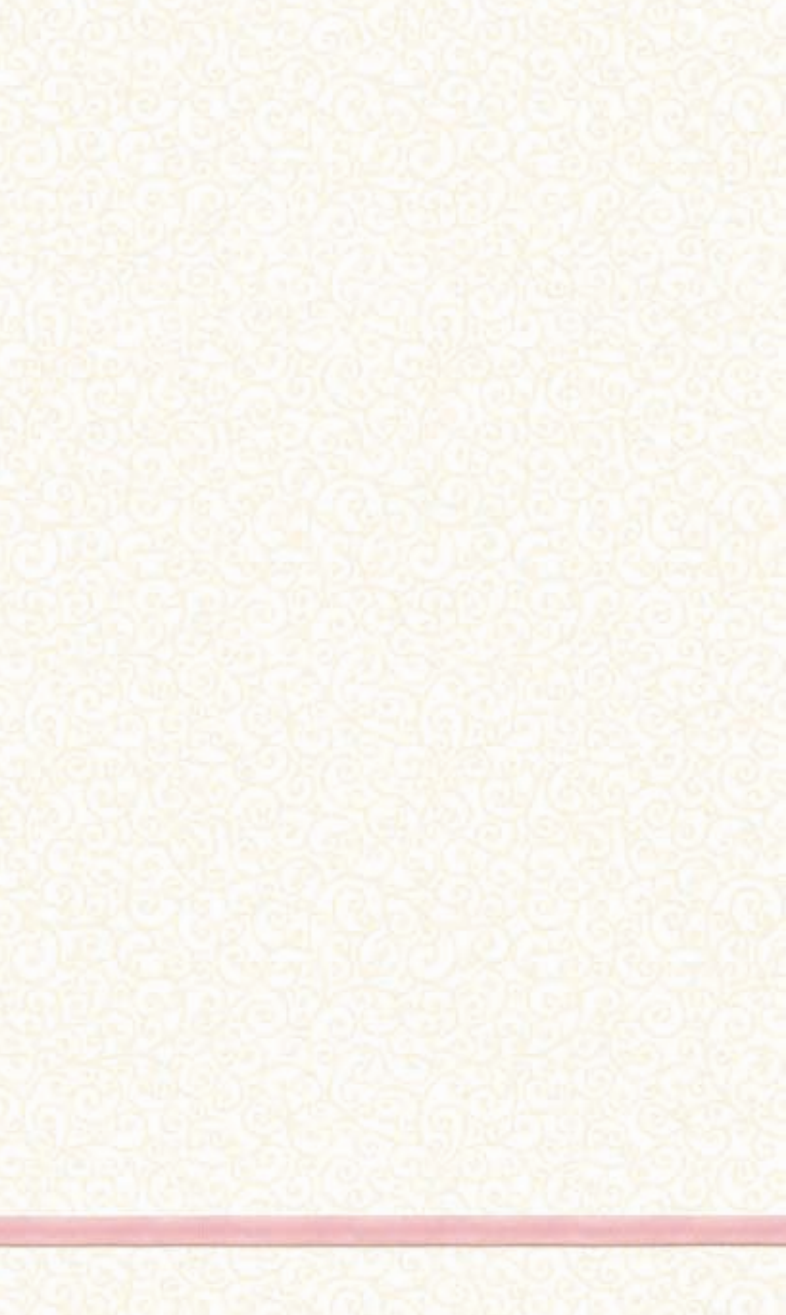

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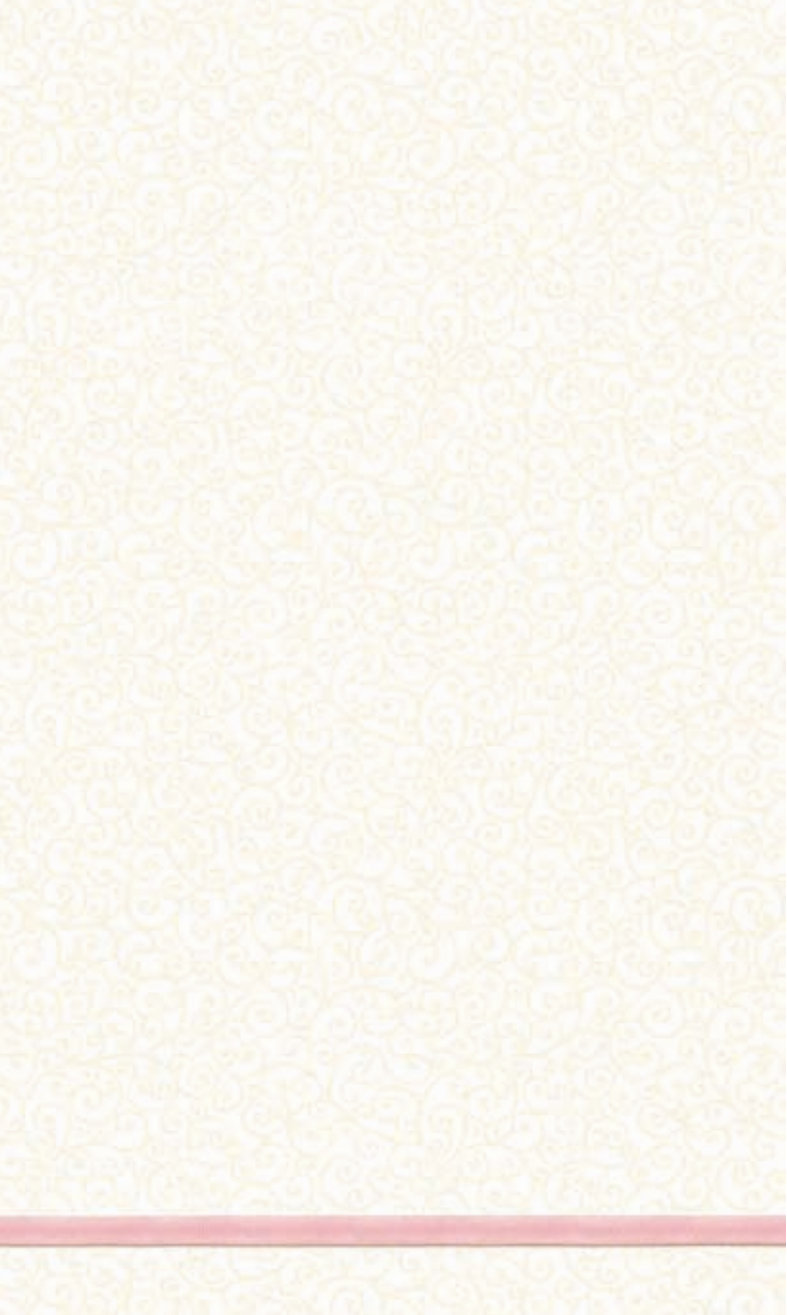
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LIFE PROMISES FOR WOMEN



CYNTHIA HEALD

LIFE PROMISES

For Women

Inspirational Scriptures and devotional thoughts



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Life Promises for Women: Inspirational Scriptures and Devotional Thoughts

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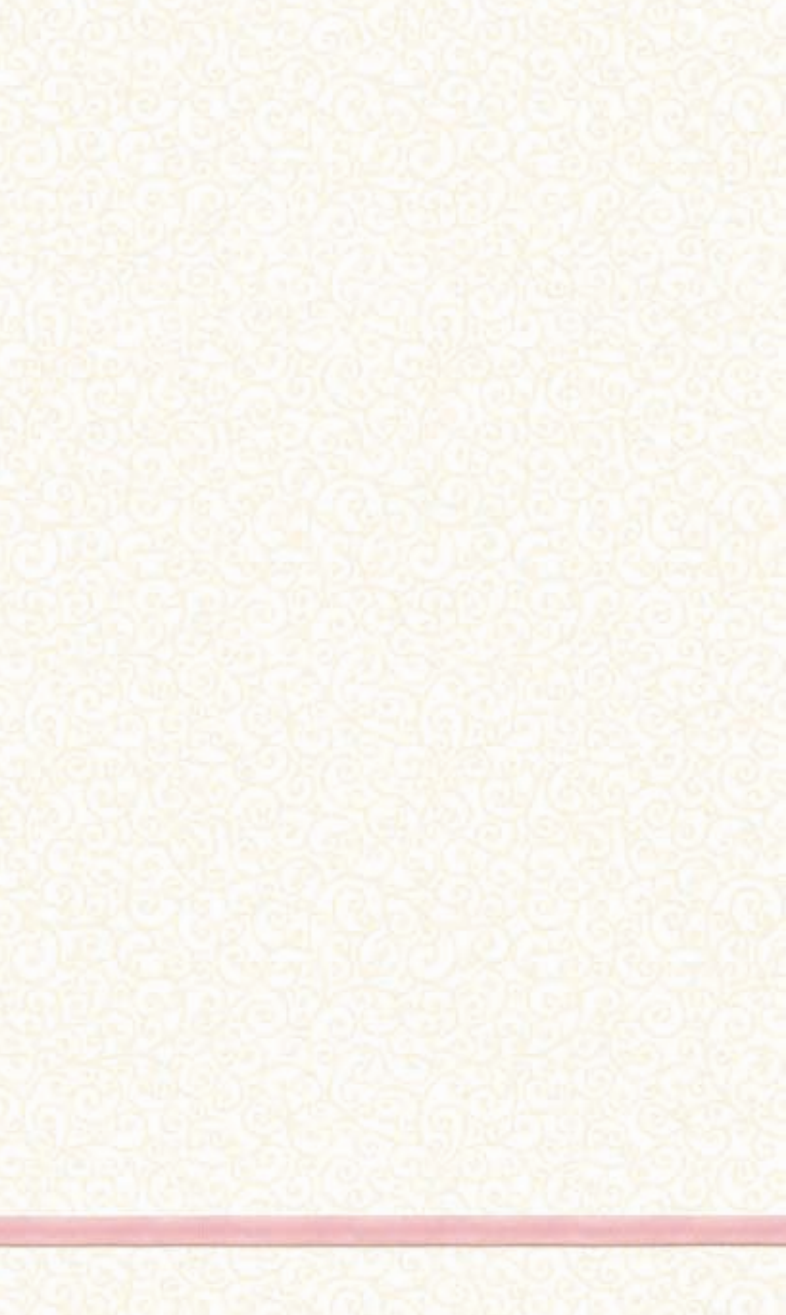
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INTRODUCTION

As a young girl I remember saying, “I cross my heart and hope to die!” These were words soberly spoken by any child who had just made a promise. This was an expected and acceptable childhood ritual that we felt was needed to reinforce our sincerity and truthfulness in making such a statement.

Our sovereign God, though, has no need to utter these words when he makes a promise. As the psalmist David declares in Psalm 138:2, “I praise your name for your unfailing love and faithfulness; for your promises are backed by all the honor of your name.” David also writes in Psalm 145:13, “The LORD always keeps his promises.” We love and serve a promise-keeping God. He gives us promises so that we can trust and depend on who he is and what he says. Paul observes in Romans 4:21, “[Abraham] was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises.” And so we, too, can be blessed by the promises of God.

A promise is an assurance given, a reason for expectation; it is a pledge, an oath, a guarantee. The writer of Hebrews reiterates God’s words in Deuteronomy 31:8 when he writes, “I will never fail you. I will never abandon you” (Hebrews 13:5). In Isaiah 43:2 God says, “When you go

through deep waters, I will be with you.” These are promises from God; they are his guarantee that he will never abandon us. These promises of God are unconditional. God is committed, as our Father, to lead, guide, and accompany us on our journey. We experience his presence just because we are his.

There are also promises that are conditional; these are given based on our obedience and faithfulness. When Jesus taught, “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need” (Matthew 6:33), he gave the necessary conditions of seeking his Kingdom and living righteously in order for God to fulfill his promise of providing for our needs.

Sprinkled throughout this devotional you will find some of God’s promises. But the majority of the Scripture used to anchor the daily readings are teachings and exhortations to live God’s way, and in each of these teachings are the underlying principle and promise that when we trust God and freely desire to live in obedience to Christ’s teachings, we receive God’s goodness, joy, and blessing.

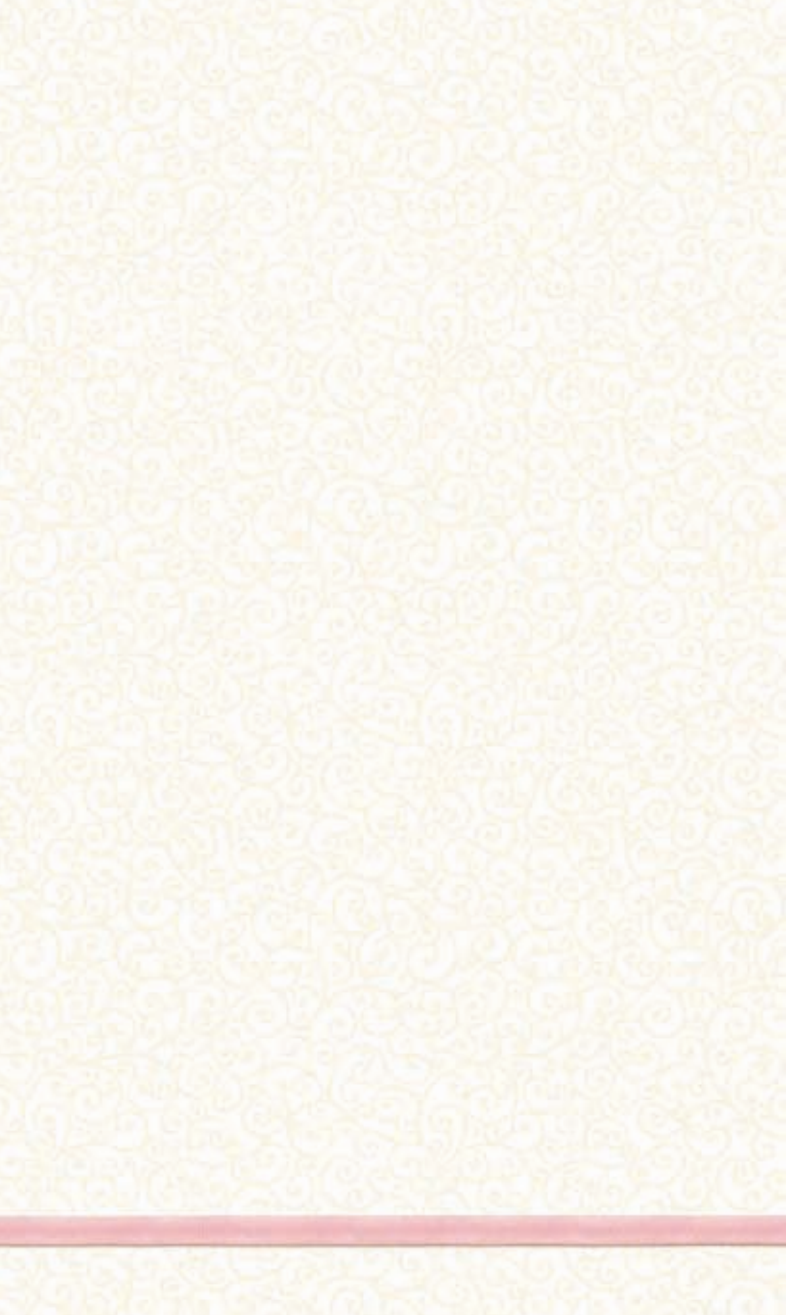
“How great is the goodness you have stored up for those who fear you. You lavish it on those who come to you for protection, blessing them before the watching world” (Psalm 31:19). “What

joy for those whose strength comes from the LORD” (Psalm 84:5). “Blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence” (Jeremiah 17:7). “I am coming soon! Blessed are those who obey the words of prophecy written in this book” (Revelation 22:7). God does promise to bless us when we obey and seek to live as his disciples.

In this book you will find stories of women from varied walks of life who portray qualities of inner beauty and character. My prayer is that the lives of these women and the Scriptures given will challenge and encourage you to claim not only the promises of God but his teachings as well so that you will be clothed with the beauty that comes from within—the “unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Peter 3:4).

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cynthia Heald". The signature is written in dark ink and is centered on the page.

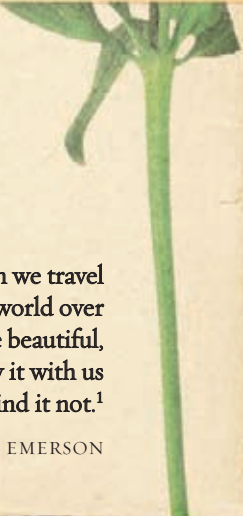


A vertical pink ribbon runs down the left side of the page, partially overlapping a piece of aged, cream-colored paper with deckled edges. The ribbon is tied into a loop at the top and bottom.

PART I

A cluster of pink alstroemeria flowers with dark spots on their petals is pressed onto the aged paper. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some showing their stamens.

Beauty

A single green stem of a pink alstroemeria flower extends vertically from the bottom edge of the aged paper towards the center of the page. The stem is smooth and has a few small leaves at the top.

Though we travel
the world over
to find the beautiful,
we must carry it with us
or we find it not.¹

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON



Life Promise

Above all, clothe yourselves with love,
which binds us all together in perfect
harmony.

COLOSSIANS 3:14

Meditation

When I am more concerned about
having a loving spirit than being
beautiful, not only do I become
beautiful, but I bestow beauty.

BEAUTY IS AS BEAUTY DOES

Growing up, I remember hearing the old adage “Beauty is as beauty does.” What I understood from that saying is that although a woman might be attractive physically, how she lives really determines whether or not she is beautiful. Often a woman’s actions and reactions can negate any outward beauty she might have, and vice versa. Ruth Graham’s Chinese nanny is a good example. Wang Nai Nai was depicted as “a homely old soul.” Ruth describes this plain-featured woman this way: “Her nose was unusually broad and flat, and there was a mole on the side of it. Her eyes were little slits with short eyelashes, framed by laugh wrinkles. Her mouth was wide and kind. A peasant’s face. A pleasant peasant’s face. Mother was right. She was a homely old soul. But what did that matter? She was loving. I would have sworn her beautiful.”²

Just as a woman’s lack of inner character can mar her good looks, a beautiful soul can render a plain face lovely.



Life Promise

You should clothe yourselves . . . with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.

1 PETER 3:4

Meditation

If I want beauty that lasts, I must adorn myself with a gentle and quiet spirit.

THAT CERTAIN SOMETHING

We have become a society accustomed to “air-brushed” beauty. I smiled at the story of Elizabeth the queen mother, who was selecting a photograph from a recent sitting. Cecil Beaton, the photographer, suggested that he could have the picture discreetly retouched to conceal a few wrinkles. The queen mother rejected his suggestion. “I would not want it to be thought that I had lived for all these years without having anything to show for it,” she explained.³ Her response is refreshing in light of our seeming obsession with looking young at all costs. We need to pay attention to our outward appearance, but not to the extent that it overshadows our concern for inner beauty. Herbert Spencer once remarked, “The saying that beauty is but skin deep is but a skin-deep saying.”⁴ Inner beauty bestows on us that “certain something” that sets us apart, gives our life meaning, and graces us with beauty even when we are sixty.

You can take credit for beauty at sixteen. But if you are beautiful at sixty, it will be your soul’s own doing.⁵

—MARIE STOOPS

Life Promise

You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

1 PETER 2:9

Meditation

It is because I am God's own possession that I can show others the difference Christ makes in my life.

UNCOMMON BEAUTY

When I think about a woman whom I admire and consider to be beautiful, I tend to think first of her inner qualities—whether she is gracious, considerate of others, courageous, wise. Beauty, to me, is seen in a woman whose face mirrors her acceptance of who she is, her contentment with where she is, and her enthusiasm for people and life. It is this inner loveliness that I have chosen to call *uncommon beauty*. It is uncommon because it is rare and cannot be seen. It can be sensed and observed only in a woman's conduct or bearing. It is a refreshing "air" that attracts and causes others to look past her physical attributes and appreciate who she really is inside.

Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take with you nothing that you have received—only what you have given: a full heart enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice and courage.⁶

—ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Life Promise

Whether we are here in this body or
away from this body, our goal is to
please [the Lord].

2 CORINTHIANS 5:9

Meditation

When my goal is pleasing God,
I become a sweet fragrance to all
I meet.

INNER RESOLVE

While sorting through some old papers recently, I came across a slip of yellowed paper entitled “New Year’s Resolutions.” I had apparently written the following list when I was eight years old:

1. Get a boyfriend.
2. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
3. Get a figure.
4. Don’t say anything mean about other people.
5. Don’t eat many sweets as to get a beautiful complexion.
6. Do exercises.
7. Good posture.

I smiled as I read these resolutions, written in 1947. Sixty years later, I can say that I did succeed in getting a boyfriend—a permanent one—but the other resolutions are still useful. Eating wisely and exercising consistently are still necessary. I continue to work on good posture with the help of my daughter’s reminders. However, the inner qualities are much more important to me now, and it is my desire to develop these qualities and to be a sweet fragrance to all I meet.



Life Promise

Be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do.

EPHESIANS 5:15-17

Meditation

Each day is a day the Lord has made, and I want to live each day understanding what the Lord wants me to do.

A BEAUTIFUL LIFE

Irene Miller was a young homemaker in Johnson City, Tennessee, with a devoted husband, two children, and a normal life. During the summer of 1950, her son, David, was stricken with polio. Three years later, Irene's husband, Bud, was robbed and murdered. Irene never remarried and undertook the challenge of raising her daughter, Dolores, and her quadriplegic son alone, working at home as a seamstress. After David died at age thirty-one of heart failure, Irene cared for her aging mother-in-law, then her own parents. Convinced that God had determined the purpose for her life, Irene made the most of each day. A poem taped to her mirror summarizes her outlook:

*This is the beginning of a new day.
I can waste it or use it for good,
but what I do today is important
because I am exchanging a day of my life for it.*⁷

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Irene's life radiated with uncommon beauty. She lived "in deeds, not in years; in thoughts, not breaths; in feelings, not in figures on a dial."⁸



Life Promise

Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

GALATIANS 5:25

Meditation

I walk in true beauty when I follow the Spirit's leading.

WALKING IN BEAUTY

When I was in college, I took a course entitled “Byron, Shelley, and Keats.” As I studied each of these great authors’ writings, Lord Byron’s poem “She Walks in Beauty” became one of my favorites. The first few lines give this picture:

*She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies,
And all that’s best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes.*

The final lines round out the image:

*And on that cheek and o’er that brow
So soft, so calm yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent.⁹*

I appreciate the image of this woman *walking* in beauty. Byron discerns that beauty is a way of life; it is a lifestyle. Wherever this woman was and whatever she did, she walked in beauty. With her soft, calm spirit; her smile; her goodness; a mind at peace; and a heart of innocent love, this is a woman of uncommon beauty.

Life Promise

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4

Meditation

Not being preoccupied with myself frees me to be gracious and to be used by God.

CULTIVATING BEAUTY

U ncommon beauty is sown and cultivated in the soul: It is watered by passion and wisdom, it puts down deep roots by practicing integrity, it flourishes by being selfless and gracious to others, it grows strong by staying firmly planted in its circumstances and courageously enduring the clouds and the wind. The choice is ours. We can sow the seed of each of these qualities in our souls so that we can bloom with the lovely flower of uncommon beauty. And it is this extraordinary, priceless beauty that we want for our lives—all the spa treatments in the world cannot keep us young or make us truly beautiful. I agree with Francine Rivers's observation that a truly beautiful woman is unaware of her beauty.¹⁰ Perhaps this truth expresses the heart of uncommonly beautiful women. They are more concerned about living passionately and wisely, they think of others more than themselves, they thrive in their circumstances, and they value freedom and justice over their own desires. To be known as beautiful would surprise them.

True beauty is rare, and seldom recognized by the one who possesses it.

—FRANCINE RIVERS

Life Promise

Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God.

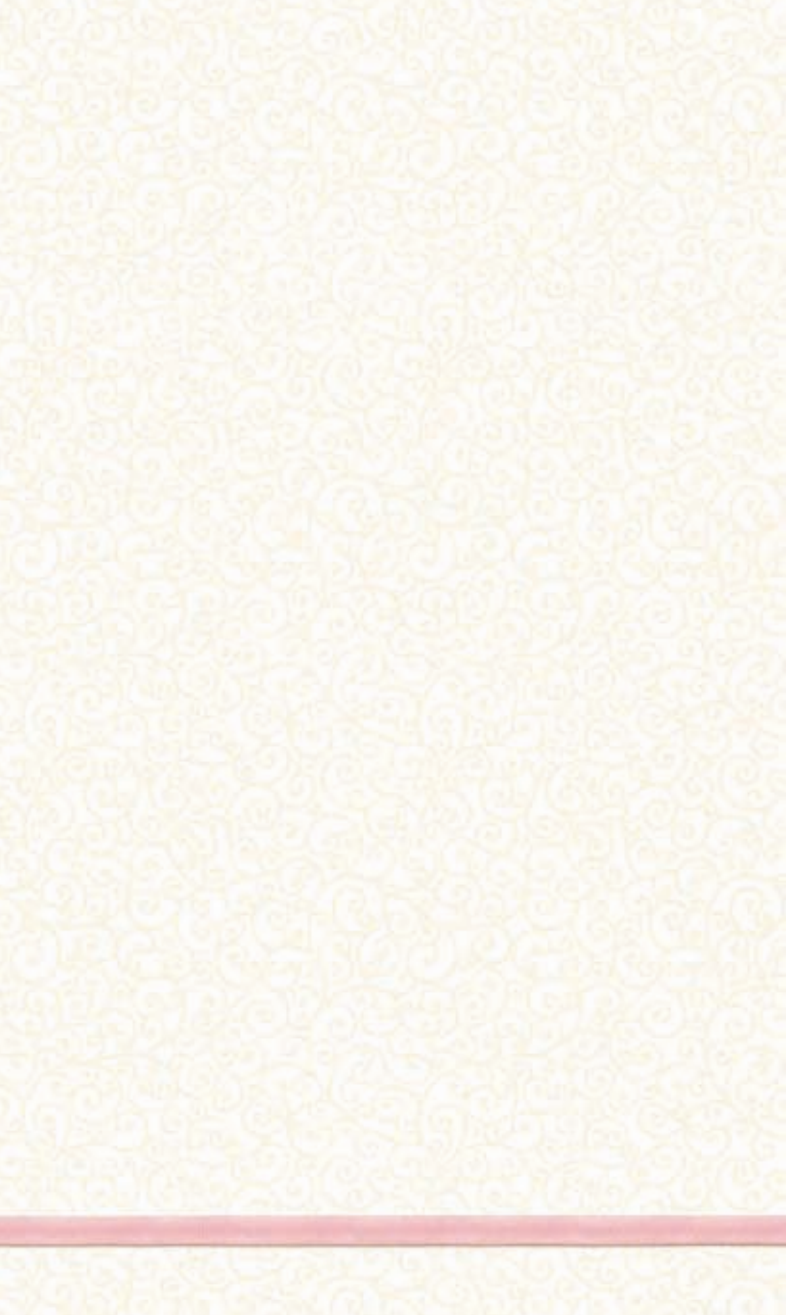
2 CORINTHIANS 7:1

Meditation

Fearing the Lord is giving God his rightful place in my life as my Father, Savior, and Lord.

PROVERBIAL BEAUTY

One of my role models for becoming a woman of inner beauty is the virtuous woman found in the last chapter of the Old Testament book of Proverbs. A mother instructs her son, a king, about the essential qualities of a worthy wife. The following characteristics this mother affirms are universal and apply to any worthy woman, regardless of marital status: She is a *passionate* and *diligent* worker. Her *wisdom* enables her to make intelligent business decisions. She is *trustworthy*. She is *selfless* in serving others. She exhibits *graciousness* and *kindness* when speaking and in her readiness to be hospitable. She is *contented* with her life, and she is *courageous*, for she is not anxious about the future. And she knows that no matter what happens, she will be able to endure because she can trust God. What makes her life so valuable and special? A verse at the end of the passage gives us the answer: “Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the LORD will be greatly praised.” She is praised for the respect and reverence she gives to God as the creator and sustainer of life, and she is commended for honoring God by loving and serving others.



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3. 1 Samuel 25:3.
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6. *Ibid.*
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8. Anne Morrow Lindbergh, quoted in *The American Experience*; see <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/lindbergh/sfeature/anne.html>.
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PART VI—*Graciousness*

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2. Hada Bejar, see http://www.quoteland.com/topic.asp?CATEGORY_ID=64.
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6. Epictetus, in *Quotable Quotations*, comp. Lloyd Cory (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 82.

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16. Janet Perez Eckles, a national inspirational speaker and writer for regional and national Christian magazines, lives in Orlando, Florida, and can be contacted at <http://www.janetperezekles.com/index.html>.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



CYNTHIA HEALD uses her speaking engagements, Bible studies, and books to encourage women around the world to deepen their relationship with God. In addition to her popular *Becoming a Woman Of . . .* Bible study series, which includes the best-selling *Becoming a Woman of Excellence* and *Becoming a Woman of Freedom*, Cynthia has also written *Abiding in Christ: Becoming a Woman Who Walks with God*, a Gold Medallion-winning devotional. Her husband, Jack, joined her in writing two Bible studies about marriage: *Loving Your Wife* and *Walking Together*. Cynthia's other nonfiction books include *Maybe God Is Right After All*, *A Woman's Journey to the Heart of God*, and *When the Father Holds You Close*.

When Cynthia is not writing or speaking, she loves to spend time with Jack and their four children and nine grandchildren. She is an avid reader, especially of the classics. Cynthia enjoys taking bubble baths, having tea parties, and eating out.

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