

THE LEGACY
of
BIBLICAL
WOMANHOOD

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Foreword

Centered around the motif of the covenant, Susan Hunt and Barbara Thompson have written a book for women and about women. This book underscores and personalizes a scheme set forth a number of years ago by the New Testament scholar William Hendriksen in his book entitled *The Covenant of Grace*. Hendriksen wrote, “The doctrine of the covenant of grace is of great practical significance. If we rightly grasp it, it will influence all of thought, word, and deed.”

You will not miss the book’s intention to say clearly and practically that the idea of the covenant is not just a part of biblical theology to be believed. As with all doctrine, it is to be lived.

The authors have been involved in women’s ministry for a number of years. They have attempted to understand how the covenantal framework not only applies vertically in our relationship to God, but also how it offers a key to understanding the development of a biblically based foundation for our relationships within the family of God. They have echoed that message in this book.

Being compelled and empowered by the gospel of Jesus Christ, they set forth a Christian woman’s legacy in a way that challenges the reader to understand that heritage for herself and to pass it on to the next generation.

This book will be a helpful tool in the process of making disciples. It will serve as a constant reminder of God’s instruction and challenge to pass on the faith to the next generation. It will remind us that we cannot walk alone with God because our Christian life must be lived in relationship with His people.

Dr. Charles Dunahoo, Coordinator,
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September 11, 2001, changed the way many people think about our world, but it did not change our world. The battle between good and evil has raged since the first terrorist attack when Satan entered the Garden and asked Eve, “Did God actually say . . . ?” (Genesis 3:1).

When Eve flinched, the war began.

In this conflict there are endless fronts on which the battle must be fought, but the ultimate issue is always the same: “Did God say . . . ?”

Womanhood is certainly not the only battle zone, but in the last century it has become a hot spot. The faceless enemy has waged an evil war to rob us of our legacy as Christian women.

Genesis 2:18 proclaims the legacy: “Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him.’”

Genesis 3:20 predicts the redeemed woman’s mission to leave the legacy by being a life-giver: “The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.”

Titus 2:1-5 gives the strategy for living and leaving the legacy:

But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. . . . Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

This book is a call to arms. We must recapture the legacy of biblical womanhood and carefully and intentionally pass it to the next generation. If one generation is careless, the next generation suffers. Relinquishing God’s design for womanhood has devastating effects on the home, church, and culture.

This battle for biblical womanhood is nothing new. It is simply the reclaiming of what always has been and always will be. But reclaim we must—for the glory of our sovereign King and the advancement of His kingdom.

Part One is the apologetic for the legacy.

Part Two is the application of the legacy.

Part Three is an appeal for the church to equip women to live and leave the legacy. ❧

The Call—Legacy of Grace

*. . . we always pray for you, that our God may make
you worthy of his calling. . . .*

2 THESSALONIANS 1:11



Barbara and Susan

We have been friends for a long time. It's a good thing. It seemed obvious that we would write a book together. We spend countless hours talking about biblical womanhood. Our hearts beat as one on this topic. We can finish each other's sentences. After several stimulating times of sharing what each other was learning and teaching in women's conferences, it clicked—why not put our material together and—voila!—a book. We had a great plan. Susan would write Part One, Barbara would write Part Two, and whoever finished first would write Part Three. This would be easy. We could turn this baby out in record time and move on to other projects.

We were so wrong, and that's an understatement.

This book taxed our brains and our spirits, and there was an undercurrent of fear that it would tax our friendship. The book simply did not come together, but somehow we knew that we were supposed to persevere, and we suspected it would be quite an adventure.

Susan: Barbara has been involved in most of my writing projects. She reads and reacts. Her insights are invaluable. We often laugh that she understands what I have written about womanhood better than I do. Her life experiences and professional background as a counselor give

her an edge on knowing the culture and understanding why we need to articulate a biblical philosophy of womanhood.

Barbara: I was a liberal feminist social worker before becoming a biblical counselor. I know the world's paradigm for womanhood firsthand.

Susan: I love to hear Barbara teach. I'm amazed when I watch her facilitate group discussions. Her thoughts and words come fast. She can synthesize people's ideas and list them on a flipchart almost before they speak. Her knowledge of God's Word and ways is matched by her love for Him and His people. Her counseling skills are wrapped in wisdom. I knew that if this book was going to explore how biblical womanhood is lived out in various relationships, I needed Barbara's expertise. I also knew that it is difficult for her to harness her thoughts and put them on paper, but I assumed it was simply a matter of slowing down and taking the time to do it.

Barbara: When Susan asked me to coauthor this book, I rather glibly agreed. I assumed that putting ideas I had taught into written form would be difficult but not impossible. Wrong! I hit the wall of God's severe mercy and realized that I cannot put ideas on paper. I write in a stream of consciousness, and one needs a Faulknerian dictionary to interpret. I struggled. My inability to write my chapters was pricey. It cost my notion that I should always carry my own weight and that I can do anything I set my mind to. It made me dependent on my sister in Christ in a way that is uncomfortable. It cost me ownership of this book. I cannot say to my parents or others, "I wrote that chapter."

Susan: My struggle was guilt. I felt that Barbara's struggle was my fault. I felt that I should be able to help her, and I didn't know how. I was fearful that if I took her thoughts and put them into my words, I would cheat her. I did not want to rob her of her voice. Plus it seemed the epitome of arrogance even to consider taking her fertile thoughts and putting them into my feeble words. Barbara is the quick, articulate one. I am the slow plodder. I was baffled.

Barbara: I kept thinking, *Let's go back to the old way—Susan writes, and I speak!*

Susan: We both knew theologically that we needed each other, but this book took us to the outer limits of that reality. We realized that Plan A was not going to work, but we were both convinced that our passion

was right. We wanted to explore the height and depth and width and length of biblical womanhood, and we wanted to take other women on the quest. We were willing to find a new way to do it.

Barbara: I realized that I had to stop putting a higher value on Susan's giftedness. We both have strengths and weaknesses, and we needed to figure out how to blend them to accomplish this particular task. Susan and I realized in a fresh way the wonder of Christ glorifying Himself through an unlikely relationship between two sisters united by Him, in Him, and for Him. I began wondering: Is this the covenantal way?

Susan: We were convinced that the concept of covenant is the key to discovering new dimensions of biblical womanhood. Finally the "aha!" moment came. The problem was not with the concept; it was with the plan. We were taking a noncovenantal approach to teach a covenantal concept. We were writing individualistically, and our gracious Father had something far better for us and for this book.

Barbara: We could not believe it took such struggling to see what should have been obvious. We were stopped in our tracks. Even when we know the theological concept of covenant, we are easily ensnared in the trap of individualism. God simply would not allow us to function that way.

Barbara and Susan: This is a relational book, and it had to be written out of the context of a relationship. It took about twice as long, but we're not complaining. It truly became a seamless, collaborative effort. We are not even sure which thoughts came from whom. This book is not two voices. It is one voice. To personalize Romans 15:5-6: The God of endurance and encouragement granted us to live and write in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together with one voice we glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And the relationship? A little taxed but a lot tighter—the covenant way.



As eyesight dims, perspective clears. Part of the joy of growing older is that the mingling of the bigness of life and the dailiness of life is more comprehensible and comfortable than it was thirty years ago when I (Susan) was in the midst of mothering three little children. My perspective peaked when our family gathered in a

Presbyterian Church in Decatur, Alabama, to participate in a glorious event. Our granddaughter Mary Kate made her public profession of faith and was received as a full communing member of the church.

Our family has decided that this is perhaps the most momentous event in the lives of our grandchildren. It is the event that should determine every other decision that child will make—from how she will spend the Sabbath to how she spends her money, from her choice of clothes to her choice of a husband. This milestone calls for a pull-out-all-the-stops celebration, and we had that for Mary Kate.

As we sat together on the front two pews of the church, I experienced a multitude of emotions and thoughts. My mother was with us, and there was a moment when I realized that three generations of women were watching the fourth generation do what each of us had done. There was a rush of gratitude for the legacy of grace that God has given to another generation. There was also an overwhelming desire to tell Mary Kate everything we had learned about being a redeemed woman. I longed to hand her a recipe and say, “Mary Kate, follow this, and life will turn out delicious.”

But I know better. I know that life is not always delicious because these same women stood at a grave when we buried Mary Kate’s baby sister Annie Grace.

However, I am convinced that everything Mary Kate needs to know in life and in death was encapsulated in seed form in those few moments when she took her covenant vows and pledged herself to Jesus and to His people. That event is an object lesson that we can use to teach Mary Kate the grand themes of Scripture. And it is those overarching themes that she needs to know and to bring to bear on every decision, circumstance, relationship, and role she will face.

Much of the confusion about womanhood comes because we isolate the discussion from the major themes of Scripture, and then we reduce the discussion to roles and behaviors. This approach fails to recognize the unity of God’s Word and usually results in distortions. It fails to give the rich legacy of biblical womanhood to the next generation.

The themes that I want to teach and pass on to Mary Kate and her generation are applicable regardless of the life-journey God has prepared for them.

Big Theme #1—*God created woman to be a helper.*

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1 NIV). These opening words of Scripture teach us that God is the reference point for all of life. The power of His Word brought creation into existence. His Word is the authority for all of life. At the end of each creation day God said, “It is good.” Creation was good because the Creator is good.

On the sixth day God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness . . .” (Genesis 1:26 NIV). Being created in God’s image gives identity and purpose. Mary Kate stood before her family and church as an image-bearer of the sovereign Creator (her identity) with the capacity to reflect His glory (her purpose). So did our grandson when he made his public profession of faith, but Mary Kate stood there as a female image-bearer. “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27 NIV).

The apostle Paul tells us, “There is neither . . . male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28 NIV). There are no distinctions or preferential treatment in our union with Christ, but this does not negate God’s creation design and order.

“The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him’” (Genesis 2:18 NIV). Why was it not good for the man to be alone? This question pushes us back to the relational, covenantal character of God. The unity and diversity of the Trinity are reflected in God’s image-bearers. The man and woman were equal but different. Gender distinctiveness flowed out of their equality in such a perfectly complementary way that it blended into a mysterious oneness. In marriage this oneness is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church.

This does not mean that a person has to be married to reflect fully the glory of God. But it does mean that gender distinctiveness was essential before God gave His stamp of approval: “It is very good.” And yet we live in a culture where hostility against this design and order has raged for several decades. The feminist philosophy says that equality means sameness, but that absurdity has created chaos and confusion.

In her book *What Our Mothers Didn’t Tell Us*, Danielle Crittenden writes:

For in all the ripping down of barriers that has taken place over a generation, we may have inadvertently also smashed the foundations necessary for our happiness. Pretending that we are the same as men—with similar needs and desires—has only led many of us to find out, brutally, how different we really are. In demanding radical independence—from men, from our families—we may have also abandoned certain bargains and institutions that didn't always work perfectly but until very recently were civilization's best ways of taming the feckless human heart.¹

Mrs. Crittenden's research and analysis are helpful, but her solutions are flawed because they make woman the reference point.

I pray that Mary Kate and her generation will write books entitled *What Our Mothers Told Us*. These books will gratefully declare:

Our mothers boldly told us that our reference point is God; we are His image-bearers; His Word is our authority; our purpose is His glory.

They told us about our helper design, which is never outdated because it transcends time and place. It is larger than any role in life, but it impacts every role. It is the design stamped upon us at creation. It is intrinsic to who we are as women. It is good because God is good.

They unwaveringly told us about our mission to be life-givers in every relationship and every circumstance.

The Hebrew word that is translated helper in Genesis 2:18 is *ezer*. In the Old Testament this word is used primarily to refer to God as our helper. When we consider how God is our helper, we begin to see the richness and the strength of this word. Moses spoke of God as his helper who saved him from the sword of Pharaoh (Exodus 18:4). In Psalms we read that God is the helper of the victim, the fatherless, the needy, and the afflicted (10:14; 72:12; 86:17). God is referred to as a helper who is our support, strength, and shield (Psalm 20:2; 28:7; 33:20).

Helper is not a fragile word, and we are not called to a mission of fluff. This is a life-giving ministry of nurture, defense, comfort, and caring. Adam celebrated the purpose and privilege of this design when he “called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20 NKJV).

Two words summarize the helper ministry: *community* and *compassion*. But sin marred woman's design, and now she thinks about her

womanhood in terms of her own self-fulfillment. She seeks her own completeness. She is her own reference point. She is her own authority. She abandons her design and mission for a never-ending quest for her own happiness. Woman became a life-taker rather than a life-giver.

Big Theme #2: *The Gospel empowers and compels us to exercise our design.*

Mary Kate's church graciously invited my husband to officiate as she took her vows. Gene's eyes glistened, and his voice trembled as he asked his granddaughter:

Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope, except through His sovereign mercy?

Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners, and do you receive and trust Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?²

As Mary Kate answered in the affirmative, I thrilled at the knowledge that God is the initiator in her relationship with Him. He chose her before the foundation of the world, set His affection on her, claimed her as His own, and pledged Himself to her in covenant faithfulness (Ephesians 1). I was struck with the thought that no matter how long I live, I can never exhaust the wonder of redemption. I will always have something fresh and sweet to tell Mary Kate about our Redeemer.

Then Gene asked:

Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you endeavor to live as becometh the followers of Christ?³

It is because of our redemption that we *can* live out our helper design. Redeeming love breaks the reign of sin in our lives and empowers us to fulfill our creation mission. And it is our knowledge of our Redeemer's love that compels us to do so. We are products of our theology. What Mary Kate believes about God will show up every minute of every day. I want her to understand grace so well that she never becomes entangled in "works righteousness." I want her to know that

she is justified by grace and that she is sanctified by grace. I want her to know the expanse of God's love for her. I want her to know that His love is not conditioned on her performance.

The redeemed woman who has a biblical apologetic of womanhood has a focus and clarity of purpose that enables her to be a true helper and to fulfill her life-giving mission. Her "teaching . . . is a fountain of life" (Proverbs 13:14 NIV), her "tranquil heart gives life to the flesh" (Proverbs 14:30), and her "gentle tongue is a tree of life" (Proverbs 15:4).

She is so grateful for God's mercy in her life that she is a stream of mercy and forgiveness to others.

She is so captivated by the reality that she is clothed in the righteousness of Christ that she joyfully extends this love and acceptance to others.

Her sights are on her heavenly home. This pilgrim mentality helps to protect her from being trapped by the materialism of the world.

She values the calling of wife and mother, but this is not what defines her. She does not make an idol of her family.

She fiercely guards her family, but she holds them loosely before God because she trusts His sovereignty and His love.

Her theology produces a maturity that enables her to move with grace through different seasons and circumstances of life.

The redeemed helper is not inward focused. You will find her visiting the sick and elderly, crossing social and cultural barriers to extend the boundaries of the covenant to the oppressed and needy and afflicted, often taking her children or a younger woman with her so that she trains another generation to live covenantally.

The redeemed helper who is not married understands that she is a mother in Israel, and she joins with other women to be corporate helpers in God's covenant community.

The redeemed helper who is married knows that her marriage is to be a gospel picture to her children, to the covenant community, and to the world. In order for it to be so, she knows that her husband must be the first beneficiary of her capacity to bring community and compassion into a relationship and that he must see the brightest reflection of her redemption.

She also knows that an individualistic approach to marriage and motherhood levels those high and holy callings to the trivial and the temporary, whereas a covenantal perspective elevates them to the authentic and the eternal. She understands that her children are not just her own. They are gifts to the covenant community. She values the interdependence of her family and the family of families—the church of the Lord Jesus. She wants her children to grow up as a part of this larger family. She teaches them about their covenant privilege to live and move among the company of the redeemed and to assume their responsibilities to this community.

But the helper design is alien and offensive to a fallen world. It doesn't fit; so the world tells women that there is a better way. Nothing has changed. The enemy still asks, “Did God say . . . ?” He still tries to convince women to try the way of independence and autonomy.

The gospel empowers and compels us to live out our design, and the gospel provides the context in which the helper design makes sense.

Big Theme #3: The covenant community is the culture in which we are equipped to live out the implications of our design.

Gene asked Mary Kate the next question:

Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?⁴

This was a wonderful moment for our family, but we knew that it was not just about our nuclear family. Mary Kate was affirming her faith in Jesus and identifying herself with the people of God. She was promising to live covenantally before God and with His people.

The words that Ruth said to Naomi are often read at weddings, and that is certainly appropriate. But they were equally appropriate for Mary Kate as she presented herself for full communicant privileges and responsibilities in the church of Jesus Christ. In a very real sense, though she probably did not understand the full implications, she was saying to the church:

Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will

die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you. (Ruth 1:16-17)

When Ruth acknowledged Jehovah as God and made this radical pledge of commitment, she understood that this meant changing her citizenship to the covenant community. This view of church life is echoed in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*:

All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His grace, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.⁵

The helper design is a covenantal concept. It makes sense only in a covenantal context.

The helper proclivity of women is crushed in a culture of individualism and independence. Women are encouraged to pursue self-fulfillment and self-actualization. Countless mothers have told their daughters, "Learn to be independent. Self-sufficiency is power." In this postmodern age of relativism and autonomy, the helper design is useless and senseless. It does not fit. But in the covenant community, the church of the Lord Jesus, the helper design is essential.

I pray that Mary Kate will never take a consumer approach to church life. I do not want her to selfishly ask, "How can this church serve me?" or to whine, "This church has wounded me." I want her to know that the church is the place where she is to share her gifts and graces with God's people.

It is in the church that believers are to be equipped "for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:12-13).

The women who went to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus present a tender picture of woman's helper ministry: "When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on

the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb” (Mark 16:1-2). Anointing the body was a way of showing affection. These women were driven to care for the body of Christ because of their love for Him.

This little society of women functioned well together. Even in their distress over the crucifixion of their Lord, they did what needed to be done. They made decisions and plans. How many spices to buy? Did they have enough money? When and where would they meet on Sunday morning? As the women walked to the tomb, they asked, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” (v. 3). Even though these women knew that the task was too big for them, they still went.

I pray that Mary Kate will do the same.

Redeemed women are to join together as corporate helpers in God’s church and care for the body of Christ. This is the essence of community and compassion. It is the helper design in action. Caring for the body of Christ still takes planning and implementing, and our daughters learn how to carry out this ministry as they watch other women do it. A life-giving culture of caring is not learned from books. It is imprinted on the soul as we live among caring women.

When we live out our helper design in the context of our local church, there will be stones to be rolled away that are much too big for us. I pray that Mary Kate will always know that caring for the body of Christ will require massive doses of grace. I pray that she will know the remarkable reality of the risen Savior shining the light of His grace upon her labors and enabling her to do far more than she could ever ask or imagine.

Someone is teaching our daughters what it means to be a woman. Is it the culture or the church? I am grateful that Mary Kate lives and moves among redeemed women who show and tell her the wonders of biblical womanhood, and among redeemed men who value her design and calling.

Big Theme #4: Male headship provides the authority structure that releases women to fulfill their creation design.

As the service continued, Gene asked Mary Kate:

Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to strive for its purity and peace?⁶

He explained to her that just as God has said that her mom and dad are the authority in their home, He has said that the elders are the authority in her church. In voluntarily placing herself in submission to those elders, Mary Kate positioned herself to receive the blessings, benefits, and protection of the church. She became a partaker of a rich inheritance as a member of God's household. If God's plan for her is marriage, this ecclesiastical submission prepares Mary Kate to understand marital submission.

The redeemed helper is not threatened by male headship. She values male and female distinctiveness because she knows that they are God's design and order. She knows that submission has nothing to do with status. Submission has to do with function and is a reflection of the ontological equality and yet the functional difference in the Trinity. Submission is built into the way God has ordered life in the kingdom, and it is good because He is good. Headship and submission are God's ordained order for achieving oneness in marriage and unity in the church.

The redeemed helper knows that submission does not restrict her; it actually frees her to fulfill her life-giving mission.

The redeemed helper who is married wants her husband to be a leader who cherishes her, but she does not want him to coddle her. She knows that coddling will cause her to be immature and weak.

After missionary Hugh Linton was killed in an automobile accident, his widow Betty remained in Korea until her retirement. While speaking at a women's conference, she told about their early years on the mission field when they had six young children, and Hugh was frequently away from home. She said that she was not always sweet about it. Then she surprised us all when she said, "I'm glad that he did not give in to my whining and complaining, but he did what was right. I think I am more secure because of it."

Indeed there is a beautiful security and maturity about Betty that I fear many women will never experience because they have not learned the goodness of God's order.

Big Theme #5: *We are called to pass this legacy to the next generation.*

Following the church service, Mary Kate's parents hosted a luncheon in her honor. It was not just for our nuclear family—though that is quite a crowd. The pastor and his family and other members of the church were there. We gave her a Bible, and everyone signed it. We wanted to etch upon her memory a picture of a covenant family. At some level, all of the people who were there have assumed a responsibility to show and tell her about God and His kingdom. Some are Sunday school teachers, and some are parents of her friends, but she is learning from all of them. From the women, she will learn what it means to be a Christian woman.

Throughout the Old Testament God tells us that one generation is to tell the next generation about Him. “We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done” (Psalm 78:4). This instruction is not just principle. It is practical. We are to “talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deuteronomy 6:7).

In Titus this command is made gender-specific:

Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled (Titus 2:3-5).

Biblical womanhood is part of Mary Kate's legacy, and it is an inheritance that she is to steward well and then pass on to the next generation.

GENE'S LEGACY

Perhaps you are thinking, *But I do not have a legacy like Mary Kate's. I did not grow up in a Christian home.* Please listen with your heart to my husband Gene's testimony:

My life is a picture of God's sovereign grace. I was born into a non-Christian family where there was never the slightest effort to even

appear religious. I don't recall my parents ever taking me to church. The only time God was mentioned in our home was when my mother and dad argued. I was an unlikely candidate to become a Christian. Yet God in His mercy reached into this situation and found me. The doctrine of God's sovereign election has never been a problem for me. I am a living illustration of this wonder.

When my dad died, we moved back to my mother's hometown. I look back and see clearly that it was God's providence that put us in a neighborhood where there was a little Presbyterian church willing to reach out to a young boy whose life could have gone in any direction. Sonny was my boyhood friend. His mother was the organist and choir director, and so when the church doors opened, she was there. Sonny had no evangelistic fervor, and I had no consuming desire to know about God. Sonny just didn't want to go to church alone, and so he would drag me along.

I spent a lot of time at the church and was exposed to a lot of preaching and teaching. It's interesting to me that I do not remember specific sermons or Sunday school lessons. I remember the warmth and love of a church family. I remember picnics and rousing singing. The church kids were my best friends. Many of their parents were our youth leaders. They opened their hearts and homes to me and accepted me as a part of their covenant family. I was in and out of their homes regularly. Families like the Harrisons and the Fullers and the Holts showed me what Christian families look like. I was enfolded into this community of believers and moved among them as if I belonged. It never occurred to me that I was an outsider. It all seemed perfectly natural and normal. Now I see that it was supernatural. It was the gospel of grace being lived out in daily life.

Gradually I came to see my need for a Savior and committed my life to Jesus. I was a teenager when I began to feel that I was being called into the gospel ministry. My church family rejoiced with me, but they did not seem surprised. They acted as if they had expected it all along. When I look back, I'm amazed that they never resented the little boy who tagged along with one of their own and who had no resources to contribute to the church. Now I understand that they invested in me because that's the covenant way.

I'm thankful that our children have very different childhood memories and that our grandchildren are growing up in Christian homes, but I do not regret my past. "The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. I will praise the LORD, who counsels me. . . . I have set the LORD always before me.

Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices. . . . You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand” (Psalm 16:6-9, 11).

I am grateful for those young mothers like Mrs. Harrison, Mrs. Fuller, and Mrs. Holt. Our children and grandchildren are part of their legacy. Our home is a pleasant place because they extended the boundaries of the covenant to a little boy whose family was very different from theirs. These redeemed helpers fulfilled their life-giving mission. This, too, is part of Mary Kate’s legacy. I pray that she will emulate their ministry.

THE CALL

In summary, God’s world was not complete without man and woman. The woman was not a clone of the man. God made one who was equal but different from the man. The God of glory created woman as a helper. Our redemption frees us and compels us to glorify God by fulfilling this helper design in all seasons and circumstances of life. This is our calling as redeemed women.

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12)

Living and Leaving the Legacy

1. What is your legacy? Read Ephesians 1 and then write your story about how God gave you this inheritance of grace.
2. Who are some of the women who have shown you the helper design? What have you learned from them?
3. Reflect on the women who went to the tomb to care for the body of Christ. How are women in your church carrying on this legacy?

Notes



CHAPTER 1: THE CALL—LEGACY OF GRACE

1. Danielle Crittenden, *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), p. 25.
2. Application for Membership (Norcross, Ga.: Presbyterian Church in America, Committee for Christian Education and Publications).
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. XXVI (Norcross, Ga.: Committee for Christian Education and Publications), p. 85.
6. Application for Membership, Presbyterian Church in America.

CHAPTER 2: THE COVENANT—LEGACY OF THE PROMISE

1. Louis Berkhof and Cornelius Van Til, *Foundations for Christian Education*, ed. Dennis E. Johnson (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., originally part of a larger volume, *Fundamentals in Christian Education: Theory and Practice*, 1953, reprinted in 1990), p. 65 (italics added).
2. O. Palmer Robertson, *Covenants* (Norcross, Ga.: Great Commission Publications, 1993), p. 11.
3. Gerard Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), p. 59.
4. S. G. DeGraff, *Promise and Deliverance*, trans. H. Evan Runner and Elisabeth Wichers Runner, Vol. 1 (St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada: Paideia Press, 1979), p. 36.
5. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, translated and indexed by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), pp. 1011-1012.

CHAPTER 3: THE CONTINUITY—LEGACY OF HOPE

1. J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, trans. H. White (London, 1846; repr. Rapidan, Va.: Hartland Publications), pp. 4-5.
2. W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Vol. 3 (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming Revell, 1966), p. 242.
3. Ibid., pp. 55-56.
4. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 592.
5. Ibid., pp. 674-675.
6. "Characteristics and Themes of Romans," in *The Reformation Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), p. 1764.

"A Year of Biblical Womanhood will instruct as it delights, and delight as it instructs. Of course it's about womanhood, an incredibly important subject for 100% of the population. But it's about a lot more too - how we read and interpret the Bible, for starters, and how we - both men and women - grapple with issues like justice, charity, silence, and grace in today's frenetic world. On top of that, Rachel is such a gifted writer you'll be warmed by her good sense, good humor, and keen eye for beauty and insight on every page." Biblical womanhood can "and does!" take on many forms and fashions in God's design. Biblical womanhood can look like being a wife, mom, and homemaker as described in Titus 2. Biblical womanhood can look like Deborah who was a leader raised up by God (see Judges 4-5). Biblical womanhood can look like Priscilla being a Great Commission worker and partnering with her husband to teach others the Word of God (and even going so far as to teach a man "Apollos!"- see Acts 18:24-26).