

*Learning To Sing
At Midnight*

by Joanne Beckley



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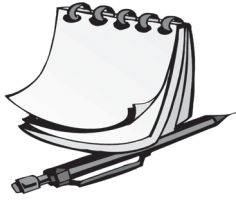
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A NOTE TO TEACHER AND STUDENT



The need for these lessons:

In my travels it has been my pleasure to visit with women in many congregations of the Lord's body. It has also become altogether too clear to me that there is a pressing need for teaching material which would address the needs of older women. Yet as I studied, planned, and presented the lessons contained herein, it was heartbreakingly apparent that younger women and mothers were also seeking help to move them toward becoming one of those sweet, loving, Christ-like older ladies they so admired.

Therefore, it is my hope that this study will appeal to all age groups. Each one of us must prayerfully consider God's expectations for the older woman serving her Master.

As I began teaching this material, I quickly realized that each lesson simply could not be covered in one class period. Yet those whose advice I sought opposed condensing the lessons. It was thought that the added material might make this a more practical tool for those who study it without the guidance of a teacher. It was also suggested that the present format might encourage the hesitant older teacher to confidently tackle her study and present her lesson.

Suggestions in teaching and studying these lessons:

Each class I taught found it was advantageous in several ways to team younger and older women as "study partners." Thus, the fainthearted were encouraged by this added support and an additional avenue was created for beneficial discussion, greater understanding, and the destruction of sinful attitudes found within a "generation gap."

To facilitate this study designed to concentrate on God's expectations of us as older women, I offer the following suggestions:

- Encourage the ladies to prepare the lesson before meeting together. This will stimulate class discussion which will in turn develop a sense of "our" class.
- Seat the class so that all parties face one another. This prompts each woman to participate. We have all lived long enough to have experienced both deep pain and great joy; we have much to offer one another.
- As the teacher, encourage progression through the lesson yet recognize the strengths found within each student which helps to anchor some important point.
- Beware the sharing of private matters. This should be done sparingly and only with the consent of those concerned. Remember, the principles needed for heart solutions are found within the Word of God.
- Within each lesson I have incorporated appropriate verses taken from the New American Standard Version. By providing a constant reminder to seek each answer from Scripture, it will reduce the dangers of "I think" and also help all those forgetful fingers. I do urge each student to consider the context of Scripture from your own Bible to insure its scriptural use as well as to increase your understanding.

As with any Bible study, if we, the teacher and the student, do not apply what we have learned, then the entire exercise has been in vain and our study has not been pleasing to God. Please, and I do stress this, we **MUST** take the time to make personal applications of these lessons to each day we live. Hopefully, this study can then become a reference and a handbook of our own goals as we grow ever older and face new challenges as daughters of Almighty God.

Dedication

In memory of Mom,
Lucille Bolton Beckley.
She always looked for the good in each day.
Died June 2, 1993

My thanks:

I wish to sincerely thank the women of Chipley, Florida for their enthusiasm in studying with me as I prepared these lessons—and managed to persist despite our pain experienced during spiritual growth.

To my readers and students of God’s Word—truly, now as you begin this study, you also must face the discomfort that is experienced when we face our imperfections and grow in the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord.

Lesson 1
AGE - THE GREAT MAGNIFIER

“O magnify the LORD with me, And let us exalt His name together.” Psalm 34:3



Our society does not welcome old age. Yet our Creator sees it as a welcome advantage during our lives here on earth. After all, very real preparation can now culminate in a deep longing for our promised life with Him.

As you have probably realized by now, how we have developed ourselves in our younger years will be what we have available to work with in our later years. Our attitudes, values, principles, disposition, and the like will be the determining factors for *continued* service to God as the years roll on.

Underline the phrases in the verses below which indicate the above statements to be true or false.

Proverbs 26:24 “He who hates disguises it with his lips, But he lays up deceit in his heart.”

Ecclesiastes 12:1 “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, ‘I have no delight in them.’”

Proverbs 22:6 “Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Ecclesiastes 11:9-10 “Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things.¹⁰ So, remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.”

Matthew 6:20, 21 “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 12:34 “You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.”

King Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes to guide youth, and in chapter twelve, verses two through seven, he emphasized the *reality* of old age. These verses were perhaps a warning also for youth to magnify the Lord *now*.

Write what you think is the equivalent part or function of an aging body next to each poetic description taken from Ecclesiastes 12:2-7.

1. “Watchmen of the house tremble” _____
2. “Mighty men stoop” _____
3. “The grinding ones stand idle because they are few” _____
4. “Those who look through windows grow dim” _____
5. “Doors on the street are shut” _____
6. “Sound of the grinding mill is low” _____
7. “One will arise at the sound of the bird” _____
8. “All the daughters of song will sing softly” _____

9. "Men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road" _____
10. "The almond tree blossoms" _____
11. "The grasshopper drags himself along" _____
12. "The caperberry is ineffective" _____

List some advantages and disadvantages in growing old:

How we react to aging will depend on our earlier development and our past goals. Age only magnifies our previously developed qualities. Old age doesn't bring about a change of character. The clay of youth hardens with the passage of time. So if we want to be sweet old ladies, we must get to work early!

But we must mind the "warts" of old age—those attitudes and sins we thought were under control. They will turn up. Perhaps we had relaxed our guard or we may even discover we had only camouflaged our sins and had never really faced them.

Does a grey head automatically equal glory and righteousness? Proverbs 16:31.

What is the treasure that will help us grow old gracefully? 2 Corinthians 4:4, 7.

What is the difference between a Christian woman growing old and a worldly woman growing old? 2 Corinthians 4:8-10.

Which is weightier: an old body or a weight of glory? 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

List some pitfalls a woman serving Christ must be aware of as she grows older:

Reflect: We have passed through many stages during our first twenty years of life; so it is in old age. The last twenty years will bring nearly as many changes in our lives...and our characters will continue to develop until mental disease or death takes us. List some changes that you are or will be experiencing during the last twenty to thirty years of a normal life span.

We will encounter many blessings as our lives draw to a close. In order to experience these blessings, what must we do (Psalm 90:10, 12) and how?

Are we willing to be careless with the *gift* of days as we grow old? God sees them as good, even if we find them hard. They are good because God is in each one of them. Not a day should be left uncounted. “This is the day which the Lord has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it,” Psalm 118:24.



WAYS A WOMAN CAN PREPARE FOR OLD AGE

1. Consider life as “sowing and reaping.”

Galatians 6:7-8 “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”

Give three actions and their consequences, good or bad, from your own life. Will (or has) any of these affect(ed) the quality of your old age?

2. Develop a proper attitude toward service.

Matthew 20:28 “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Galatians 5:13-14 “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’”

When does a woman begin her service as a Christian?

When must her service end?

3. Retain self-respect as each year passes—by using simple grooming habits, a healthy diet, and exercising the mind. God has given women these tools to maintain respect in her own eyes and in the eyes of others. She will receive untold benefits and continued admiration.

I Corinthians 6:19-20 “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”

Our self image is up to each one of us. Give examples that work.

4. **Listen to others** rather than hand out advice unsought.

Proverbs 17:27-28 “He who restrains his words has knowledge, And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. ²⁸Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.”

I Peter 3:4 “but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

Psalms 141:3 “Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.” Define a “meek spirit” and a “quiet spirit.”

How does the Bible describe a woman who feels she has the *right* to speak her mind, *no matter what her age*? (Take time to consider the evils of gossip, or even how to recognize when gossip is occurring and how to halt the process.)

5. **Accept physical and mental limitations** gracefully *now*.

Can you find a prayer in the Bible which asks God to remove the problems of old age? Underline what David asks for in his prayer in Psalm 71:9, 17-21.

⁹Do not cast me off in the time of old age; Do not forsake me when my strength fails. ¹⁷O God, You have taught me from my youth, And I still declare Your wondrous deeds. ¹⁸And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come. ¹⁹For Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the heavens, You who have done great things; O God, who is like You? ²⁰You who have shown me many troubles and distresses Will revive me again, And will bring me up again from the depths of the earth. ²¹May You increase my greatness And turn to comfort me.”

Note his thankfulness! David saw that his work was not finished. What phrase indicates this?

6. **Communicate! Keep in touch! BE A SERVANT!**

Matthew 5:13-14 ¹³“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;”

Should a woman withdraw into her own world because of loneliness, pain or hurt, feeling that no one cares?

7. **Place a high value on time.**

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 ¹“There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven-- ²A time to give birth and a time to die; A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted...”

Time automatically makes us accountable for its use. Our Lord used time and God in heaven uses time to fulfil His plans.

Ephesians 5:15-16 ¹⁵“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”

Matthew 26:18 And He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, “My time is near; I am to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.””

Ephesians 3:11 “This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,”

“Therefore _____ you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, _____ of your time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16). Are these the same evil days as referred to in Ecclesiastes 12:1 and 11:8?

8. **Cultivate a sense of humor**, of seeing the “happy” in life’s events.

We must be able to laugh at ourselves and laugh with others. This will help to ease our own burdens.

Genesis 21:6 “And Sarah said, ‘God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.’”

Psalms 126:2 “Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with joyful shouting; Then they said among the nations, ‘The LORD has done great things for them.’”

I Chronicles 16:26-27 ²⁶For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the LORD made the heavens. ²⁷Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and joy are in His place.”

Philippians 2:18 “And you too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.”

When would laughter be inappropriate?

When can laughter heal?

Define joy.

9. **Grow spiritually.**

2 Peter 3:18 “...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

Ephesians 4:15 “but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.”

This subject will be dealt with in the next lesson. Growth is *not* a choice. If we do not grow, we regress; life has no stopping point of growth.

10. List any other ways you can think of to aid us in preparation for old age.

Yes, learning *how* to grow old in the Lord is absolutely crucial to our one day living with Him. There can be no letting up on serving God and our fellow man. Jesus did not rest and Paul did not rest. Surely we are not resting! (Have you ever been guilty of saying, “I’ve done my part; it’s your turn now.”) There are younger women out there *crying* for help. Are we teaching and encouraging them? (Younger women, are you listening?) Let us move on toward being seasoned citizens in God’s kingdom.