

CROWN OF CREATION

A BIBLE STUDY SERIES

WOMEN OF TROUBLED TIMES

CINDY COLLEY



Books with Class

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To Hannah Colley
who grew up
in America's most troubled time to date,
and, in the process,
developed a faith that continues
to glorify her Father
in the best and worst of circumstances.



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LESSON 1

THE UPSIDE OF TROUBLE

CHRISTIANS ARE SAFE REFUGEES!

I like to write positive books that make us feel happy and productive as God's women. That's what I want this book to be. But it's a real challenge to put a positive spin on the era of the judges. The upside of the study has to be what we do with the account rather than the account itself. Hold that thought.

This book opens on a world that is any godly woman's nightmare. It was clearly a society steeped in moral and spiritual subjectivism. In the lives of its women we will see harlotry, deceit, evil desires. Times were much like our own era in many respects. Judges 17:6 records God's terse summation of this era of Israel's history: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

TROUBLE FOR MOMS AND GRANDMOMS

It's a challenge to raise godly children. To do so in our present culture of relativism is extremely difficult. Our culture calls the acceptance of sin "tolerance." It calls avarice and greed "success."



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—Judges 17:6

When women forsake their God-given roles in rearing their own children, it's feminism. Homosexuality is love; murder in the womb is abortion. When my children live in a world where blatant immorality is ascribed these most sterile names, it becomes my job, as a mother, to be ever more vigilant in peeling back the devil's deceitful and glamorous facade. As we again evoke Judges 17:6, we know that calling wrong right does not make it right. Neither does its renaming provide any protection from the consequences of wrong. This philosophical diet of moral tolerance must be countered at home with the antitoxin of God's immutable truth. If my son's history teacher is an outspoken advocate of homosexuality and my daughter's theater director is a spiritual universalist, these situations must light a

fire under me as their mother! When even conservative religionists tell my children that the New Testament is merely a book of general principles rather than a standard of absolute truth, my job as a Christian mother again intensifies.

Sometimes when I sit back and evaluate this world in which I struggle as a parent, I'm truly amazed at how far society has veered in one generation. Let's notice the digression.

✧ *Government-funded events now include what is vile* (Romans 1:26). When my children were small (1992), I had to shield their curious eyes from witnessing the inaugural parade of our U.S. Presidency because homosexual advocates were given, for the first time, a place of honor in that Presidential procession. Thirty years earlier, when I was small, homosexuality was never mentioned in any honorable public arena.

✧ *Prime time television is filled with sexual innuendo, as well as graphic sexual material.* As a teenager, I can remember when the show "Happy Days" first aired. My parents were amazed at the innuendos that frequently surfaced in this sit-com and we frequently had to turn it off. Typical recent themes would certainly make "Happy Days" seem very benign. These recent themes have included "breast-only orgasms," homosexual and lesbian heroism, and sex-driven competition in amazingly vulgar reality TV.

✧ *The Boy Scouts of America have been forced to sacrifice corporate funding.* Why? Hefty donors like the Levi-Strauss Company refuse to sanction homosexuality in its leadership. The Boy Scouts have faced numerous lawsuits because of this stance. When I was a child, no known homosexual could have successfully led an adult civic club, much less a group of innocent young boys!

✧ *Our federal government offers tax incentives to young working mothers.* Women who choose to have babies and then relegate their care to day care workers are actually rewarded! When I was a preschooler, more than ninety percent of my peers were being daily nurtured at home, with their mothers.

✧ *Popular CDs are rarely curse free, and even more rarely, pure in theme.* I checked the lyrics recently of the top five songs on America's pop charts. Four of the five contained extremely objectionable lyrics. When I was a child, an album with objectionable material was far rarer than an album with decent lyrics.

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✧ *Oral sex is the popular pastime of the early teen years.* Several mothers of middle schoolers in an upscale community have filled me in on this current event. When I was in middle school, I had never heard of oral sex. I believe my innocence in this regard was fairly typical at the time.

✧ *Wednesday night ballgames, play practice, club meetings, etc. are all very common in most American communities.* When I was a child there were only very rare Wednesday night Bible study conflicts because entire communities were cognizant of the priority of Bible study in most American homes.

✧ *Less than half of American children now live with both birth parents.* Divorce rates have exceeded marriage rates in America in recent years. When I was in elementary school, there was only one girl in my class whose parents were divorced. In most of our eyes she was an anomaly.

✧ *Over a million babies this year in America will be aborted.* Not one single baby in America had ever been legally aborted until I was fourteen years old. The word “abortion” was defined by Webster’s dictionary as “a miscarriage” when I was a child.

The list could go on and on. If you are over thirty-five you could easily reminisce and make your own list. But why? Why have we seen such a rapid and expansive moral decline during the last thirty five years?

Have older women in the class call to mind moral changes they have noted in the past four decades. As they are listed for the class, find scriptures that have been violated in each case, thus causing the moral erosion.

THE TROUBLE WITH TOLERANCE

These women of the book of Judges were raising children in the shadow of national disobedience. Remember, as the tribes of Israel were preparing to enter the promised land, God was clear in instructing them to destroy the peoples of Canaan (Deuteronomy 7:1–2). But they didn’t. Instead, they left remnants of these heathen groups. They made treaties with them. They finally intermarried with them. They allowed their sanctified status to become polluted and cowered in compromise to big armies and military might. The first chapter of Judges relates in detail their multiple failures in ridding the land of idolatrous heathen tribes. Now as we study the judges, we find that succeeding generations are left to struggle in a nation plagued by the spiritual pollutants of that idolatry. Tolerance turned to acceptance which turned to conformity.

The point must not be overlooked. The society that was doing what was right in its own eyes did not happen overnight. A nation did not go to sleep one night in compliance with Jehovah and wake up the very next morning in rebellion to Him. Passive iniquity grows into active iniquity in a generation.

Someone wisely said, “When tolerance becomes the primary virtue of a nation, it is soon the only virtue.” How is this true?

So I’m convinced about Israel’s problem. They brought it on themselves. But what does that have to do with my struggles as a Christian parent today?

THE TROUBLING CONNECTION

God’s nation today, His spiritual Israel, is the church. Just as God told Israel to purge Canaan of the idolatrous heathen, so He tells the church of the New Testament to purge itself of fornicators (1 Corinthians 5:1–7), to withdraw from brethren who walk disorderly (2 Thessalonians 3:6–7), to have no company with those who are not walking the walk (2 Thessalonians 3:11–14), and even to refrain from eating with those who are fornicators, idolaters, covetous, railers, drunkards, or swindlers (1 Corinthians 5:11).

Those who cause division in the body by teaching false doctrines are to be marked and avoided, as well (Romans 16:17).

A study of these passages reveals no ambiguity. God is clear in His command, even calling the admonition a command in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 and invoking the authority of our Lord. But have we done this in the body of Christ? Just as Israel did in Judges 1, we have picked and chosen when we would obey. We have, in most congregations, largely ignored these com-

mands because we find them distasteful, and it seems more peaceable to us just to look the other way when the enemy is in our territory. We had rather make a treaty than to fight the distasteful battle that purifies the church and saves the lost brother. As a result our children often attend worship with people who are living in adultery, have Sunday school teachers who are engaging in impure forms of entertainment, and are associating with friends' families who are putting all kinds of activities before worship of God Almighty. In many congregations, those who are serving publicly in our worship assemblies are profiting from the sale of alcoholic beverages. No wonder it's hard for me as a parent to instill a respect for the absolute truth of God's word in my kids when church leaders take such an irresponsible stance toward the purity of the body of Jesus and the peril of lost brethren. When those who know better ignore sin in

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the camp, failing both to practice and to preach this purifying process, there will arise a generation that doesn't know any better. It falls as the duty of parents, teachers, and certainly elder's wives to teach, to pray, and to encourage a return to the prescribed method of congregational purity.

You see, Israel wasn't commanded to fix all the problems of the heathen nations. God's people were simply not to co-exist with them in the Promised Land. They were to drive them out or utterly destroy them. While we cannot fix the problems of a society that will not accept biblical teachings of morality, we can, by obeying the New Testament commands to maintain our sanctification, refuse to encourage sin within our own promised land, the church. God's prescribed plan today is not the physical destruction of the immoral and unholy. It is our withdrawal of interaction that is purely

social—exclusion from fellowship while sin persists. That is God’s method of congregational purity today. If my children see a shepherding leadership and a supportive congregation really working to maintain that purity and enforcing these biblical consequences for blatant, persistent sin, it will impact their moral and spiritual decisions. They will see in a very practical way that every man cannot do that which is right in his own eyes and still be in fellowship with God’s holy “called out” people. I wish my children could have seen a lot less tolerance for obvious impenitence and a lot more loving leaders who were willing to work through the difficult process of discipline within the body.

But we cannot go back. Beginning the process of obeying in the case of discipline so long neglected is a Herculean task. It takes leaders of integrity who are committed to stand on the truth of God’s word at any personal cost. It takes their families being willing to endure harsh criticism and sleepless nights. It takes churches of people who are willing to have their hearts broken as loved ones are marked and disciplined in love. Once we allow sin to grow within the body as leaven (1 Corinthians 5:4–6), it is much more difficult than it would have been if vigilant elders had been conscientious all through the years. But the fact remains. Loving discipline is a commanded characteristic of the church of the New Testament. No rationalization for its absence excuses the Israel of God today.

What wording in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 invokes the authority of the Lord?

Is a church that ignores the commands of discipline a fully restored New Testament church? Why or why not?

Find and list other New Testament passages that call the church the spiritual Israel of today.

HEALING FOR A TROUBLED LAND

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14).

We often hear this scripture used as a plea for a return to the religious and moral principles upon which the United States was founded. What a blessing it would be if our nation could experience a moral cleansing and turn back to a recognition of God as the source of good government. But, in reality, the true Israel of our day is not America. It is the church! (Romans 9:6–33). We, as the body of Christ, are the people who are called by His name: Christians (Acts 11:26), the church of Christ (Romans 16:16), the house of God (1 Timothy 3:15). We are the ones who are called to humble ourselves. We are the ones to whom the avenue of prayer is available. We are the ones who, because we are in Christ and have contacted His blood, may be forgiven. We are the ones who can truly claim this healing. Remember that thought you were holding? Well this is the upside. This is the great potential for good that can come from our study. This is the positive tack we must use in studying these often desperate women. This is the hope for our day found in the hopelessness of theirs.



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So be not dismayed. We will find applicable, positive, and objective truth for our day. We will be better as we study. And we will find ways to encourage our leaders to be better as well. We will learn that His way is always best and we will develop faith to do life His way. Our inner resolve will grow and our circles of influence will widen. We can be a part of the healing in our corners of the world.

As we focus on being the sanctified spiritual people we should be in the new Israel, let us remember that, as nations crumble around us and even as America will one day fall, the holy nation of God is eternal. Our truest citizenship is in a country that is not of this world.

Study our citizenship from Hebrews 11:13 and Philippians 3:20. Does the fact that our citizenship is in heaven mean we should remain politically inactive in this life? Why or why not?

Cindy's Reflections

Your Truest Citizenship

Will there still be an America when you have grown to be
Big enough to fight for her? Will she still be free . . .
Still one nation under God, from sea to shining sea;
Or will she be a pretty part of an aged memory?

Will the flag to which we pledge be waving in the breeze?
Will Liberty still hold her torch o'er great Atlantic seas?
Will the Bible grace her courtrooms? Will coins still bear His
name?
Or will they go the way of prayer—at school and at the game?

I cannot promise you, my child, that she can yet be saved;
That Lady Liberty will glow . . . the flag can still be waved.
But I'll show you a country where you can plant your heart,
And in a million years your dreams will still be at their start.

If you will be a soldier in the service of its King,
"My Country 'Tis of Thee" forever you can sing.
This country won't be terrorized, demoralized, defeated,
Nor plundered by the enemy when armies have retreated.

No emergency management or militia in this heaven,
No reserves, no disasters, no wars or 9-11,
No revolts against the system, no assassinations,
No threat of nuclear holocaust, no evacuations.

God has a welfare system that operates in the black,
His courtroom system is flawless, His judgment is exact.
His right-hand-man is Jesus and righteous are His laws.
And you can be a citizen, a soldier for His cause.

And this homeland security has never been undone
If all else fails, He still prevails. The battle He has won.
So work and pray for the USA and wave the red, white and
blue.
But remember where your home is. To that kingdom, first, be
true!



LESSON 2

THE CURSING WOMAN

MICAH'S MOTHER