



Woman to Woman

"Letter 8"

THE FRAGILE HEART

Dearly Loved Sisters in Christ,

I love to read Proverbs 31 because it reminds me that here is an example of a godly woman who truly had an energetic approach to life, and interestingly enough, we read that she was always well occupied in doing things for others. We can also glean from Proverbs 31 that she possessed exceptional management skills among her many accomplishments. However, what is of most interest to me is that among her many wonderful assets, here was a woman who demonstrated great compassion for others.

What about us, are we compassionate? Is it relatively easy to comfort and help our own family, but then only put out minimal effort to find time to help other people? Have we prayed asking God to help us truly discover what our "gifts" are? Are we sometimes guilty of just waiting to be bowled over by a really impressive gift that God will suddenly give us? Have we convinced ourselves that when this does occur, we then finally will become passionate about using this special gift? If we have, then in some cases many months and years can go by without our seeing some of these elusive gifts because we have been so busy *waiting* for God to put this "big impressive gift" smack dab in front of us. If so, we may have totally missed out recognizing it. Is it just possible that we need to stop being so "picky", and take the time to listen more carefully to God in order to hear His "still small voice". Instead let's consider and do whatever it is that God puts right in front of us – no matter how small or unimportant the task might seem to us.

Did you know it is very hard to become passionate about NOTHING? All we need to do is open our eyes and look around closely – since there are needs to be discovered everywhere! There are so many people "out there" who are hurting and in need of your assistance. These people are ones that I call "fragile hearts." They have found themselves in the midst of some kind of trial or problem, and life is really tough for them. So what should we do? When

we see a need, that is clearly the time to take action and to really try to find a way to help. Once we prepare ourselves mentally to do this – and courageously step out – some amazing things will begin to happen. A vital key is to pray and think: “What can I *do* instead of worrying mostly about me and my problems?” Do you know that when we serve others we are acting as one of the tools that God uses to help set us free from the slavery of selfishness? Service to others is vitally essential for our own spiritual growth.

So then who should we help? Family? Neighbors? People on the streets? Church members? For starters, how about helping anyone we come in contact with who has a real need? We read that the woman in Proverbs 31 is actively seeking out ways to help the poor and needy.

20 “She extends her hand to the poor, Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.” [NKJV]

She is a woman who doesn't need to be asked to help because she has developed sensitivity, awareness, and compassion. In other words, she is able to readily anticipate the needs of others. She also understands that God is near to those in need, as stated in Psalm 34: 18:

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted,
And saves those who are crushed in spirit. [NAS]

How do you know that God hasn't planned to use you – and your special and unique way of helping – in saving that person who is so “crushed in spirit”? What a great opportunity! Now there will be times when we will encounter people who are not accustomed to love and kindness, and in some cases it will be very difficult to do things for them. But consider this: Perhaps you will be the only person to show them the love of God that day. As the saying goes, “You may be the only Bible they ever read.” We know that it's easier to do things for others when we feel appreciated, but what about making efforts to help others *for God's glory* and not for ours? It has been said that “Small deeds done with great love produce great results.”

I recently read in our local newspaper of a family that had the horrible experience of losing their home, and as a result became homeless for a period of time. Together, the family members determined that if they ever had a home again they would do something to help the homeless. Later, when they were able to once again have a roof over their heads, they started out helping homeless people by making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. They drove to a local downtown park where there were many homeless people; then asked if anyone would like to have a peanut butter sandwich – and of course many did. Since then, their work of service has grown, until now they distribute *hundreds* of these sandwiches daily. What good-hearted people they are! They are working and doing within their means what they can to help those “crushed in spirit”. Truly they have become a loving blessing to others.

In today's world it is easy to let our hearts become hardened, and become judgmental when we see the plight of the poor – however many destitute people are in that condition through no fault of their own. Judgmental thinking makes it easy to give ourselves excuses which lead to closing our hearts and hands to the needs of people who lack the basic necessities of life.

God instructed the Israelites that when they arrived in the promised land they should help the poor among them. Notice Deuteronomy 15:7-8:

7 "But if there are any poor people in your towns when you arrive in the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight fisted toward them.

8 Instead be generous and lend them what they need. [NLT]

Also, I am reminded that Benjamin Franklin was known for asking himself a certain question when he got up each morning: "What good *shall* I do today?" Then, in the evening he would then ask himself: "What good *did* I do today?" That's not a bad idea, is it? In fact it's a loving, godly approach to life!

Sometimes we allow ourselves to feel drained by the realities and problems of our lives. Do we then make excuses and consider ourselves "exempt" from helping others? After all, it could take some of our time, money, and/or energy – all of which often seem to be in short supply.

The best example concerning being truly loving was set for us by Jesus Christ. Notice that even while being crucified, He was busy performing acts of love. His heart was not hardened by what had transpired and the intense pain He was suffering. First, He asked His Father to forgive the two criminals who were also being crucified. He considered that, in reality, they didn't know what they were doing. In Luke 23:42 we find that one of the criminals said: "Lord, remember me when you come into Your kingdom." Notice that Jesus was not focusing on Himself although He was suffering in intense agony. He answered the criminal, assuring him that he would be with Jesus in paradise.

Secondly, even as Jesus was in the process of dying, He was filled with loving concern for His mother and asked John to care for her as his mother. Then He asked His mother to look on John as her son (John 19:26-27). Yes, His mind was continually thinking of others. Christ, our Lord and Master, served His Father by caring for people. Likewise, we too must serve our Lord by lovingly meeting the needs of those around us.

In Matthew 24:12 we read that at the end of the age the love of many will grow cold. We certainly do not want this to happen to us! Instead, let us strive to ask God daily to show us what we can do – in love – to help and serve

others who are suffering in their trials and troubles. In I Corinthians 12:26 we are told:

“And if one part [of the body of Christ] suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.” [NIV]

Once you really begin to consider the welfare of others with your own awareness and sensitivity, then get prepared to be a blessing to them! Soon you will notice an amazing thing will begin to happen -- and that is this -- while you have been busily serving God and helping others, He has begun taking care of your problems! ATTITUDE is what it really comes down to! It all begins in our minds and hearts. Notice this:

I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds. [Jeremiah 17:10 – NASV]

By this we can see that God examines our feelings, and even tests our very innermost thoughts.

Now I can almost hear someone saying, “But the difficulty is, I don’t know what “gifts” I have that I can share with others.” The answer will be different for each of us. For some it may be in the form of money donated for worthy causes, but for the majority of us it will be in the form of TIME. God often does use us to help others even when we ourselves are suffering with imperfect health and broken down bodies. I am always amazed to see this in action. We all have gifts to use and we will soon find that blessings which He gives so abundantly to each of us, can be and should be used to help others. Sometimes just “being there” – comforting them – when someone has received devastating news can be an incredible help. Sometimes, saying “I understand” can be supportive and encouraging. The most important thing is to take positive loving action – never thinking of excuses why we can’t be bothered to help others when there is a need.

Are we *aware* that there are thousands of “fragile hearts” out there in need of mending? Many may be strangers, it may even surprise us to find that quite a few may be people we already know, perhaps sitting right there in the midst of our own church congregations. Some people may be very lonely (possibly widowed), a number of people may be enduring difficult illnesses, others are without jobs, and then some are encountering marriage problems, while other may have lost a loved one. There are a surprising number of people who just need someone to give them a bit of encouragement. Sometimes a simple loving phone call or an encouraging note can really work wonders.

Are you good at crafts? Baking? Running errands? There is a world of opportunity just waiting for your own unique skills or talents to be used. For

example, we had a lovely lady at church who took on the job of teaching several of us how to crochet. It took a great deal of patience and TIME on her part, but she was gladly willing. The results of her efforts continue in the variety of beautiful handiwork made in our congregation.

Proverbs 22:9

9 A generous [woman] will [herself] be blessed,
For [she] shares [her] food with the poor. [NIV]

In addition, here is something we need to understand: the resources we currently have as individual women were given to us by God to use and invest for Him. God wants them to be developed and cultivated in order to produce yet even more. And guess what? When we invest these resources to help others, God will provide us with even more to give. Here is another fact: Those who are recipients of your help, in whatever form you choose it to be, will surely thank and praise God – and will pray for you. It is so true that as we bless others, we are always blessed in return. That's God's way!

My love and prayers go out to all you aspiring Proverbs 31 women. I am hoping and praying, that today and every day, you will look for the opportunities that God is giving you to serve someone. And, that you take your place alongside Jesus who is the ultimate servant of all. How many of you are willing to courageously step out the next time you see a need – to fill it? Are you ready and willing to stand up to help mend the next “fragile heart” you encounter?

May God fill each of you abundantly with the gifts He has chosen especially for you. May He also supply you with every resource that you need, including the compassion, the inexhaustible depth of love and joy required in order to serve others. In addition, may He supply the strength of character and the enduring faith and patience to accomplish your mission. Most of all, may He give you the guidance and power needed from His Holy Spirit to be the very best “**fragile heart-mender**” you can be!

Much love to you all,

Priscilla

P.S. One more thought: If you ever think you are too small or unimportant to have any impact, just try going to bed with a mosquito!