

Prescriptions
FOR A
WOMAN'S
Soul

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DEDICATION

With all my love to my mother Jean Grant Vance, who first gave me physical life and then taught me about eternal life, and to my husband Tom Rollins, my partner for life in Jesus Christ. “Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:13).

CONTENTS

Preface	7
Introduction	9
1 Faith—the Foundation	11
2 Virtue—the Soul’s Compass	25
3 Knowledge—the Key	39
4 Temperance—the Boundaries	51
5 Patience—the Daily Practice	65
6 Godliness—the Fountain of Immortality	77
7 Kindness—the Healing Oil	87
8 Charity—the Choice	99
9 Abundance—the Divine Diagnosis	111

PREFACE

I have always enjoyed creating and teaching Bible lessons for ladies' classes of all ages. This workbook was written with a desire to continue to make my "calling and election sure" and to spotlight some of the biblical women who are outstanding examples of the qualities Peter listed (2 Peter 1:5–11). I pray that this small book will assist you in your diligent effort to live a Christian life. May God bless and keep you all.

INTRODUCTION

The apostle Peter most likely wrote this letter very late in his life. The days of his impetuous spirit and hair-trigger temper were long gone. He had personally witnessed his Savior's being brutally crucified by the Romans. He had lived many years haunted by the memory of his own denial of Christ.

Yes, Peter was all of these things when he wrote the book of 2 Peter, but he was much more. He was a man who had raised the dead (Acts 9:40), preached the good news of Jesus Christ and Him crucified to a countless multitude (Acts 2), established churches, and proclaimed to thousands the gospel of Christ as the key to eternal life.

It is here, at the end of his life, that we can picture Peter as a kind of "soul physician" writing prescriptions for Christ's disciples of the first century and for all Christians yet to come. But instead of prescribing medicines to promote physical health, his prescriptions promoted spiritual health, assuring participants an entrance "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

We women often find ourselves in the role of physical caretakers who must be especially receptive to physicians' instructions. But who is our spiritual caretaker? *Prescriptions for a Woman's Soul* is designed as a spiritual guide from this seasoned apostle. In short, Peter prescribes not only the foundation of faith, but he also gives additional "prescriptions" to make us fit for the church—the kingdom of heaven.

What are our objectives for these lessons?

- ✎ Define each quality prescribed by Peter.
- ✎ Search the Bible to find out how we can acquire each characteristic.

- ✠ Examine the lives of women in the Bible who possessed each attribute.

The entire book is based on 2 Peter 1:5–11:

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So come, let us begin our study of *Prescriptions for a Woman's Soul*.

CHAPTER
1

Faith

THE FOUNDATION

PRESCRIPTION



And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity (2 Peter 1:5–7).

PHYSICIAN'S INSTRUCTIONS



Blessed is the man [or woman] that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is (Jeremiah 17:7).

DAILY DOSE



Hebrews 11:1	Hebrews 11:6
1 Corinthians 11:1	Romans 12:3
Matthew 17:19–20	

What Is Faith?

Peter's first "soul prescription" instructs us to "add to your faith" all the godly attributes that follow. Since we know that faith is to be our foundation, it is extremely important that

we understand what faith really is. The Scriptures say, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). This passage uses a legal term, "evidence," to explain faith. Evidence is something offered as proof of certain facts. Faith is our proof of heaven and all the other "things not seen."

Hebrews 11:6 gives us further reasons for defining and seeking faith: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." You must desire to please God, otherwise, why would you be studying

this book? Since we can't be pleasing if we lack faith, then it is our duty to own it and to add to it the other graces that Peter describes.

OUR
CHRISTIAN
FAITH MUST
BE FED AND
CHERISHED.

It is clear that having a genuine faith in God is the first condition of our salvation. The only way we will ever be in the presence of God in heaven is to become like His Son, Jesus Christ. If we hope to imitate Christ as Paul instructed (1Corinthians 11:1 ASV) it is necessary for us to add each of Peter's prescriptions to our own characters.

Just as a pediatrician's list for a young mother includes things that will help her baby grow up strong and whole, Peter's list describes specific qualities we Christian women should add to our faith in order to make our "calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10). In short, when we start to follow his directions, we are well on the way to becoming mature, whole Christians.

Our faith can grow. Paul commended the Christians in Thessalonica, "because your faith groweth exceedingly" (2 Thessalonians 1:3). But be careful. Our faith can also decrease. Jesus reprimanded His disciples when their faith

faltered: “O ye of little faith” (Matthew 6:30). Peter acknowledged that faith can fluctuate when he said we should be “giving all diligence” to keep adding on to our existing good character. The entire growth process helps us understand “what manner of persons” we ought to be (2 Peter 3:11).

Look again at our “Prescription” text. Peter emphasizes that faith is to be nurtured. Just as a baby grows strong by eating nourishing foods and getting lots of rest and exercise, women become stronger Christians by acquiring virtue, knowledge, and all the other qualities Peter lists. As a baby must be cared for and loved, so our Christian faith must be fed and cherished. If faith the size of a mustard seed can move mountains, just imagine what a strong, mature faith made up of all these qualities can do!

And Jesus said unto them . . . Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you (Matthew 17:20).

Don’t you want to strive for this type of faith?

How Can I Live By Faith?

The seedlings of true faith are planted each time a person hears the gospel taught by a knowledgeable servant of God.

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:14–17).

The Scriptures tell us:

- ✧ The just shall live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4).
- ✧ Faith can make us whole (Matthew 9:22; Mark 5:34).
- ✧ Faith can save us (Luke 7:50).
- ✧ Christians are to “walk by faith, not by sight”
(2 Corinthians 5:7).

Certainly, these and other passages convince us that the foundation of our Christian character must be faith.

How can we develop the kind of sustaining faith that will see us through until Judgment Day? What can Christian girls or women do to strengthen their foundations of faith? Consider the following:

1. *Listen to the Word of God as often as possible.* Romans 10:17 tells us that “faith cometh by hearing,” and Proverbs 4:20–22 cautions us to keep the Word in the midst of our hearts. *Listen* means to understand and to react to what you hear or read. Think about what you read in the Bible. Talk about it with your family members and friends. Reflect on it. Decide what place the scriptural teachings will have in your daily life. Make a conscious decision to hear the Word proclaimed publicly as often as possible. Invite others to hear it with you. Use all the technological devices you have in order to listen to the Bible being read, sermons being preached, and scriptural songs being sung.

What we listen to affects what we believe. The television is a marvelous invention, but it often takes the place of activities that enable us to hear the Word of God. Why not use it to watch and listen to the godly programs which are becoming more numerous each year? If you aren't sure where to find these kinds of programs, ask your

minister, an elder, or a close Christian friend for advice. You might be surprised at the variety that exists. Use your computer to read articles written by ministers and other members of the Lord's church all over this country. Use your CD player or MP3 player to listen to scriptural a cappella singing groups. By doing these things you can optimize your opportunities to listen to the Word of God as often as possible.

2. *Obey God in your daily activities.* In Acts 5:29, Peter and the other apostles stated, "We ought to obey God rather than men." After all, we have the world's best book to guide us in exercising our spiritual muscles. Faith grows stronger with use, so use it as often as possible in your daily interactions with others.

We women are not hesitant to tell a neighbor or even a stranger about a sale at the local grocery or a remedy for some ailment. Why not mention the cure for the soul? Today might be the best time to invite a neighbor for

—  —
 WHY NOT
 USE TV TO
 WATCH GODLY
 PROGRAMS?
 —————

coffee or tea, along with a private Bible study at your table! Not only should Christian women take time everyday to communicate with God through prayer and study, they should choose to obey God's teachings through their daily relations with others.

3. *Always be thankful.* Paul reminds us, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Develop a sincere attitude of gratitude and model it for your family and friends. Be thankful for all things great and small and let God know that you are (Philippians 4:6). Take time to give thanks before meals. Make it a point to say thank you to others

and mean it. Fill your speech with sincere expressions of thankfulness to God and man.

4. *Encourage others as they strive to be faithful.* Make it a practice to associate with members of the Lord's church at times and places other than worship. People of like interests and beliefs enjoy spending their leisure time together. Ephesians 4:12 tells us to "edify [build up, encourage] the body of Christ [fellow Christians]." A kind word spoken at the right time can make a huge difference in another Christian's life. Take every opportunity to give sincere encouragement to others. Worship regularly. Your presence is an encouragement to others as they seek to honor God and build their faith.

5. *Talk the talk and mean it!* Fill your conversations with sincere references to God's Son and His Word. The psalmist states, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

Although it may sound a bit trite, do ask yourself, "What would Jesus do, and what would Jesus say?" Your status as a follower of Christ should not be a mystery to your daily associates. Be a good example in word and deed without beating others over the head with your "goodness." They will know you belong to Christ if you are consistent and sincere in your efforts to do and say the right thing in every circumstance. Be careful to use a kind tone when you speak! Misplaced sarcasm or thoughtless comments may negatively affect the way others see you. If you are a caring person on the inside, make sure your "outside" shows it.

6. *Pray often.* One of the very best ways to strengthen your faith in God is to talk to Him daily. The Bible even gives

examples of whom to pray for and what to pray about. We can pray for ourselves as Jesus did (Hebrews 5:7). Pray for each other (James 5:16) and for our enemies (Luke 6:28; Matthew 5:44). We are told to pray for the ministers of the gospel (2 Thessalonians 3:1–2). Pray for the sick, which includes the spiritually sick (James 5:14–16). Remember the rulers of our country in prayer (1 Timothy 2:1–2), along with all men everywhere (1 Timothy 2:1). And pray always and without ceasing (Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). Finally, we should ask God daily to increase our faith and make it stronger (Mark 9:24; Luke 17:5).

7. *Be proactive.* Create situations that are likely to bring forth good things rather than staying on guard to minimize the unavoidable messes of haphazard planning. How can women use their faith in God every day to protect and enrich lives? Review the previous steps and you will conclude that each step is proactive. The assurance that God loves us and gave His Son for us (John 3:16) is the fuel that enables us to plan and work fearlessly for His kingdom (2 Timothy 1:7). Let's be on the lookout for opportunities to study the Bible with friends and neighbors, to pray for them, and to speak kindly to them. We must be ready always to serve others, because our actions loudly proclaim our beliefs and convictions.

Adverse Side Effects of Faithfulness

Your physician may caution you to be watchful for negative side effects when you begin taking a new prescription. Similarly, Christians should expect to experience some adverse reactions as they demonstrate their continued faithfulness to God. Here are some common negative side effects of increased faithfulness.

- ✠ *Doubt*—Doubt may creep into your thinking when you are feeling the most alone or weak. Friends may react to you differently once you become a faithful Christian. Family members may be doubtful of your sincerity. Others may ridicule your faith in God whom they cannot see. Recognize doubt and cast it out by giving aid to someone who needs help.
- ✠ *Disobedience*—Disobedience is a silent condition that may slip into your thoughts and actions when you least expect it. It may come from within or from the comments and actions of others. What can encourage you to stumble in your Christian walk? Why will you disobey God? The most common reasons are the TV programs you watch, the books and magazines you read, and the friends you choose.
- ✠ *Worry*—Worry is a feeling of uneasiness, apprehension, or dread. People who worry live in the future, spending a great deal of the present's time speculating on what might happen. They continually fear the worst. Anxiety, or a general feeling of uneasiness, often accompanies worry. Worry can steal years of a woman's time that could be used laboring in God's kingdom. Are you a worrier? Remind yourself that God is in charge at all times (Psalm 103:19). He knows everything (Job 7:20). And He is everywhere (Psalm 139:7).

At the first sign of an adverse side effect read:

1 Peter 5:7	John 14:27	Psalm 40:1–3
Isaiah 40:31	John 14:1–3	Isaiah 41:10
Psalm 32:7–9	Romans 8:31–32	John 14:18
Proverbs 3:5–6	James 1:2–4	Romans 8:24–25

WOMEN OF FAITH



Mary of Nazareth

Mary was a humble village maiden who lived in a town so insignificant that it led Nathaniel to say, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46.) As the mother of Jesus, Mary is better known than any female character in the Bible. She has long been the best-known woman in the world. The Bible does not tell us anything about her appearance or her family’s importance. She was probably a poor teenager when she was espoused to Joseph.

- ✧ *Mary had a beautiful character.* Gabriel, the angel of the Lord, told her, “Blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28). However, just because she was called blessed doesn’t mean that we should make her the object of our worship.
- ✧ *Mary was spiritually fit to be the mother of Jesus.* Following Gabriel’s complimentary proclamation that she was highly favored, the angel of the Lord said, “The Lord is with thee” (Luke 1:28). Mary was obedient to God’s will and was physically pure, as shown in the miracle of the virgin birth. She also was thankful to God and was humbled by His confidence in her (Luke 1:46–56).
- ✧ *Mary was human.* She needed a savior just as we do. Mary was not the mother of God as some teach; she was simply God’s vessel to bring His Son to earth in human form. “But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19). Mary’s good attitude during that time probably influenced the rest of her life.
- ✧ *Mary was obedient.* Think about all the questions that must have run through her mind after Gabriel’s visit! How did

God want her to raise His Son? Why was she chosen? How should she tell Joseph? These thoughts and so many more must have bombarded her, but she managed all of them well because she had faith in God and a willingness to do His will. “And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her” (Luke 1:38).

So far as we know, after Gabriel told Mary she would bear God’s Son, she was never again visited by an angel. Joseph, not Mary, was told in a dream to go to Egypt in order to save the Christ child. As we read about Mary later in her life, we see her close to her Son, working continually to do His will (Mark 3:31–35; Acts 1:12–14).

God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus because He knew she was able to hold fast to her faith, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” She did not know the future, but she was compelled to accept, with the help of her faith, the astonishing announcements and the revealing challenges of being the mother of our Lord. Through joys and trials, she trusted her Son and she trusted her God. Don’t you want to have a faith like Mary’s?

Hannah

Hannah was the favorite wife of Elkanah. Sadly, she had no children. However, her husband’s second wife, Peninnah, had several, and she delighted in taunting Hannah about her barrenness. Although her husband frequently reassured her of his love, Hannah’s greatest desire was to be a mother.

After many years of barrenness, Hannah came to the tabernacle in Shiloh, where Eli was high priest, and prayed,

O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child,

then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head (1 Samuel 1:11).

Note Hannah's attributes.

- ☞ *Hannah was selective.* Did Hannah run to her next door neighbor and bare her soul? Did she go to a fortune teller to see what the future might hold? No, she went to God for a prescription that would grant her heart's desire—a man-child.
- ☞ *Hannah was honest.* Eli questioned Hannah's actions and was able to understand her reasons for praying even though God had taken away her voice. He told her that God would answer her prayer. A few months later, Hannah's son, Samuel, was born. She loved him with all her heart and she remembered her promise to God. When he was old enough, Hannah took Samuel to Shiloh to live with Eli in the house of the Lord. Hannah was faithful to her promises to God; she honored her commitment.
- ☞ *Hannah was a servant.* Each year she visited her son and presented him a coat that she had made.

Hannah is an example of faith in action. Her honest, serving attitude was evidence of her trust in God. She put her hand in His hand and never looked back. Don't you want to have a faith like Hannah's?

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR PRESCRIPTION



1. Peter did not always have all the faith he needed. Why do you think that Peter worked diligently throughout his life to become a better Christian and to have stronger faith?
2. Discuss practical examples of a proactive faith.

3. Give three reasons why worry is counterproductive to the development and maintenance of faith.
4. Discuss some ways women today can attain the kind of faith Peter describes.
5. When Mary learned she was pregnant, what are some of the issues she had to be concerned with that involved her betrothed, Joseph? How did her faith help her in her approach?
6. How did Mary once express her faith in her own Son? (John 2:5.)
7. How do Mary's words in Luke 1:38 apply to us today?
8. Who remained at the cross after all the men had gone away? (John 19:25.)
9. What was Hannah's reaction when Eli told her that her prayer would be granted? Why do you think she believed him?
10. Hannah gave Samuel over to Eli for a life of service to God. How is that a good example of Hannah's faith?
11. Had you been in Hannah's place, how would you have felt about:
 - a. being barren?
 - b. snide remarks from Peninnah?
 - c. Eli's accusation of your being drunk?
 - d. God's promise of a son?
 - e. turning your little boy over to a strange man to be mentored by him?

12. After discussing the above, give a summary of your perception of Hannah's faith.

FURTHER RESEARCH



- ☞ What did Rahab do to merit being listed in the “roll call of the faithful” in Hebrews 11?
- ☞ What statement did the woman with the issue of blood make that proved her faith?
- ☞ How can we tell the difference between our faith and our emotions?

CHAPTER 2

Virtue

THE SOUL'S COMPASS

PRESCRIPTION



And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity (2 Peter 1:5–7).

PHYSICIAN'S INSTRUCTIONS



Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Philippians 4:8).

DAILY DOSE



2 Timothy 3:16–17

2 Timothy 2:22

Ephesians 5:15–16

Ruth 3:11

Proverbs 31:10–31