the catechism is "What is the chief end of man?" Its answer is to glorify God and love him forever. Loving God is the key to us doing His will and ultimately glorifying God. We can trust Him with all the tasks and to-do lists when we are seeking Him first. Seeking Him keeps us in the center of His will.

Interestingly, whenever the Bible mentions the will of God, it involves our hearts and minds being focused on Him. I don't believe the paths of our lives should be the focus of our seeking. God will show us the way when we are seeking Him. It requires us to become less self-focused because this life is not about us.

Biblical womanhood is really about spiritual maturity. It is about us reaching the point in our lives that we see the world through the lens of serving others for the cause of the gospel.

At the same time, we are aware of our boundaries and become clear on what we can and cannot control and what we are and aren't responsible for. Boundaries protect our identity and keep our roles from defining us. When we choose to find our identity in a role we play, we quench the Holy Spirit as we end up ignoring his leading.

Philippians 2:4 says, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." In Matthew 22:39, Jesus tells us, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." At first glance these verses appear to be instructing us how to treat and view others, but they also quietly speak of how we should treat ourselves.

We are usually very aware of the importance of caring for ourselves. The Bible says we are to love others as we love ourselves. So often, people use that verse to guilt us into giving more of ourselves in the name of service. But how often do we consider how we think about and care for ourselves. That verse provides the framework for balance.

How can we love others as we love ourselves if we don't show ourselves any grace or love at all?

I believe this is more of a stewardship issue than an excuse for pampering and selfish me-time. Loving our bodies means giving ourselves nourishing food, exercise and movement, sunshine, regular periods of rest, and most importantly, building in times for prayer and Bible study. We can't give what we haven't received. I'm not in any way saying a day at the spa is wrong or going to get a mani/pedi is wrong. It's not. But let's be careful to keep our attitudes glorifying God while we seek refreshment. The purpose should be a rejuvenation so that we can continue pursuing God's will, not just to feel good.

When we get the balance right and walk in spiritual maturity, seeking God's will for our lives, we will find ourselves enjoying our work with a joyful attitude. Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 says "I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live. Also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man."

It all comes down to our motivation. Are we motivated by ourselves and some worldly care or God? Self-fulfillment or a furthering of the gospel?

In a devotional from *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers writes, "If our devotion is to the cause of humanity, we will be quickly defeated and broken-hearted since we will often be confronted with a great deal of ingratitude from other people. But if we are motivated by our love for God, no amount of ingratitude will be able to hinder us from serving one another."

This mindset shifts in us by the hand of God as we progress into biblical womanhood. It is only the work of God in our lives that radically changes our hearts and our perspective.

As women, we are bombarded with advice to put our husbands and kids first, to make our lives solely about them. Conservative Christian circles often encourage women to give up the things of their own interests to raise their family, justifying it by saying you can pick them back up after you have raised the kids.

I tried my hardest to accept and live out that theology because my parents taught me the same thing. But it left me restless and sad. Finally, the Lord led me to understand that finding our identity in one of our roles is making an idol of it. He did not make us mother or wife. God made us our own person, developed our gifts and talents as we grew up, and then asked us to be our husband's wife and our children's mom. Wife

and Mom are roles added to who He already created and developed us to be.

Biblical womanhood calls us to embrace it all but find the balance between them. It calls us to let the Holy Spirit lead us and show us how much of each area is present in each stage of life.

Chapter 6

The Role of Wife

The role of a wife is often the first role outside of ourselves that is added to our life and expands our to-do list. It is deceptively easy at first because we are so in love with the idealistic romantic version in mind. Affection for our husband naturally happens as we make a new life together. So it's not too much of a stretch to care for the one we love.

As time goes on, as the rose-colored glasses come off, we find ourselves in the reality of day-to-day tasks like dishes and laundry. Our best side comes out less and less. Love shifts away from Eros love towards agape love. It takes intention and effort to keep the relationship healthy. Love becomes a choice we make rather than responding to a feeling we have.

Marriage is more spiritual than we realize when we first choose that path. In reality, it's symbolic of Christ's relationship with the church. And one of the more significant purposes of marriage is to mature us in our faith. It sure does if we let it.

For the woman who values her marriage and is growing in her faith, the shift in love prompts studying of Proverbs 31 and other passages that offer instruction on how to be a good woman and wife. It is at this point where the striving begins.

It took me over 16 years for God to rescue me from my striving. I read and studied and kept trying to conquer my to-do list while spending countless hours researching how to be a godly woman, manage my time well, and efficiently manage my household. New techniques and perspectives promised to solve the problem if I just did them correctly.

Eventually, God allowed circumstances in my life to bring my search to my identity in Him. But, who did God create me to be? What did God really think and expect of women? I had a sneaking suspicion that my understanding was incorrect. One of the first things I learned was that motherhood and being a wife are roles we play, not our identity. Forsaking who we are and who God made us to be, what we developed in our growing up years, to make being a wife and mother our identity, is to make idols of those roles.

They are essential roles and sacred callings. There's no question about that. If God has

called us to those roles, we must make them a priority. But we must still remember that they are not our identity. The truth is that our dreams, passions, and talents will make us better wives and mothers. We will find that staying in touch with them will help us avoid burnout. I will be bold enough to say that I believe Satan loves it when women get this mixed up. It's a common trap that I bet every woman falls into at one time or another. We aren't our best or living out our entire purpose when we get our identity and roles mixed up and out of balance.

That's not to say that we will give them equal play. Balance doesn't mean equal. Go back to math class with me for a minute. Picture a balance with the two trays, one on either side. Remember how we had to make them balanced with different weights on each side? For example, one side might have a 25oz block, a 50oz block, a 10oz block, and a 15 oz block. The other side would contain a 60oz block, a 20oz block, and two 10oz blocks. Each side had different weight blocks, but the balance remained equal as each side contained a total of 100oz. Our life is a lot like that.

We begin with having it all for ourselves as we grow up and develop who God made us to be. Next, we learn to balance our interests and passions that eventually lead to our career path with our roles as daughter and friend. Then, for some, God calls us to the role of being a wife and adds motherhood.

As the seasons of our life come and go, it will look a lot like the balance scales. Career, passions and interests, motherhood, and being a wife will take up different amounts of time and energy. Giving every role equal parts of ourselves isn't realistic. That's why there's maternity leave right after the birth of a baby, a honeymoon right after a wedding. There will be way more weight allotted to motherhood than career and being a wife in the first two years after having a baby just because of the needs of an infant.

Motherhood is indeed going to take a lot of time and energy during that season. And other things will naturally have smaller amounts of our time and focus. But that does not mean that we give up who God made us to be. We can't trade our identity to identify solely as one of the roles God gave us.

Rest and refreshment will come in the forms of our passions, interests, and talents, whatever they may be. This concept will look different for every woman. Please don't believe the lie that we should give up everything to be a wife and a mom. It's a commonly accepted theology in conservative circles. Recognize it, call it out, and replace it with Ephesians 2:10: "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Both sides of our family believed that a woman should give up everything about herself to raise her family, that she would use her natural passions, to raise her family, that she would use her natural passions, talents, and gifts later. And yet, here I was wrestling with being a wife, motherhood, and God's call on my life to blog with a strong desire to bring my business online. I was perplexed and conflicted.

I couldn't deny the question any longer. Who did God make me to be? I had reached womanhood, obviously- I was pushing 40 with a husband and four kids. But there had to be some answers for my restless soul. Then God opened my eyes to Biblical womanhood.

I began to understand that it wasn't in the striving. Striving makes us tired and is a cruel taskmaster. When Jesus says his burden is easy and His yoke is light, He's offering us a life free from striving. When He says to cast all our cares on Him, it's because He doesn't intend for us to carry the heavy burden of life.

As I began studying biblical womanhood and who I was in Christ, I was surprised when I came face to face with my sexuality and was amazed to discover that sex is a significant piece in the marriage relationship. I realized that it didn't matter how well I kept the house or how behaved the kids were. God showed me that taking care of a husband's sexual needs should be a high priority in marriage. And it's for the sake of both spouses. Both husband and wife benefit from it.

Dr. Kevin Lehman, in his book *Sheet Music*, discloses that when a husband and wife are both sexually satisfied, everything else seems to fall into place. He has found that it grounds and settles the kids and makes both spouses the best versions of themselves. All of that will positively overflow into careers and work. Yet, for some reason, surrendering this part of our lives is probably the hardest thing to relinquish. I believe the difficulty of surrender here is more of a spiritual battle because Satan knows the impact of honoring God in this area. He can't take our salvation, but he can immobilize us and keep us from moving forward in our maturity.

This concept may also be the most challenging part of biblical womanhood to embrace. As we grow closer to the Lord, we lose our focus on ourselves. Yet, it's a miracle that God does within us the longer we walk with Him.

This doesn't mean that the wife never gets to say no or not tonight and is at her husband's beck and call regardless of how she's feeling. This concept will look different

through the various seasons of life and it's a very delicate topic. It is also an area where abuse can be present even in marriage. While the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 4:7 that our bodies belong to our spouse, it also speaks of mutual decision and respect.

Don't be afraid to seek counsel if you are struggling in this area for any reason or if this verse is being used to force you into intimacy. Spiritual and sexual abuse may happen within marriage and it is not what the Lord intended.

Marriage is also an area where striving can rear its ugly head. I fell prey to the lie that I needed to keep the house a certain way, serve specific foods, etc., to keep my hubby happy. But God gently showed me that I needed to seek to please Him and that I wasn't responsible for my hubby's happiness. That was outside of my boundary. That revelation made such a difference for me. I no longer took bad moods to heart or took things personally for the most part.

As biblical women, we must be seeking the Lord for understanding in the areas of boundaries and prayerfully looking to please our heavenly Father.

Chapter 7

Motherhood is a Role, too

I have yet to find a passage of scripture that puts motherhood in the position of utmost priority. In fact, in the famous Proverbs 31 chapter, children are only mentioned once, and that's when they call her blessed. The Hebrew word used for blessed means happy. So her children had a happy mother.

Interestingly, there's not much in the Bible that speaks specifically about motherhood. There aren't any passages that give us rules or do and do not lists. So I'm not sure why Christian women have put such restrictions and "thou should's" to it. It reminds me of the way the Jewish Rabbis twisted and added to the Sabbath commandment.

God gives us children, and we are to raise them, but there aren't any verses specifically written to mothers. Instead, there is a handful of verses written as instruction to fathers.

If you look up the word "mother" in a concordance, you will find that it is simply used to label a woman who has given birth to a child or an idea. Eve is the mother of the living, and Deborah is the mother to Israel using the Hebrew word "'em." 'Gebiyrah' is a Hebrew word used to describe the queen as a mother of the nation.

There are a few passages that mention the roles mothers play. For example, proverbs 6:20 speaks of a mother's teaching, and Isaiah 66:14 speaks of a mother's comfort. But as far as I can tell, a woman's purpose and identity are not canceled by motherhood. In fact, in Proverbs 31, her value is in her character and her actions. The passage mentions children only to show she is happy.

Now I'm not saying that to gives us the right to abandon our responsibilities as moms. It's not permission to hand your kids off to someone and pursue your own interests. But I say that to counter the conservative view that a woman's life is supposed to stop and completely change once she becomes a mom.

Our pastor once addressed the black, white, and grey areas within the Bible. He wisely preached that there are very few black and white things in the Bible but many grey areas. These grey areas are areas God wants us to seek him and search for His will for

us. He will convict us and lead us all differently according to the purposes for which He created us. He will give us our black and white in the grey areas, and it will likely look different from those around us.

So when it comes down to motherhood and how we live out that role in our own lives, we need to seek God for direction and carefully follow His lead. He will lead some of us to full-time motherhood. Others he will call full-time to the workforce. Most of us, however, will find ourselves somewhere in the middle. No way is right or wrong. What is wrong is not doing what God calls us to do.

Motherhood is an ever-changing role. We desperately need God's direction for each transition and change. The stages of infancy, toddlerhood, preschool, elementary school, middle school, and high school all have different landscapes, and each one requires different things.

The woman who has reached Biblical womanhood will live surrendered to God's will and she will desire to do the things God created her to do. But this will always involve motherhood duties and tasks if He has blessed her with a child or children. And when there are kids in the home, motherhood will hold greater weight in the balance of our roles.

Motherhood encompasses the directive to minister to the poor and feed the hungry, fulfilling the promise in Isaiah 58:10. So we live out the great commission in Matthew 28:19-20 when we see our role as motherhood as one of a missionary sent to our family.

Chapter 8

Marks of Biblical Womanhood

I read somewhere that a lot of the global oppression of women is a spiritual one because of a woman's beauty. Satan, once the most beautiful angel in Heaven, has been banished. He will never step foot in Heaven again, and God removed his beauty. Because of this, he tries to destroy beauty out of spite. Satan's jealousy is what fuels the intense persecution of women.

As believers, Satan can't touch us. Jesus already won the battle, and we only need to stand firm and resist. But make no mistake, there will be a battle.

The battle is in how others make us feel and how we think about ourselves. We will fight for our identity and get sidetracked by marriage and motherhood, tempted to find our identity in other things than in who God created us to be. He'll make us doubt by asking us if God really said that to us. He'll tell us we're not good enough. Problems will arise that consume our time and keep us from exercising our God-given gifts and talents. He'll work through our spouses and family members when we don't feel their support.

But God.

There's that phrase again! He has a counter to every lie the devil whispers at us. Part of the journey to Biblical womanhood is learning to discern the work of the devil as we begin to hear the promptings of the Holy Spirit and begin to live spirit-led lives.

Sometimes a person close to me will say something hurtful, but I understand that they aren't the one saying those things to me. It's surreal to have the gift of discernment in the moment, and I am always amazed at how un-offended I feel. You will notice little things like that, too, as you move further on into your journey of maturing to Biblical womanhood.

One of the most important things the Lord shows us as we move into maturity is that we are individuals within the body and are individually responsible for our lives. Therefore, we answer to the Lord first and foremost. Oswald Chambers warns us: "Where does Jesus Christ figure in when we have a concern about our natural

relationships? Most of us will desert Him with this excuse— "Yes, Lord, I heard you call me, but my family needs me and I have my own interests. I just can't go any further" (see Luke 9:57-62). "Then," Jesus says, "you 'cannot be My disciple'" (see Luke 14:26-33).me, but my family needs me and I have my own interests. I just can't go any further" (see Luke 9:57-62). "Then," Jesus says, "you 'cannot be My disciple'" (see Luke 14:26-33).

Interestingly, Jesus said a true disciple of Christ is willing to leave their family and their interests. However, Jesus has some harsh words in Luke 9 and 14 about the person who puts family above Him.

Loving Jesus above everyone and anything else is a trait of a woman who has reached biblical womanhood. She is bold and brave to follow the Lord wherever He leads her. She is living out Romans 12:2, which says: "Do not allow this world to mold you in its own image. Instead, be transformed from the inside out by renewing your mind. As a result, you will be able to discern what God wills and whatever God finds good, pleasing, and complete."

Another mark of a woman who has reached biblical womanhood is that she spends time studying God's word and in prayer. The world does not mold her because she renews her mind with God's word. Living this out often looks like her life is in contrast to those around her. She might not even fit into the Christian circles around her.

Over time, as we mature, we will notice a new heart within us. We will see we respond differently, and we have a different perspective as we view the world around us. We will identify with the words of Ezekiel in Ezekiel 36:26 (TLB)- "And I will give you a new heart –I will give you new and right desires—and put a new spirit within you. I will take out your stony hearts of sin and give you new hearts of love. This change from stony to new isn't always automatic when we come to faith. I've noticed it's been a gradual change for me, and I still have room for more softening.

Just as Christ died to sin but lived His life for God, so we, once dead to sin at conversion, mature to a place where we live our lives to God. Our agenda, desires, intentions, and plans are replaced or redirected with God's purpose. That is biblical womanhood at its finest.

Scripture gives us a few verses that give us a beautiful picture of the result of maturing to biblical womanhood. We're to fix our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2). As we do, we find that God is able to bless us abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that

we need, we will abound in every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:8). God promises that before we call, He will answer; while we are still speaking, He will hear us. (Isaiah 65:24). God will also meet all our needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19) We can count on those beautiful truths that we find to be true after we have walked through the trials that brought us to biblical womanhood.

Thankfully there was more to Cinderella’s story than a maid with a never-ending to-do list. We are princesses as daughters of the King who has laid out an incredible plan for our life.

The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever.
Psalm 138:8



Author Bio

Lucille Stekl lives in Western New York with her husband Brian and their 4 kids who range from 3-15 years old. Raised in a conservative Christian home, she cherishes studying scripture and growing in her faith. She has been blogging at lifewellinspired.com since 2012 and enjoys sharing what she learns from her personal bible study time and encouraging other women to grow in the Lord. You can find her homeschooling her kids, gardening, or tackling a home project.