

Seasons of Life



For who is greater,
the one who is at the table or the one who serves?
Is it not the one who is at the table?
But I am among you as one who serves.
Luke 22:27

March

Seasons of Life

"Generations"; Panel; maturity; themes

What does God say to wives, to mothers, to single women, to widows?

What does He say about aging?

How do I honor Him as I get older?

What are the important issues and questions faced by all women of all ages and cultures?

How do I accept and embrace change?

Scripture-based exploration

- Jim Branch's Blue Book chapters *Loved by God*, *Story*, and *The Soil of Your Soul*
- Psalm 135 (shorter) or Psalm 78 (much more detail): These psalms tell the story of God's involvement in the generations of Israel. Psalm 78 narrates the history of Israel from the start of the nation to David. Use this psalm as a template to tell the story of your family, your nation, or yourself!

Books

- *Emotionally Healthy Woman*, Geri Scazzero
- *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, Pete Scazzero
- *Made to Crave*, Lysa TerKeurst
- *A Celebration of Sex*, Dr Douglas E Rosenau
- *When Your Husband is Addicted to Pornography*, Vicki Tiede

Artwork for the creatives

- Check out Danny Broadway's artwork called "Circle Unbroken." How does this inspire you artistically to relate to the seasons of a woman's life? dannybroadway.com
- Draw your family tree. If your people are nearby, have them put their inked fingerprints as leaves.
- Draw/paint/charcoal/etc the hand of an older woman. How can you bring into the art the beauty of her heart and experience?

Movies

- *The Painted Veil* (favorite!!! ~Suzanne). The main female character matures greatly during the movie, often during conflict or consequence. How do you see her mature? How does she learn to love?

Questions to ponder

- What is God saying to you at this particular stage of your life?
- How do you relate vulnerability with maturity?
- What has been the most impactful season of your life so far, and why?
- What is your greatest fear related to aging?
- How do you associate aging and beauty?

Music for this month:

How He Loves, David Crowder Band

Marry Me, Train

Find You on My Knees, *The More I Seek You*, *You are For Me*, Kari Jobe

Dance Me to the End of Love, The Civil Wars

	Traditionalists GI Generation "The Greatest Generation"	Boomers (second largest)	Gen X (sandwiched, smaller)	Millennials (largest)
birth years, age	1901-1945	1946-1963ish	1965-1980ish	1980-1995ish
events	Radia, Korea, Roaring Twenties, Depression, World Wars I & II, concentration camps, the Pope, Trump, the Clintons, Joe Biden, Jesse Jackson, Bernie Sanders; Paul Simon, John Wayne, Hank Aaron, Paul Newman, Gloria Steinem, Elizabeth Taylor	TV, EMS, Bob Dylan; Cuban Missile Crisis; VietNam, Cold War; space exploration; civil rights, women's, peace movements; strong feelings for/vs war; gas shortage; assassinations; rock-n-roll; Ed Sullivan, Nixon, Brady Bunch, Bill Clinton, Meryl Streep, Kennedys, MLK, Oprah, Stephen Spielberg	MTV, email, corporate & religious corruption, Desert Storm, cell phones, 9/11, end of apartheid, Berlin Wall, HIV/AIDS (80s and 90s), OJ Simpson, Bill Gates, Barack Obama, Paul Ryan, Nicolas Cage, Angelina Jolie, J-Lai, Brooke Shields, Shania Twain, Halle Berry, Adam Sandler, Julie Roberts, Mary Lou Retton, Cameron Diaz, Eminem, Drew Barrymore	YouTube & hand-held technology; World, school, home news & violence; Operation Iraqi Freedom, Katrina; fast & fleeting tech trends; global awareness; Taylor Swift, the Kardashians, Malala, the young royals; Mark Zuckerberg, Jen Lawrence, Tim Tebow
jobs	one; had apprenticeships; closed Sundays	one-two with clear leadership tracks; union membership peaked in the 50s; rise of the yuppies (80s); chasing the American Dream	multiple; available when not at the office, first via email, now phones, blue collar, steady with turnover; moms work, two-income families, single parents	white collar contractors, 12-15 jobs expected; no benefits; blue collar, steady w/in turnover; time of economic expansion
emotions & attitudes	loyal, stoic	opt.m.st.c, hard-working agents of change; highest divorce rate and most second marriages in history	entrepreneurs, "I'll do it myself," more balance, realists, "I'll take care of myself, thanks"	bright, savvy, opt.m.st.c, passionate, great, entitled, poor manners, crave authenticity; child-centered era (busy)
work, input, and retirement	hierarchy, no input, duty, keep their word, dedication, loyalty; retirement was sitting on the porch for your final days in peace; strong ties to land	huge %; economic expansion and security; input; large leadership, paper, crusaders; want to "shine"; ambition, collaboration, take risks; company execs get a scandalous amount of money; retirement became "the good life" of extended wealth; eager to please their boss	Want balance, a meaningful life and work, informal, uncreative; shift to digital Shift to global capitalism; global economies, global communication, global influences; more diversity in every job in every way; rich-poor gaps widening; Suburbs, a place of safety for Boomers, = alienation for GenXers	Cloud, "why?" is not a rude question; mentors; go straight to the competent person, not acc to position or rank; use social networking; less concern about gender, race, sexual orientation, or religious background, collaborate; very busy, flexible hours, don't like pressure, well-educated, fun
change	Gradual, respect the process of going through proper channels	Not gradual—now, and ready to protest, sign petitions, march, etc.	If they don't like the mainstream way of doing things, they leave, entrepreneurs, go it alone	rapid, gamers, creative, think on their feet, very resourceful, find or create pathways they need
main issue	tradition and honor	security	trust and individualism	movement together
phones	on the wall, for talking; don't speak on the phone at night or interrupt family dinner	on the wall, for talking; adjusted to a mobile bag phone in the 80s; adjusting now to using it as a tech tool	Constantly keeping up with new technology on phones, for work as well as for personal relationships	Cannot imagine life without it! Always available, in conversation, updating to the next new "thing"; worldwide unrest, read Scripture on their phones; "LOL" BACKLASH: UNPLUG!
work or church community setting liabilities	Don't adapt well to change Hierarchical, top-down approach like the military chain of command. Avoid Conflict; right or wrong **A word about Digitals: they need help with social skills, eye contact; being "bored" and entertained all the time	Expect workaholicism, dislike conflict, challenge authority of traditionalists, judgmental if disagree; self-centered achievers, like recognition	Cynical, skeptical, dislike authority and rigid work requirements, leave conflict, impatient, can mistrust institutions, puzzled by the optimism of Boomers and Millennials	Dastard for mental work, brain-smart but experience-starved. Need supervision, filters, discipline. High expectations of others; lack "real people" people skills large Hispanic population (Rodriguez/Smith) Immigrants are adding to this generation

	Traditionalists	Boomers	Gen X	Millennials
Family dinner	Clockwork at the dinner table	Around work schedule at the table	Fast food emerged, table or counter, or uber-healthy now	Eat out/take out, local and organic trends
Family Experience	Traditional, nuclear	"Traditional" began to disintegrate under workaholicism; Cleavers; mom was still home	Latch-key kids who could take care of themselves at a young age; women work; day care generation; blended and non-traditional families emerge	non-traditional families, coddled kids (trophies no matter how they performed)
Commands	Yes, sir! (No questions asked)	Let's get it done! Team effort for positive change	Why?	What's with me? How can we do this creatively?
Expressions of love	Letters	Phone calls	Emails and online dating	Texts, tweets, social network "status," pictures
Motivation	Boss' good word, pat on the back, h.s. acknowledgement	Gold watch, corner office, symbols of success	Balance (maternity and paternity leave)	Meaning more than \$\$
Technology	Foreign language	3rd year student	Immersion; global	Native; global
Information	About a week post-, newspaper	newspaper & TV news networks (used to be only 3 channels)	TV networks and real time on media (need a remote for 100s of channels), social networks	Overexposure; need a trusted filter; online, mobile, facebook for news; social networks
Meetings & Protocol	Early, serious conversation before meeting, agenda and task-oriented; male dominated	On time, social before meeting; women enter the work world	Late, with excuses; Higher male % in top jobs, women try to "have it all" and are exhausted	"Did you text me a reminder?" "I didn't hear my phone alarm." Poor "traditional" business manners. Diversity! Straight to the most competent. Fast!
Money	Little debt	Economic security paramount, use credit frequently but well	Credit Card debt with multiple cards	Big debt! Money for school
Authority in the Workplace	Authority = seniority + tenure	Originally skeptical of authority but are becoming similar to Traditionalists; time => authority	Skeptical of authority figures; will test authority repeatedly or leave	Will test authority for competence yet often seek authority figures when looking for guidance.
Communication	Discreet, formal, respectful; good grammar, manners; no profanity; focus on words (not body language); like hand-written notes	Diplomatic, in person, direct and open, first names, friendly; how they can fit in to larger mission	Blunt, direct, immediate, informal; learn others' style and meet them; use email; avoid jargon and buzz words; don't micro-manage	Polite; informal, action-oriented, like humor; better at technical; communicate on than personal; don't like being "talked down to", like "wow" and being entertained but it can't be fake
Models of Ministry, EPC; thanks to Susan Nash, 2013-2014	Traditional-hierarchical, same template for all churches, monthly Bible study in churches, monthly Circles, pledges, "Pres Women" or "WIC" 6%	Mixed: multiple ministries for women; weekly Bible studies with teaching & small groups; still incaps traditional model; "Women's Ministries" 18%	Integrated: integrated into mission of the church, no gender separation, adult discipleship structure, small groups-driven, relational not programmatic. 31%	No Model: small church, "all hands on deck" attitude, a women's Bible study, everyone involved in every way. 5% [Other information: 13% no mention, 27%, no website]

Week One: Generations: Watch the video by Suzanne...

Find the video on our website. It's brief: <http://www.cspc.net/sos>. Scroll to "At the Table" to find it.

Examine the charts on the generations. Contrast them with each other. Note similarities and differences.

Consider these two charts. They summarize some of the characteristics (listed in the left column) of each generation from Traditionalists to Millennials (listed across the top). Take some time to digest it, and identify yourself, then reflect on this information and apply it to your church, workplace, friends, and family.

Questions for you:

- What generation are you in? Do you identify more strongly with a different generation?
- How can you be identified not only as a member of your generation, but also as a member of Christ?
- What challenges you the most about your own generation?
- What do you feel you need to work on when it comes to working with generations at church, in your job, or in your family?
- In your family, how can you help generations honor each other's strengths? work on weaknesses?
- What can we do to love each other well in the Name of Jesus, when we are so different?
- Do you have meaningful relationships with women of other generations? If so, how did those relationships form?
- What are your greatest challenges, fear, and joys as a woman at this point in your life?
- For older women, after listening to the younger women in your group, how did your experiences match theirs? What challenges might you have as you grow older?
- What do you most need from women of other generations (older or younger)?

Questions from Every Decade

Gordon MacDonald is now in his mid-seventies. **Every decade, he states, has a main question.**

Teens: Who am I and who am I becoming?

20's: What am I going to do with my life and with whom?

30's: Now that I have all these responsibilities and obligations, how do I manage all these priorities?

40's: Am I a success or a failure?

50's: As I move into the second half of life, who is this younger generation that wants me out of the way and how do I cope with the disappointments in my life?

60's: How much longer can I do what defines me or do I change?

70's: How do I live with loss?

80's: Does anyone remember who I once was? Can anyone remember?

Final Question: What happens when I die?

Spend some time with these questions this month.

Week Two: our Big Gathering: Generations Panel

Questions for you

Discuss (verbally process) what you learned. What surprised you the most?
What was difficult to understand or imagine?

Which decade seemed to be the most challenging to you?
What did you see as strengths in each decade?
After hearing these women, how are you inspired to mature?
What kind of person do you want to become in your own current decade?
How is God challenging you to be who He has called you to be in your decade, now?

Week Three: Maturity

Watch Suz's video on maturity (Breuggemann's theory about maturing and Scripture) here: <http://www.cspc.net/sos>. Scroll to "At the Table" to find it.

Here's some space for a few notes on what Walter Brueggemann and Richard Rohr (Second Half of Life) think about the stages of life & maturity:

1. The Container/The Torah -
2. Critical Thinking/The Prophets -
3. Hitting the Wall -
4. Tension, paradox, both/and, mystery, unknown & unknowable/Wisdom Literature -

Where are you in these phases?
What makes you come to life? What sucks that life right out of you?
Have you hit the wall yet?

Health: Aiming for Maturity

Review this list of what an emotionally and spiritually mature Christian looks like:

What does an **emotionally** mature person look like?

- naming, recognizing, and managing our own feelings
- identifying with and having active compassion for others
- initiating and maintaining close and meaningful relationships
- breaking free from self-destructive patterns
- being aware of how our past impacts our present
- developing the capacity to express our thoughts and feelings clearly, both verbally and nonverbally
- respecting and loving others without having to change them
- asking for what we need, want, or prefer clearly, directly, and respectfully
- accurately self-assessing our strengths, limits, and weaknesses, and freely sharing them with others
- learning the capacity to resolve conflict maturely and negotiate solutions that consider the perspectives of others
- distinguishing and appropriately expressing our sexuality and sensuality
- grieving well

What does a **spiritually** mature person look like?

- awakening and surrendering to God's love in any and every situation
- positioning ourselves to hear God and remember His Presence in all we do
- communing with God, allowing Him to fully indwell the depth of our being
- practicing silence, solitude, and a life of unceasing prayer
- resting attentively in the Presence of God
- understanding our earthly life as a journey of transformation toward ever-increasing union with God
- finding the true essence of who we are in God

- loving others out of a life of love for God
 - developing a balanced, harmonious rhythm of life that enables us to be aware of the sacred in all of life
 - adapting historic practices of spirituality that are applicable today
 - allowing our Christian lives to be shaped by the rhythm of the Christian calendar rather than the culture
 - living in committed community that passionately loves Jesus above all else.
- ~Pete Scazzero, Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, pages 45,46

What are your greatest challenges based on this list?

How do you experience Jesus as you become more mature in Him? How is He taking you deeper and deeper into maturity? Are you cooperating with Him or pushing back? (Sometimes a 30-year-old can resemble a child having a tantrum ... know what I mean?)

Dr Henry Cloud on Maturity: **“Immaturity is when we ask life to meet our demands and maturity is when we meet the demands of life.”** Wow, that’s good! Talk about that together.

Seasons of Life with Abraham

Trace the life of Abraham. How do you see him mature? What do you notice about him in the various phases of his life? How do you see God at work in his story?

References	What was happening?
Genesis 12	
Genesis 17	
Genesis 18	
Genesis 20	
Genesis 21	
Genesis 22	
Genesis 23	

Now create a simple timeline of his life, exploring his changes, maturity, and destiny.



Week Four: Themes for every age to pay attention to

Mary Magdalene's story

Mary Magdalene was one of Jesus' followers. When He met her, He cast out 7 demons and set her free (Luke 8:2, Mark 16:9). Her deliverance must have caused quite a stir because it was mentioned several times.

Her response to Jesus' actions can be summed up in one word: loyalty. She followed Jesus, helping to pay His way out of her own finances (Luke 8:2, Mt 27:56).

She was fearlessly affectionate towards Jesus, choosing to face authoritarian opposition in order to be near Him as He suffered and died (John 19:25). When He was buried, she saw where He was laid (Mk 15:47) and returned at the first possible moment (Mt 28:1). She went to the tomb, saw an angel, felt the earthquake; she was told, "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you'" (Mark 16:7). Then in Mark 16:9, we're told He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, which is quite an honor! She was the first person sent by Jesus to spread the Good News. She told those who were mourning and weeping that He had risen, and they did not believe her.

The best MM story is in John 20:11-18. It's a story of intimacy. Poor Mary was alone at the tomb, weeping. She longed for beautiful, powerful, caring Jesus. What had happened? How could He have died? What should she do with all of her confusion?

She just wanted to be near Him, so she had gone to the tomb, only to find it empty. Where on earth was Jesus' body? So now, without Jesus there, she just sat down and cried.

She spoke to someone, asking for His body. She just wanted to be with Him, to continue to take care of Him, to anoint Him properly for burial and then try to let Him go. But one word changed everything: the Person she thought was the gardener was actually Jesus. Through her tears and complete melt-down, she did not look up and stare in order to recognize Him. But the Man said her name, and suddenly, everything was different: "Mary." Her heart leapt! She knew that voice! It was Jesus! Tears of sorrow and sadness turned to tears of joy, and she ran to Him. Her strong testimony of salvation (what He did for her, how He had served her) expanded into her strong testimony about His resurrection and what she could do for Him, how she could serve Him. Her life changed on a word, Jesus calling her name.

Why do we love MM? Because she began as a demon-possessed wreck of a woman, and she ended up a fearless, close, mature follower of Jesus. She lived honestly, not playing games, and generously, giving from her own money to support her Savior. She cried when life broke down, yet was empowered to be the very first person in the world to spread the good news about the risen Christ.

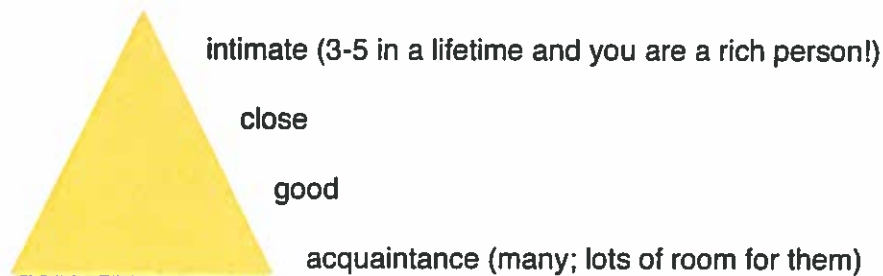
In this same way, you are on a life-long journey toward maturity.

MM had issues; do you think many people befriended a demon-possessed girl? Do you think she had grace for the people who had scorned her? What are your issues?

Let's take a look at some of the major issues women face through their adult decades.

1. Friendship: Every person's capacity for friendship is LIMITED.

There are different levels of friendship in your life:



How do you label your capacity for friendship — in other words, how much space would you allot to acquaintances, to good friends, to close friends, and to intimate friends? Draw lines in the triangle to show how you portion out your relational capacity. Then list names of your intimate and close friends. Let them know you love and appreciate their friendship today.

How does this help you understand other women who are already at capacity on some level?

I love this example of my Aunt Elisabeth's group, the "Cute Girlfriends": they were very close, met weekly for a decade, but then when they began to have children, they struggled to meet. They made a pact: when their children were out of the house they would come back together weekly. In the in-between time, they would check on each other and meet irregularly — two or three times a year and a beach trip, if possible — and continue to pray for each other. They did just that. They are all now in their 70s and still together. They have literally lived life together. Beautiful. What a gift!

How do you live an open-hearted, free life as an accepted, beloved daughter of God in a world of people with incomplete relational skills? Consider cliques ... unforgiveness ... conflict resolution skills ... and we realize we all need grace! Grace often looks like patience; listening; kind responses; gentleness; and humbly telling the truth. This is what Jesus gives you in the Gospel. Pour it out! :-)

Are you a good friend? In what areas do you need to grow? Look for the negative patterns that show up in your friendship: jealousy? possessiveness? over-service? lying? gossip? not considering the reality of another's life? avoiding conflict? Take steps toward healthier friendships.

2. **Conflict resolution:** negotiating resolutions that keep the other person in mind
Rod and Judy Huckaby get the credit on this section, and they pass it on to the book Intimate Allies by Dan Allender.

Typical problems we face when trying to resolve relational issues:

"Enemy suit" - Judy Huckaby taught me (Suz) that phrase. It's when we make another person who has injured us an enemy, and **everything** they do and say is wrong. You can also broaden this to a certain group of people (i.e., racism: that older white man was rude and arrogant; all older white men are rude and arrogant, and I don't like any of them, ever). Have you put the enemy suit on someone, thus rendering yourself as judge, and unable to see their humanity or any positives within them?

Shutting down/escaping - Someone in the problem refuses to engage, either by refusing to talk or by escaping (for example, using media, leaving the home or restaurant, over-working so they don't have to face the other person, etc.). This is also called stonewalling. It feels violent at a soul level.

Lack of resolution - People in a relationship just keep on moving, but never resolving, because the growth required is too difficult. They often just ignore the problem while continuing on with life. But

associated with this is often a list of everything someone has ever done wrong and the person has stuffed down her healthy responses.

Defensiveness - Claws out! This is a self-protective posture, as if you are expecting an attack. You feel the need to always defend yourself.

Blaming - This is a way to deflect responsibility and sin onto another person. If something is their fault, you don't have to look within yourself and work on your own issues.

Despising - Having contempt for the other person, and trying to wound them at a soul level.

Solutions:

•Live honestly. Live kindly. Live humbly. •

If you're upset, you can say it. Don't lie. If you're not alright, stop saying you're "fine." Put words to your problem or complaint and present it to the other person. Stop playing those games and be real.

Open your heart: you are a sinner, loved and forgiven, but all of us have a growth curve on relational skills. Give grace to others and yourself. Be patient.

Learn to listen, and not just defensively (to retort or defend or wound). Lean in. Focus your eyes on the other person. Notice their body language. Help them, if you can, by being patient and listening with a loving filter.

The person in front of you, in relationship with you, is a sinner, yes; so are you. Have patience with each other. Talk things out. It may take an hour, or days, or counseling over time. It's worth it.

Get advice together from a trusted mentor couple or counselor. Get outside the pathology in your relationship by getting another person's take.

3. Assumptions and expectations

Assumptions- To **ass-u-me** is to "make an **ass**-out of **you-and-me**"

Because we can't read minds . . . we've got to clarify and state our assumptions and expectations. I know it sounds super simple ... but the results can be miraculous.

Do you assume your husband will take out the garbage? Does he assume you will change the sheets? Do you assume your friend is mad at you if she doesn't text back? Do you expect your boss to come to you, rather than you go to him/her, about issues in the workplace?

Expectations- "An expectation is not valid unless it has been agreed upon." (~Pete Scazzero). Voice them. You may think you have no expectations of others to guard yourself from being disappointed ... but they're there. Dig a bit deeper, especially regarding your close relationships. Also note, this principle applies to adult-adult relationships, not adult-child relationships.

What are your expectations of yourself? of God? of other people? of a close friend? of a spouse? of a parent? of a grandparent? of an employer?

4. Managing yourself

Who are you?

What brings you life?

What is "killing you" right now?

What are you afraid of?

What are you angry about?

What is bringing you joy?

Soul Care - How do you care for your soul?

Body care - Do you have a healthy view of your God-made body? Are you content? Are you disciplined? Are you obsessing? Are you buying what our culture is selling?

Friendships - Are you reasonable in your expectations? Are you lonely? Whenever you feel lonely, press into that feeling and ask some questions: is God allowing your loneliness so you will draw closer to Him? Are you possibly looking to others to do for you what only God can do? Or do you genuinely just need to pick up the phone and reach out for a friend?

Are you giving grace? Are you living honestly? Are you expecting your people to meet needs that only God Himself can meet?

Perspective on this season of life - If you are in a super-busy season of life, you've got to adjust your expectations of yourself, your friendships, your marriage relationship, and your time alone. What might need to shift for a time? What needs to stay rock-solid?

If you are in a more quiet, spacious season of life, what is God asking of you? How does He want you to invest your time and energy? In what ways does the Kingdom need your presence, your voice, your prayers, your creativity?

5. Managing your home: decide how you want to live

Decide what you want to do about (the) ...

- level of cleanliness & organization in your home
- level of cleanliness in your car
- level of activity in your life/your household
- how you want to eat (organic? gardening? fast food? eat out or take out? budget?)
- how you take care of yourself?
- how you choose to spend money? Remember, as a Christian, all of your money is His. And so are you! So ask Him: how do You want me to live? How can I honor You financially?

6. Your husband (if you have one)

Marriage is a complex, beautiful, stretching partnership. It is a sign and wonder representing God and the church to a secular world; it is a beautiful and rare thing to be well-married. There are few things worth suffering for, to me, and marriage is one of them.

If you're young in your married life, you've got some things to work out between you two. Keeping a "team" mentality is crucial. You've got to "have each others' backs". Are you trustworthy? Do you hold his heart gently? Do you speak kindly to him? Do you live honestly with him? Does he do this with you? Do you give each other the time and affection you need to be healthy? Do you get to play together? Study him as you would study a topic. Know him. Encourage him. Challenge him. Comfort him. I hope you receive the same from him.

After watching marriages, failing in one, being tremendously thankful and happy in another, I have a word for you about manhood. Take it for what it's worth - I'm no expert. But I see the essence of manhood in movement, kindness, protection, and self-sacrifice; I see the evil one tempting men to be lazy, narcissistic, unmotivated, and irresponsible. Men need our prayers.

On a completely different note, pornography has no place in a Christian marriage, although it is largely normalized in our wider culture. No other man or woman needs to be in your bedroom. Get honest with each other. Do you need help? Pursue a Christian counselor or expert to help you break the neurochemical chains pornography produces. I recommend Vicki Tiede's book *When Your Husband is Addicted to Pornography* for women if your husband is into pornography.

How can you be an effective team in this stage of life?

Depending on your stage of life, you may be working out all kinds of questions. Can we fight in front of our kids? How do we talk about money? Misfortune? Other people? Who does what in your home?

Over-functioning - Ah, over-functioning. Please read the "Emotionally Healthy Woman" chapter on over-functioning by Geri Scazzero. What an eye-opener! A typical pattern is one person in a marriage or friendship will over-function, while the other will under-function.

An example I see in my office: The wife does all the cooking, cleaning, laundry, and caring for the children, often on top of a job. The husband comes home, has dinner she has prepared, relaxes, interacts with the kids a bit, then checks out till bedtime. This is incredibly unhealthy!

If both parents work, as in our example, the husband should be responsible for a few dinners each week and pitching in with laundry, minimum. He should also be well engaged with the care and keeping of the kids. Marriage and family is a **partnership, a team effort!**

The over-function-er is the one who must change because the under-function-er has it pretty great! It's usually a very uncomfortable time, but real change will bring more health to your home.

7. To the Single/Dating Ladies (from a single lady)

Ladies, being single is HARD. But guess what I (Rebekah) have learned/observed, being married isn't any easier! You haven't arrived/become an adult simply because you have gotten married. You are not a child/immature because you are single. So whether you are "still" single, or single again or dating:



Are you content? Not so much do you want to be in a relationship or married, but are you content if this never comes to be? Or does that thought make you upset (even angry)? Do you feel "less than" without a partner? Do you know deep inside, no matter what society, your family, friends, even the Church says, that you are NOT less than, messed up, not enough, invaluable, or too much?

I won't say that God can change this circumstance, because He can. BUT He may or He may not. How do you feel about that? Have you talked to God about that? There are times when I am LAID OUT before Him about this ... Lord, WHAT are You doing? I'm feeling _____, Help me to reject the lies that are swarming me and to believe the Truth of who I am in You. I would like _____, teach me to be content with You and You alone. How do I do this, when it seems like EVERYONE else has a partner? How are You that for me? TEACH ME! And Father, if/when You bring someone to me, keep me from forgetting You, what You have taught me, and that being in a relationship does not change who You say that I am.

Are you dating someone? Has this changed your approach to the Lord and your relationship with Him? How are your boundaries: physical, emotional, and spiritual? How are you approaching sharing your relationship with the Lord with your boyfriend? This is very intimate ... praying together, sharing your thoughts, places of growth, questions, and pain are intimate. Know this, and be aware of how it can quickly advance a relationship.

Are you all "serious"/talking marriage? Can you see beyond the ring, the wedding dress, the ceremony? Is he (are you) a team player? Are you willing to be one? Is he? Is he someone who would have your back? Look over the questions concerning husbands - are you even now over-functioning (so that he will love you, won't leave you, see you as a "good wife")? He does not need a mother and you do not need to be his mother - you both need and deserve a partner. STOP doing for him what he can do for himself!

Remember you are a Warrior Companion (even when the companion part is for friends, family, the church and the whole world)!!! ~Rebekah Peterson

8. Good News

What is the answer to these issues? To mature, to bear fruit that will last (John 15:16), looks like ****living the gospel out within the context of your own soul and your own family and your other relationships.****

In your family, you would like to (with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit) . . .

- practice forgiveness (Colossians 3:13)
- practice patience (1 Thessalonians 5:14)
- laugh
- clean up at the end of every day
- be good to each other (Ephesians 4:2)
- give grace, have peace (Ephesians 1:6, Mark 9:50, Colossians 3:15)
- talk out our conflicts
- train your kids to obey you (Ephesians 6:4,)
- love your neighbor (Romans 13:10)
- encourage the wild and free hearts of your children, within solid boundaries (Proverbs 22:6)
- be more YES than NO
- laugh more than cry

- allow feelings
- live honestly (Colossians 3:9)
- stop assuming
- clarify expectations
- stop over-functioning or under-functioning
- still dream about developing your dreams
- have preferences; have a personality!
- lay down your lives for each other (John 15:13)
- pursue God together and share (Acts 4:32)
- figure out your standards for living well (not \$) (Acts 4:32 also)
- learn contentment in some new areas (1 Timothy 6:6)
- have perspective on this season of life
- break patterns and cycles of sin (Romans 6:16-18)

Short Form: if your group can't do all this stuff ...

Week One

Go through the charts on Generations. Identify yourself. Apply these to your family and workplace. How does the gospel inform how the generations relate to each other?

Week Two

Talk through these questions. What are your answers at this point in your life for all of them?

Gordon MacDonald is now in his mid-seventies. **Every decade, he states, has a main question.**

Teens: Who am I and who am I becoming?

20's: What am I going to do with my life and with whom?

30's: Now that I have all these responsibilities and obligations, how do I manage all these priorities?

40's: Am I a success or a failure?

50's: As I move into the second half of life, who is this younger generation that wants me out of the way and how do I cope with the disappointments in my life?

60's: How much longer can I do what defines me or do I change?

70's: How do I live with loss?

80's: Does anyone remember who I once was? Can anyone remember?

Final Question: What happens when I die?

Week Three

Craft, watch "The Painted Veil" together, or talk through the Blue Book chapters.

Week Four

Either:

Read through Mary Magdalene's story together. How do you see her mature? Connect her life to yours: put yourself in her shoes. Experience her experiences in your imagination. Think through our themes of generations, maturity, and aging. Have an open discussion about how God moves in the life of MM. How do you see Him moving in **your** life?

Or:

Read through Abraham's story together in Genesis 12-25 (skip the non-Abraham parts). How do you see him mature? Connect his life to yours: put yourself in his shoes. Experience his experiences in your imagination. Think through our themes of generations, maturity, and aging. What generational sins do you notice in him and his sons (for example, lying when he is afraid, favoritism)? Have an open discussion about how God moves in the life of Abraham. How do you see Him moving in **your** life?

What is wrong

with us,

that we don't

recognize

the beauty of aging?