

CROWN OF CREATION

A BIBLE STUDY SERIES

WOMEN OF SCANDAL

CINDY COLLEY



Books with Class

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To Rebeka Colley,
who came into the Colley family during the writing
of this volume.

Rebekah, God blessed us with your coming, just when we
needed you most. May you and Caleb raise up the new
generation of Colley kids so that the house of His servants
may continue ever before Him.

2 Samuel 7:29

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PREFACE

I never thought I would write a book called *Women of Scandal*. It sounds like the kind of writing I'd be afraid to hand to my publisher, much less for which to account in judgment before God. But it is God who wrote their stories in the first place. As I neared completion of this book, a compilation of the stories of the women surrounding the reigns of Saul and David, I knew that *Women of Scandal* was the right name. Impropropriety, wrongdoing, defamation, shocking events, skeletons materializing from closets, and smear campaigns are all woven into their diaries. Murder, adultery, idolatry, lies, anger, incest, rape, greed, and power grabs—it's all there. But unlike the dramatizations of scandal produced by Hollywood, these historical accounts give us the real picture of sin: its seemingly innocent beginnings, its blinding appeal, and the pain and destruction it continues to exact long after its commission.

A number of convicting lessons unfold in the stories of these women. But if there is one paramount emergent and practical lesson from this collection of women, it's this: Learning the consequences of sin from the Word of God is always preferable to learning them from experience. Sin first entangles and then chokes the sinner, but the ends of the entangling strands of sin's web still dangle loosely and may affect peripheral people in negative ways in future times and far-away places.

It's my prayer that *Women of Scandal* can go to many of the places in hearts and lives where the devil would like to be. I hope in its pages you will find resolve and courage to keep him out and to keep lust from conceiving to bring forth sin (James 1:15). Should there be lives already entangled, I pray for a strong resolve, true repentance, and renewed purpose so that your joy in Him can be full. After all, His redemption is the eternal answer to every scandalous departure. Even as God suffered long with immoral and unholy departures in the early kingdom of Israel, His business was to raise up the house of David as the agency for the conveyance of the Savior to earth. May we praise Him for His redemptive ability to restore the joy of salvation (Psalm 51:12).

—Cindy Colley

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LESSON 1

ICHABOD'S MOM

SOMEONE COULD HAVE
USED A GOOD SPANKING!



Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas's wife, was with child, due to be delivered; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and gave birth, for her labor pains came upon her. And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not fear, for you

have borne a son." But she did not answer, nor did she regard it. Then she named the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. And she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured" (1 Samuel 4:19–22).



Eli paid a great price for his failure to discipline his sons. Connected to that failure was the loss of battle and the loss of the lives of both of his sons.

A FAILURE TO DISCIPLINE

There was a day in the childhood of Phinehas when his father Eli, the high priest of God in Shiloh, failed miserably.

And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever (1 Samuel 3:13–14 ESV).

Eli paid a great price for his failure to discipline his sons. Connected to that failure was the loss of battle, the loss of the lives of both of his sons, the loss of the life of his daughter-in-law, the loss of the ark of God to the Philistines, and the mortal fall of Eli himself, when he broke his neck and died.

Phinehas' wife was married to a man who was not disciplined or restrained by his father. Eli was a good man, but he failed in the very important and consequential job of properly disciplining his children.

What are signs in your community that children are not restrained?
What can we Christians do in our communities to encourage discipline and help influence unrestrained children?

Find other examples from Scripture of parents who were righteous but failed to produce righteousness in their children. How do these examples help us to make wise parenting choices?

As I was preparing to write this lesson, I received a letter from a mom asking this question: “So, if my children go astray, does the blame lie with the parents? Are there ever cases in which no fault lies with the parents? How should I view my parental responsibility of discipline in the home?”

In answering this mom’s questions, we must find balance between two points:

1. The very biblical injunctions to train and discipline in our homes.
2. The equally valid teachings of Scripture regarding the free moral agency of every adult.

Parents cannot make adult children choose righteousness. Once children reach adulthood, they have the choice to accept or reject Christianity. And even when they choose to follow the Lord, as they may have been trained to do, they must at some point own their faith. The determination of adult children to follow Jesus for life, in all decisions and circumstances, must be given from individual hearts and consciences. This may not be

a decision they fully make on the day of baptism; maybe it is a process. Nonetheless, an adult preparing for heaven must choose the path of evidence-based faith for her life. That freedom of choice is the reason for “who-soever will” passages, the strong call to repentance in 2 Peter 3:9, and the clear decision made by the adult Moses in Hebrews 11:24–28:

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

Notice the refusal, the choice, the consideration, the “looking,” the lack of fear, and the endurance. All of these traits and actions were motivated by his own adult faith. He made choices as a grown-up.

But none of us would deny that Moses’ choices were strongly influenced by the training of his parents, especially his mother. We know that Jochebed made some faith-filled decisions that resulted in the amazing man for God that Moses became. Sometimes we try to comfort moms by absolving them of all responsibility when their children go astray. Our attempts, though well-intentioned, may lead young mothers to believe something that just is not true. Mothers have a tremendous influence on the eternal destinies of children. We do great harm to young mothers when we fail to emphasize this critical and obvious principle in our “Titus 2” kinds of classes and conversations.

Ask mothers and grandmothers to share, in Titus 2 fashion, effective methods of punishment. Then ask those women to contribute examples of positive reinforcements for good behaviors that have worked in their homes.

WISDOM ABOUT CHILD DISCIPLINE

While the proverbs may often be general principles rather than hard and fast rules, they do mean something, and the maxims must have an application in our lives. “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6) may not mean that every child who is raised by parents in the way he should go will live for God all of his days, but doesn’t it teach that there are certain principles parents can follow to help insure a child’s future faithfulness?

Among those principles is faithful discipline—restraining our children from following their own selfish wills. Other proverbs make it very clear that a child without punishment for wrongdoing, an integral part of the discipline process, is being denied a vital component of faithful living.

He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly (Proverbs 13:24).

Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction (Proverbs 19:18).

Find other proverbs about parenting. List the parenting traits that come from this great book of inspired principles.

Under the law of Moses, consistently rebellious children were to be put to death (Deuteronomy 21:18–21), so in Proverbs 19:18 we see that parents were not to give up hope for rebellious children too soon. They were to hope and trust in the effectiveness of corporal punishment; spanking, for example.

Spanking is an appropriate and very biblical method of discipline, but it is not the only good method. Positive reinforcement for good behavior rather than punishment for wrongdoing is smart and effective under certain conditions. Still spanking, administered lovingly and in measured doses, is, hands-down, the simplest and most effective form of punishment.

SOME DOS AND DON'TS OF EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

Dos

1. *Do be consistent.* Whatever was wrong yesterday is still wrong today, no matter if you are stressed or experiencing PMS today. Whatever exacts a spanking at any particular time needs always to exact a spanking.
2. *Do spank for outright disobedience or verbal disrespect every time.* Be sure you understand completely that there was intentional disobedience or disrespect. That means you will not spank a child the very first time he picks up the glass object on Mrs. Duncan's coffee table. You will tell him no. But once you determine that he is disobeying, a spanking is in order.
3. *Do practice discipline.* You are probably thinking, "What does she mean? Isn't that the whole topic of this part of the lesson?" By "practice" I mean practice like a drill or a repetitive exercise. When you give your young child a command, such as, "Stop playing with the kitty and climb in the high chair for lunch," and the child continues to play with the kitty, you may, in the hurry of events, want to give the toddler a swat on the bottom and pick her up and put her in the chair yourself. That's not a terrible choice, but a more effective choice is to give that child a swat, and then say, "Now let's try again. You play with the kitty." She complies and then you give the command again. Command-swat-repeat until you get the desired result. This is both laborious and loving. I once did it for forty-five minutes with a strong-willed thirteen-month-old. My persistence was both excruciating and rewarding.
4. *Do be sure that you, as parent, always win in any war of the wills.* When you begin this very effective battle of the wills on any occasion, you have the potential to make great progress in the long-term molding of your child's view of authority. If you surrender in the middle of the battle and let the child have his way you are eroding, rather than building respect for, authority.

DON'TS

1. *Don't yell.* You do not want your children to obey you because you are loud. You want them to obey you because you are Mama!
2. *Don't abuse.* We really do know the difference between anger-induced lashing and gentle but firmly administered discipline. We know that

one is of God and the other is a sin of the devil. Never leave any red marks on your children that will remain more than fifteen minutes. Never bruise, burn, squeeze, or immerse your child in water. Use your hand, rather than other objects, to pop your children when needed. You really know the force with which you are touching them when you use your hands. Also your hands are always “handy.”

3. *Don't lie.* Whatever the good thing you promise your children, keep your promise. Make the same commitment when you promise a spanking. Never idly say, “If you touch that again . . .” or “If you say one more word about that . . .” The gift of your word's reliability is huge in developing trust and respect in your children. It is also huge in the development of their own integrity as they travel to adulthood.
4. *Don't count.* I was recently speaking with a grandmother who spanked her small grandson when he blatantly disobeyed her. He whirled around to her and exclaimed, “Why Grandma! What are you doing?” She calmly explained that she was spanking him because he did not obey her. “But Grandma,” he wailed, “you didn't even get to one, and I was waitin' for three! What are you thinkin'?” God doesn't count for us when He commands. He expects our immediate attention and obedience. That's respect. Sometimes mothers teach counting and even fractions (two-and-a-haaaaallf) during attempts at discipline, but they fail to teach respect.

FAR-REACHING RAMIFICATIONS

This has been quite a discipline tangent as we considered the wife of the wicked and rebellious Phinehas. Many parents today, like Eli, are getting a lot of things right. But this one practical area neglected can do a lot to negate the wonderful things we do in the rearing of our children. For Eli, it is obvious. Sadly, the same mistake was made by the sweet little boy he mentored. Years later, Samuel made the same tragic error in parenting and he, too, paid a dear price for the failure to restrain his children, Joel and Abijah (1 Samuel 8:1–5). In fact, the nation which wanted a king used this parenting failure as their chief excuse to request a king, a request that would prove extremely detrimental to Israel. The ramifications of a failure to discipline are rarely reserved for one generation. The ramifications of proper

discipline are far-reaching, too. They are the peaceable fruits of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11):

Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

How does discipline yield peaceable fruits in the home? In a mother's heart? Discuss.

The pain of discipline is not reserved for the child only. It is grueling for the parent, and it takes diligence, a watchful eye, and a committed heart. But the “later” yield is the goal. Do you want the peaceable fruit of righteousness in your house? I do!

THE WRONG HUSBAND

Phinehas was not a good choice for a husband. Whether the marriage was arranged or the partners chose one another, this woman ended up married to the wrong man. Time and again in the *Crown of Creation* studies we have emphasized the importance of marrying the right person.

At the moment this woman realized that she was giving birth to a fatherless child, that both her husband and his brother had been killed in battle, and that the ark of the covenant had been taken by enemies, the clock could not be turned back to what might have been had she married someone different. How many times I have spoken with young women who would give all they have for the chance to rewind the clock and have a “redo” of the wedding day, to choose someone who honored God rather than someone who blasphemed Him as did Phinehas. The regret is verbalized in many ways:

- ✧ "My husband wants me to leave my son at home with him on Sunday mornings."
- ✧ "My husband becomes drunk in front of our children."
- ✧ "My husband watches filthy shows on TV when our kids are in the room."
- ✧ "My husband yells uncontrollably at our children."
- ✧ "My husband regularly looks at pornography."
- ✧ "My husband has no interest in studying the Bible or praying with me."
- ✧ "My children are using bad language that they hear their father using."
- ✧ "My husband wastes our money on gambling and partying."

Start praying now that your children will choose God's faithful children as spouses. Start praying for the parents of your future daughter-in-law or son-in-law that they will be, even now, bringing them up to be faithful Christians. Make sure your children know that you are praying for these people. Don't wait until your daughter is falling for a Phinehas, an undisciplined rebel, to become vigilant about the matter of marriage. If you do, you may end up with an Ichabod for a grandson, an innocent child who has hardly a chance of growing up with faith in the Lord.

A practical children's book, *Picking Melons and Mates*, is available at www.thecolleyhouse.org. Its goal is to plant seeds in kids' hearts for choosing spiritual heroes and heroines to marry, and it comes with a 21-day Family Bible Time guide. It is worth consideration as you prepare your children, even very small ones, for this decision-of-a-lifetime that can make or break them spiritually.

List ideas for mothers of young children that will help them choose godly spouses.

THE PLUNDER OF THE BATTLE

It's telling to notice that Phinehas and his brother Hophni brought the ark of God as some sort of lucky amulet that the elders of Israel determined would cause the battle to be given to their people (1 Samuel 4:4). It was true that between the cherubim on either end of the ark was the mercy seat, the representation of the dwelling place of God among them. It was also true that the ark had been left behind on one other occasion, and the battle was lost (Numbers 14:44–45). Even the premature shout of triumph rather than the plea for forgiveness and prayer of submission belied the pride of Israel. They were glorying, but not in the Lord. It is clear from this passage that the ark's being in place was no substitute for the hearts of the people, both priests and warriors, being in the right place.

- ✧ It is not the Bible on the coffee table but the Bible in my conscience.
- ✧ It is not the cross around my neck but the cross around my heart.
- ✧ It is not the name of Jesus on a decal or tattoo but His authority in every decision I make.

These convictions enable me to win spiritual battles. Contemplate the following attitudes and consequences:

If I presume to depend on the congregation I claim as “mine” for my personal righteousness;
If I tend to call the preacher when I need a prayer answered;
If, indeed, I have no relationship of deep faith personally,
Then the mercy seat, the place of propitiation, for me, is gone with the enemy. I can say with the mother of Ichabod, “Where is the glory?” I cannot glory in the Lord (2 Corinthians 10:17).

What are some examples of outward symbols without spiritual substance?

Cindy's Reflections

Peace

There's a fungus on the bathtub toys
And handprints on the door.
I'm still in my old blue robe
And, my, it's almost four!

I can't find the other pink sneaker;
My new sweater faded and shrunk.
My yard sale was rained out last Friday;
And now, what to do with the junk?

My youngest can't sleep well at nighttime;
My oldest can sleep right through class.
I thought the teacher conference was this week,
But found out just now it was last.

There are holes in my oldest son's blue jeans;
And, what's worse, is that he likes them there.
I just spent forty bucks on my daughter's new perm,
And she "can't do a thing with her hair."

My deductible's met, for the most part;
And, of course, it's the "least part" who's sick.
The interest rate rose, the house payment went up,
And our budget took one more big lick.

"What else?" I said, grabbing the finger
That I smashed in the silverware drawer.
This stress is about to get to me;
I don't think I can take any more.

And then, as I called them for dinner,
Each hurriedly ran to his chair;
And tiny hands folded, our youngest
Talked to our Father in prayer.

“Thank You for Mommy and Daddy
And brother and sister and me.
Thank You for beans and corn and meat,”
He said, as he peeked out to see.

“And thank You for pie—That’s the best part!
Why, God, You just give us so much!
Help me to be good and happy.”
And I whispered “Amen,” my heart touched.

As I served this, my child’s, plate for dinner,
I, too, offered my silent prayer;
A plea for forgiveness for failing
To remember His unfailing care.

A promise to understand stresses,
As calls to a quiet place of prayer;
A pledge to remember that messes
Are leftovers from His blessings there.

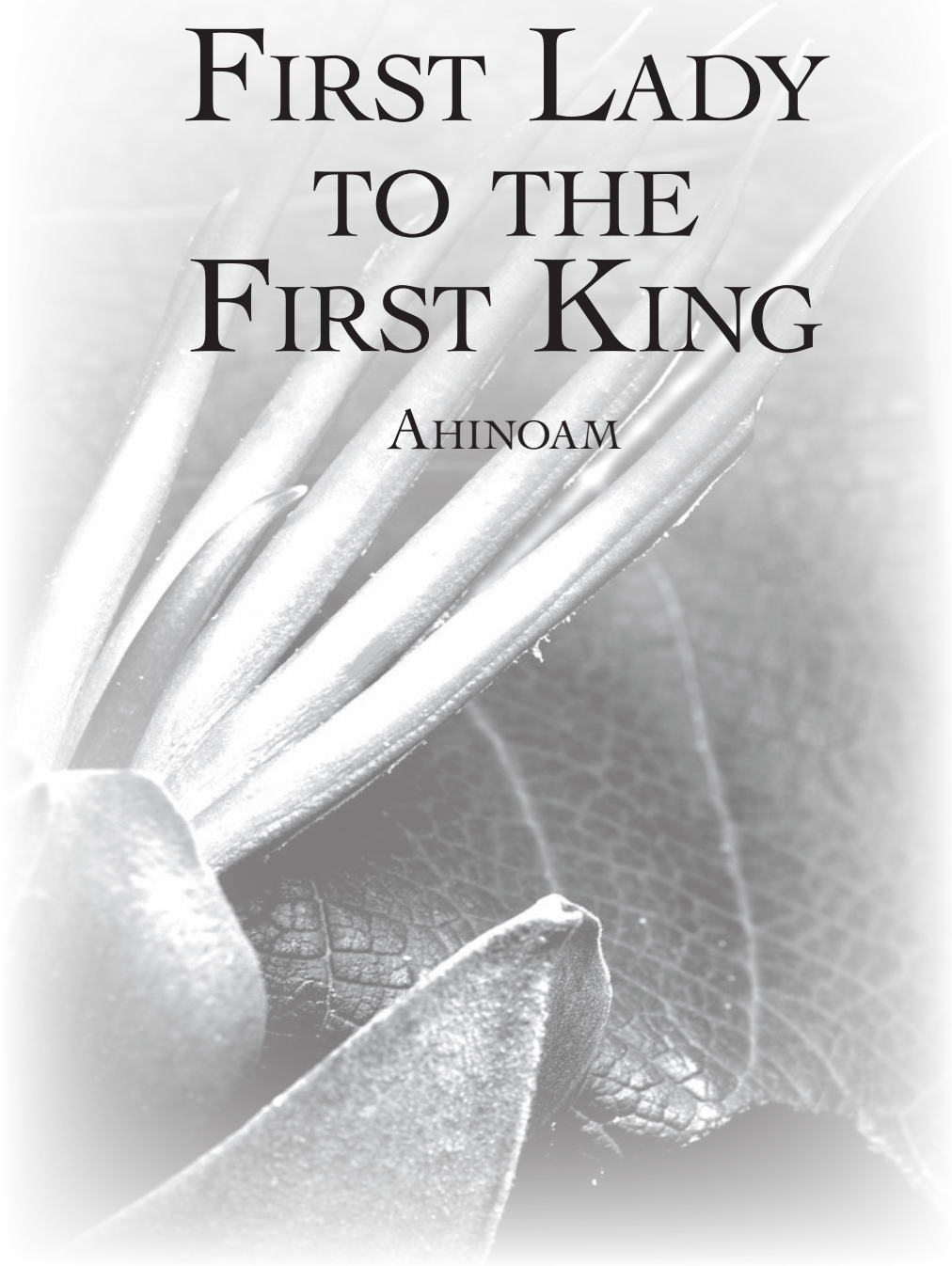
Tomorrow the fungus will be there,
And handprints will still show the grease.
But help me to look to you, Father,
And find that, within me, there’s peace.



LESSON 2

FIRST LADY TO THE FIRST KING

AHINOAM



Inquiring minds want to know, but when it comes to Scripture, all minds should be inquiring. If there's one take-home from this study, it is this: when we dig into Scripture, there is generally a deeper layer immediately below the one we have just unearthed, and our lives will be blessed if we keep digging. Let's proceed with that premise.

Maybe you have never wanted to know anything about Ahinoam because you have never even heard of her. Perhaps you have read the Good Book all the way through, so you must have seen her name. But for the life of you, you can't remember who she was. And how could you possibly learn life lessons from someone so obscure that you cannot recall her biblical identity? Inquiring minds want to know.

Ahinoam was the first wife of King Saul, the first king of Israel. She was the first "first lady" of the young nation of Israel. From the slight mention of her in 1 Samuel 14:50, it's true that there is very little we can know, for sure, about her. But there are, at the very least, some assumptions we can make with relative confidence about Ahinoam and some lessons we can learn as we examine those probabilities.

The name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz. And the name of the commander of his army was Abner the son of Ner, Saul's uncle (1 Samuel 14:50).

Find another Ahinoam in the Old Testament. To whom was she married?

MARRIAGE DOESN'T ALWAYS GO ACCORDING TO PLAN

Ahinoam's new husband had, in all probability, either just become the first king of Israel or he was just about to enter that prestigious position. First Samuel 9:2 says he was tall, dark, and handsome—well, it almost says that. It says he was head and shoulders above the rest of the people and very good-looking. In fact, there was no one more handsome in the land. That dreamy man had been chosen by God to be the king of all Israel. Who would not have loved to be in the shoes of this young woman? Who would not want to be chosen by the "chosen"?

In the early days of her engagement and marriage to Saul, Ahinoam must have reflected on her position. There is no indication of her nobility or

rank in the nation prior to her marriage. Surely she must have marveled at her amazing good fortune. I can almost hear her musing, *Who am I to deserve such a man? How did I ever rate this tall, good-looking, brave man of God? I am simply the luckiest girl in the nation, and my life is destined for happiness and prosperity. I am the wife of the king!*

Ironically, as one can see from even a casual study of the life of Saul, this Mrs. Saul was in for a very difficult life. She would face much competition from other loves in her husband's life. She would, assuming she lived about as long as her husband lived, see him consumed by envy and a spirit of rebellion. She would see him hate and try to kill their own son. She would see him use her daughter as a bargaining chip and then dishonestly rescind his agreement. She was in for a life that would offer more than its share of pain.

While most problems in our homes could have been avoided by taking a good hard look at the man before the marriage, there are some cases in which women marry good honorable Christian men who change. As was the case with Saul, position or prestige sometimes changes a man. Disappointment in others or financial loss may alter a man's devotion to God. Sometimes it is sexual temptation or involvement in addictive behavior. While there is no temptation so great that a man cannot resist it (1 Corinthians 10:13), the devil is trying to get your husband to fall prey to his devices.

What sins may we commit that are unrelated to selfishness? In what sense is selfishness the basic sin that breeds all kinds of sin? What is the "root of all kinds of evil," according to the Word? How is even this "root" grounded in selfishness?

Saul was an abusive person. In what ways does abuse still exist among God's people today? How can we become better equipped to deal with this problem among our families in the church?

IF HE FALLS

How would I react if my godly husband were to fall? What if he is tempted by the devil and begins a downward spiritual spiral, sinking deeper and deeper into sin? What should I do?

1. *I must not fall with my husband*. Notice here that we are not speaking of a good and faithful man who makes mistakes. We are speaking of a husband who is living in sin. His conscience has been seared (1 Timothy 4:2).

As I counsel a woman who suddenly finds herself married to this kind of sinful man, I realize that although her sins may not be the same as those of her husband, she is often embittered, quickly becoming less committed to doing right. She is more vulnerable to the devil.

- ✧ A wife is tempted to lie in order to cover the sinful behavior of her husband.
- ✧ A woman begins to date non-Christian men after having put away her husband for adultery.
- ✧ A woman begins missing worship because she is embarrassed by her husband's behavior.
- ✧ A woman stops praying because she feels as if God is not listening.
- ✧ A mother becomes overwhelmed by trying to be the only godly parent and begins to make compromises in the way she is raising her children.

The devil has many ways to weaken wives whose husbands fall into sin. Let's predetermine the course we will take if ever placed in such a sad position. May I remember that I am spiritually married to Jesus and that my bond with Him is even stronger than the one I have with my husband.

Make a list of ways the devil may tempt women who are choosing to serve God after being abandoned by a once-faithful spouse.

2. *I will continue to be in the Word every day.* Notice the word *continue*. You cannot continue something that you have never begun. If you have not already made it a habit to study daily, begin now, even while beginning this new study, to put the Word into your heart regularly. It will be enriching now, but it may be a sanity saver if you face the devastation of a spouse gone astray. You do not want to follow after wickedness, so you must stay close to the Book, and then you will have a hard time following his lead into sin. “They draw near who follow after wickedness; they are far from Your law” (Psalm 119:150).

Offer tips that have helped you stay on track with daily Bible study. Think about times of day, tools, goals, and places for study.

3. *I will seek wise counsel.* As a Christian wife with a once-Christian husband, you have looked to your husband as a spiritual leader, just as the Bible commands (Ephesians 5:23–24). It’s very difficult to stop looking to that man as your mentor, your spiritual advisor. But sadly, if he has left the Lord, he can no longer be trusted to direct your spiritual conduct. You may need guidance desperately. Seek faithful people: elders who are in the Word and older women who fit the Titus 2:3–5 model. If you need professional counseling, be sure to seek out a Christian counselor, or, at the very least, a counselor who advises in accordance with biblical principles. Many women follow the counsel of a trusted but non-Christian counselor, right onto a path that will lead them to hell.



*If you have not
already made
it a habit to
study daily,
begin now.*

Have a class member list the qualifications of the woman from whom younger women should seek counsel. (See Titus 2:3.) Define those characteristics.

4. *I will work diligently to protect my kids from spiritual danger.* But understand this: Children, when their father or mother falls into sin, will be hurt. They cannot escape unscathed. However, many children with Christian backgrounds rise above such a situation to live faithful lives as adults. Cases in which kids end up spiritually successful are usually guided by a parent who remained faithful, even when the going got tough. In cases where the husband's sin has resulted in his abdication of parental responsibilities, the mother must parent to the point of exhaustion

almost every day. She must be sacrificially involved in the lives of her children, giving attention to discipline, helping with homework, and protecting, as much as possible, from the insecurities that come with divided parents. It may mean walking that fine line between ignoring sin, thus normalizing it, and conversely making it clear to her innocent children that their father is living in sin. There will be tough calls to make, but that mother's life must be filled with prayer, the Word, good counsel, and discretion. She cannot allow her emotions to strangle the joy out of her children's innocent years any more than is already necessitated by the sin.



*She cannot
allow her
emotions to
strangle the joy
out of her chil-
dren's innocent
years.*

Direct a class member to research the present-day statistics of the number of young people falling away from the Lord compared to those who are remaining faithful. How do these statistics directly relate to parental faithfulness and involvement in the church?

5. *I will not even begin to compromise with the world.* This world spews forth self-fulfillment as the philosophy that brings us through the tough times:

✧ “Isn’t it time you did something for you?”

✧ “You deserve to have a little fun too.”

✧ “You can’t let him rob you of your happiness.”

✧ “I think God wants me to be happy.”

That final point is an attempt to neutralize God’s authority. But even then, all the above is rubbish. God did not call us to be happy. He called us to be holy (1 Peter 1:16). Remember, when making tough calls in tough times, you can do anything for a lifetime. I know it’s hard. I know it’s exhausting. I know, on some days, life seems hopeless and it’s a struggle to go on. But try to see this life as God sees it. It’s a vapor or a flower that appears for a short time and, *poof*, it is gone as quickly as it came (James 4:13–17). It is so very temporary and yet, it is the battlefield that decides the eternal victory. Don’t let the devil get you so discouraged that you choose an instant pleasure that results in eternal damnation. You can do anything for a lifetime. You can bear any burden for the short sojourn to heaven.



*God did not
call us to be
happy. He
called us to
be holy.*

Can a modern-day Ahinoam be categorized as the woman in 1 Peter 3:1–6? List some ways she can try to win her once-faithful husband to the Lord?

6. *Children can be better, much better, than their fathers.* One of Ahinoam's sons was Jonathan! Frankly, it's difficult to see how a man like Saul could have raised a son like Jonathan, whose soul was knit with David's; who was willing to risk his own life in the protection of God's faithful anointed one. Perhaps you may think, "Saul's influence on Jonathan was for good in the early and formative years prior to the time when Saul's heart was filled with rebellion." Perhaps so. But perhaps it was the influence of his mother. At any rate, we know it can be done by godly mothers and grandmothers. Eunice and Lois did it with Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5). You can raise children to rise spiritually above their fathers.

Who was the godly king in 1 Kings 15 and 2 Chronicles 14–16?

How did he rise above a godless father?

7. *Children are always hurt by parents who do not honor God.* We know something about three of the children of Ahinoam: they were hurt by their father. Subsequent lessons in this book will deal with Saul's treatment of Merab and Michal. Saul's treatment of his daughters was, at the least, inconsiderate. But what of his treatment of Jonathan?

The father-son relationship between Jonathan and Saul was obviously a source of great pain in Jonathan's world. The breach between them over David became so great that Saul, out of envy of David, threw

a spear at Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:33). The scripture indicates that he intended “to kill David.”

I daresay that you know some situations in which there are breaches between father and son. But not many of us know fathers who have tried to kill their own children. Saul did. To the extent that fathers allow selfishness to develop in their hearts, they will become capable of harming even their own children by neglect, by anger, or sometimes even by physical abuse.

THE ME MONSTER

Brian Regan, a popular comedian, calls selfishness the “Me Monster.” The “Me Monster” is very real and once he’s gotten into your life, he is not funny. He can do all kinds of damage.

- ✧ That’s why it is very important for fathers to keep hobbies in check.
- ✧ That’s why mothers should be sure their choices reflect that they are first keepers at home.
- ✧ That’s why fathers should examine expenditures and be transparent with their wives about how the family funds are allocated.
- ✧ That’s why children’s ball games are more important than business or rest.
- ✧ That’s why worship to God is more important than children’s ball games.
- ✧ That’s why we should all be careful about making those statements like, “I need some ‘me’ time,” or asking questions like, “What am I getting out of this relationship?”

Purposeful unselfishness always ends better and happier than slowly giving in to the universal temptation to satisfy self above others.

Mothers with teens should let their children watch the four-minute Brian Regan segment from youtube called, “Me Monster.” Discuss biblical concepts with your teens that will prevent them from being affected by the “Me Monster.” I have successfully used the “Me Monster” clip several times to teach children the value of selflessness, although I do not recommend all of Regan’s clips.

Discuss 1 Corinthians 10:24 as commentary on “Me Monster.”

BROKEN DREAMS

Now think for a moment of Ahinoam’s position. She was married to a man who was sufficiently depraved to try to kill the son they had borne together. There was a time when her husband was an humble man who sought to please the Lord. But later, her husband found the occasion to try to kill Jonathan for his defense of the innocent young man David (1 Samuel 20:1–34). The Bible does not tell us how Jonathan’s mother reacted to her husband’s

outburst, but assuming she was privy to it, her relationship with Saul and her life in general must have been irreparably damaged. She must not have been surprised—maybe she was even relieved—on that day when her husband finally committed suicide, falling on his own sword (1 Samuel 31:4).

Surely there was a day when Ahinoam reflected and realized that being a part of the royal family was not all she had dreamed it would be. Surely she must have reflected on Saul’s glory days and lamented over the fact that her husband, once wrapped up in the Lord, had become a man who was entirely wrapped up in self.

Selfishness never breeds happiness, but it brings forth confusion and every evil thing. Selfishness is self-inflicted pain. Ironically, the man who tried to pierce the flesh of his young harpist (1 Samuel 19:10), and even his own son, purposely fell on his own sword to bring his conflicted and miserable days to an end (1 Samuel 31:4).

But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there (James 3:14–16).



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Discuss some practical ways mothers can teach children to replace selfishness with kindness. There's valuable wisdom in groups of God's women!

Recommended Resource:

"Mama's K.I.S.S." series on Cindy Colley's blog, *Bless Your Heart*,
www.theColleyhouse.org

Cindy's Reflections

Plant Kindness, Gather Love

Take a tiny seed of kindness to the field of fellowmen;
 Find a fertile heart there, turn its sod and place within.
 Cover it and say a prayer for one sweet day of reaping,
 And know the tender vine that breaks the soil is in your
 keeping.

There yet may be a frigid night e'er roots have taken hold.
 Your blanket of encouragement will help keep out the cold.
 And when the night has broken and its icy chill is done,
 You'll take heart to see that now your plant is growing
 toward the Son.

Every day you pull some weeds, for they spring up so
 quickly.
 Discouragement or doubt could make a tender plant turn
 sickly;
 But you are there each morning with your tools to weed and
 hoe;
 And you are making sure your kindness plant has room to
 grow.

Time goes by and branches grow. A tiny bud appears.
When dry days come you moisten it with sympathetic tears.
You're there for every fallen branch through every summer
shower;
And soon the tiny bud you saw has blossomed . . . it's a
flower!

And then it's time for waiting for the fruit to slowly grow.
It comes but has to ripen yet. The process seems so slow!
But God is teaching patience and persistence on your part;
And He's preparing something worth the wait within that
heart.

The harvest comes. The busy field's a blessing from above.
And from your little kindness plant you pluck the fruit of
love.
In thankfulness you kneel upon the fertile soil to pray.
And learn the fruit you hold's just half the blessing of the
day.

Beneath your dirty gardener's hands, you feel the fertile soil;
A heart that now is free from stones and softened by your
toil.
The heart has learned of goodness since that day you turned
its sod;
And now it's rich and ready—You can plant the Word of
God!



LESSON 3

THE DAVID FAN CLUB

THE SINGING WOMEN

