

A WOMAN  
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AFTER  
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GOD'S OWN  
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HEART®



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ELIZABETH GEORGE



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS  
EUGENE, OREGON

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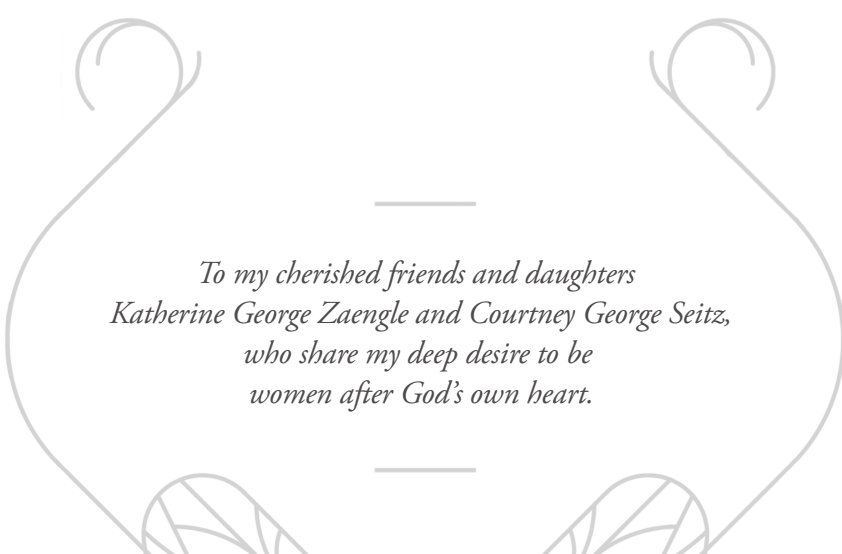
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A decorative scrollwork frame in a light gray color, featuring two upward-curving scrolls at the top and a large, open loop at the bottom that frames the text and the dragonfly illustration.

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*To my cherished friends and daughters  
Katherine George Zaengle and Courtney George Seitz,  
who share my deep desire to be  
women after God's own heart.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

As always, thank you to my dear husband, Jim George, M.Div., Th.M., for your able assistance, guidance, suggestions, and loving encouragement on this project.





# Contents

Dear Seeker of God's Heart .....	9
A Word of Welcome .....	11

## **Part 1: The Pursuit of God**

1. A Heart Devoted to God .....	15
2. A Heart Abiding in God's Word .....	29
3. A Heart Committed to Prayer. ....	43
4. A Heart That Obeys .....	55

## **Part 2: The Pursuit of God's Priorities**

### *Her Husband*

5. A Heart That Serves .....	67
6. A Heart That Follows .....	77
7. A Heart That Loves—Part 1 .....	91
8. A Heart That Loves—Part 2 .....	101

### *Her Children*

9. A Heart That Values Being a Mother .....	115
10. A Heart That Prays Faithfully .....	127
11. A Heart Overflowing with Motherly Affection—Part 1 .....	139
12. A Heart Overflowing with Motherly Affection—Part 2 .....	149



### *Her Home*

- 13. A Heart That Makes a House a Home . . . . . 159
- 14. A Heart That Watches Over the Home . . . . . 169
- 15. A Heart That Creates Order from Chaos . . . . . 179
- 16. A Heart That Weaves a Tapestry of Beauty . . . . . 191

### *Herself*

- 17. A Heart Strengthened by Spiritual Growth . . . . . 203
- 18. A Heart Enriched by Joy in the Lord . . . . . 215

### *Her Ministry*

- 19. A Heart That Shows It Cares . . . . . 229
- 20. A Heart That Encourages . . . . . 243

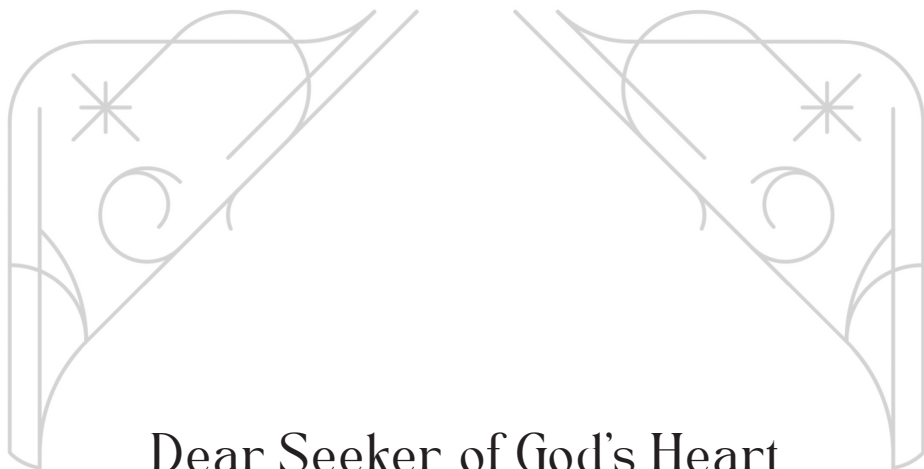
## **Part 3: The Practice of God's Priorities**

- 21. A Heart That Seeks First Things First . . . . . 257
- 22. Following After God's Heart . . . . . 267

## **Part 4: In Praise of God's Priorities**

- 23. A Trip Through Time . . . . . 285
- 24. Through It All . . . . . 303
- Notes . . . . . 309
- Quiet Times Calendar . . . . . 316
- A Note from Harvest House Publishers . . . . . 318





## Dear Seeker of God's Heart

God knows how deeply humbled I am each time someone like you writes to let me know how He has used His truths in *A Woman After God's Own Heart*® to positively impact you, your family, your home, and your love for Him. His truths are truly transforming (John 17:17)! And He also knows how blessed I am when someone like you brings a tattered and torn, dirt-darkened, tearstained, coffee-splattered, dog-eared, doodled-on-by-your-children book through a line for me to autograph. As I always say, “The best book is a used book!”

Well, my dear reading friend, at last—thanks to Harvest House Publishers—this wonderful updated and expanded edition of *A Woman After God's Own Heart*® is now available! Its debut was prompted by women like you who have heard me speak from this book or studied through my video Bible

study of *A Woman After God's Own Heart*®.<sup>1</sup> These women asked about the additional insights I now share in person or on CD that reflect my growth and understanding of practicing God's priorities for the years that have passed since I wrote this book. This new edition is just for you...to read and reread, to carry with your Bible, to take along in your backpack or carry-on (or diaper bag, as the case may be!), to study with friends, to leave on your nightstand as a refresher, and to bless and encourage others as a life-changing gift.

It's wonderful being a woman after God's own heart, isn't it? To know Him. To love Him. To enrich the lives of others. To follow Him...and to enjoy the blessings He extends to us when we do. No woman's life could be more satisfying than the life enjoyed by a woman after His own heart, a woman whose heart's desire is to do God's will (Acts 13:22)! May God richly bless you and yours as you continue to follow after Him.

In His everlasting love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Elizabeth George". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each name being capitalized and prominent.



## A Word of Welcome

**I**magine living life so that people thought of each of us—today and long after we’re gone—as a woman after God’s own heart! Thousands of years after he walked this earth, we still think of King David—the faithful shepherd boy who slew Goliath, the warrior who mercifully spared King Saul’s life on more than one occasion, the king who danced with joy as the Ark of the Covenant was returned to Jerusalem—as *a man after God’s own heart* (1 Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22)!

Before you protest, “But I’m hardly in King David’s category!” let me remind you that he was far from perfect. (For instance, does the name “Bathsheba” ring a bell?) Despite his tendency to forget to consult God, despite his cold-blooded arrangements to murder Uriah so he could marry Bathsheba, and despite his less than solid parenting, David has been given

the title “man after God’s own heart.” I find that very encouraging as I continue on the path of being a woman after God’s own heart.

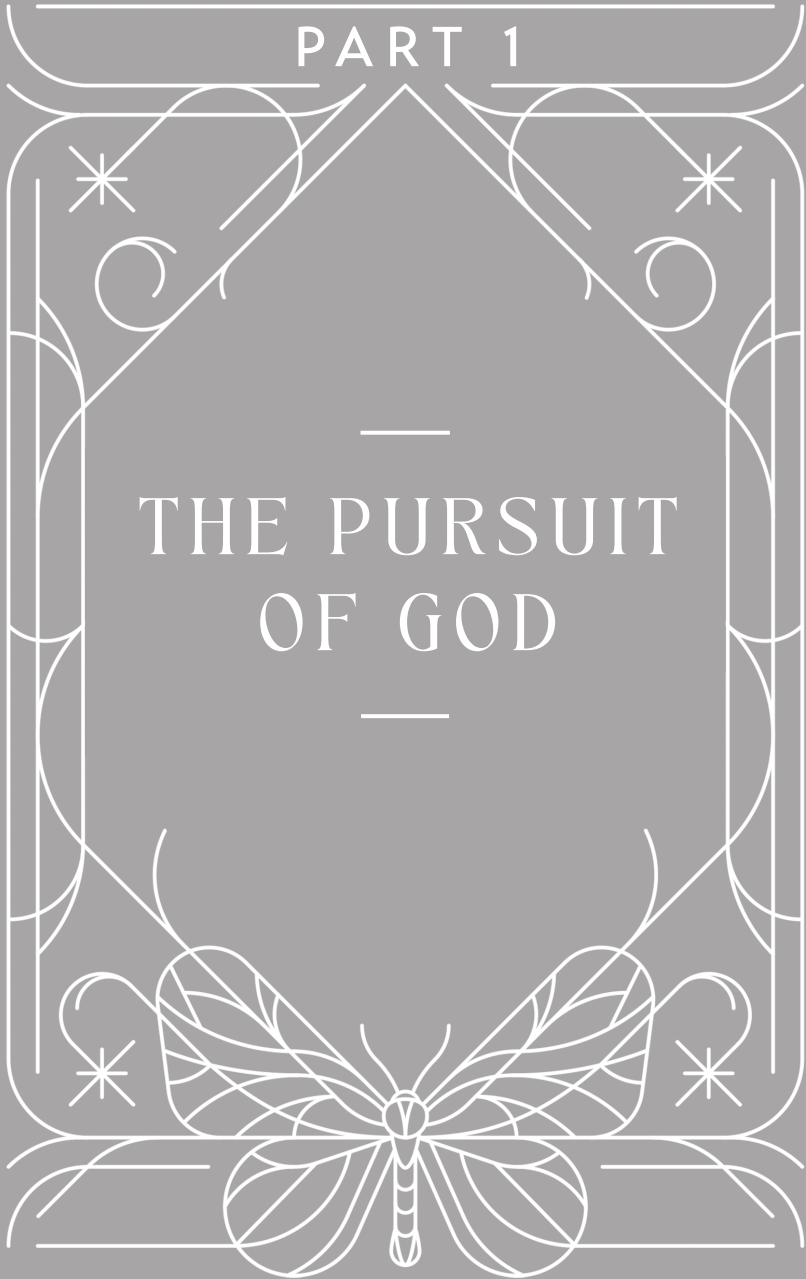
I also find encouraging the fact that this path is, in the words of Richard Foster, “the path of disciplined Grace.”<sup>1</sup> He goes on to explain:

It is discipline, because there is work for us to do.  
It is Grace, because the life of God which we enter into is a gift which we can never earn....Discipline in and of itself does not make us righteous, it merely places us before God....The transformation...is God’s work.<sup>2</sup>

Our transformation into being a woman after God’s own heart is indeed God’s work. But what I offer here are the disciplines we can follow to place ourselves before God—disciplines regarding our devotional life, our personal growth, our home, our marriage and family, and our ministry—so that He can do that work in our heart. You’ll find practical insights about what it means to follow God in every area of life, insights about nurturing an impassioned relationship with God, experiencing personal growth, caring for your home, loving your husband, enjoying your children, and giving to others. The journey is an exciting one, and you’ll find much joy along the way. So I welcome you to join me as each of us seeks to be the woman God calls us... and will empower us...to be, a woman after His own heart.

PART 1

—  
THE PURSUIT  
OF GOD  
—







## CHAPTER ONE

# A Heart Devoted to God

*But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.*

LUKE 10:42

I had done it thousands of times before, but two days ago it was different. I'm talking about the walk I take each day in the dewy part of the morning. As I moved through my neighborhood I noticed a woman—probably in her late seventies—walking on the sidewalk by the park. She had an aluminum walker and appeared to have suffered a stroke. She was also a little bent over, a telltale sign of osteoporosis.

What made this outing different for me? Well, just three days earlier we had buried my husband's mother. Lois was in her late seventies when God called her home to be with Him... and Lois had used an aluminum walker...and Lois had suffered from osteoporosis...and Lois too had experienced a slight stroke.

Still grieving over our recent loss, I was a little down even before I spotted this woman who so reminded me of Lois. I

had already used the few tissues I had taken with me. And my heart and mind were filled with thoughts like *What will we do for Thanksgiving? We always had Thanksgiving at Lois's. She always fixed the turkey, dressing, cranberry sauce, and homemade pies. What will a family gathering be like without her?* On and on my thoughts went. *She won't be in her regular seat at church Sunday....I no longer have any reason to take the freeway exit that leads to her house. Besides, it is no longer her house....Now who was praying for us? How will the loss of her prayer power affect all of us—Jim's ministry, my ministry, the girls' lives, this book?*

As I watched that dear, brave woman struggling to walk and remembered Lois's battle with cancer and pneumonia at the end of her life, I realized I was taking a hard look at reality. Every one of us has a body that will someday fail us—and that someday is not necessarily too far off.

I was also sharply reminded once again of how desperately I want my life—indeed each and every day of it, each and every minute of it—to count. Yet as I took in this scene and thought these thoughts, I was aware that my fiftieth birthday had come—and gone. My thirtieth wedding anniversary had done the same. And my two little babies had graduated from life at home to life in their own homes with husbands to love and babies of their own to consider. I was running out of time!

## **A Change of Heart**

Now I don't want you to think this book is a "downer"! This is certainly not at all how I intended to begin a book about a woman after God's own heart. But these thoughts don't mark the end of my walk—or my story. Let me tell you what happened next.

As I pushed forward on my walk, I realized that I needed



to push my thoughts forward too. I had been thinking earthly thoughts—human thoughts, physical thoughts, worldly thoughts—rather than thoughts of faith. My perspective was off! We as Christians are to walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7), so I turned my mind and heart upward and began to adjust my perspective to match God’s view of my life (and Lois’s life and yours), His eternal view that encompasses our past and our future as well as our present.

Rushing to my rescue was one particular verse from the Bible. I had memorized it long ago and had since applied it to my life in many ways. The words were fresh in my mind because the pastor who had shared the platform with my husband, Jim (Lois’s son and only child), at her memorial service had used it when speaking of her life. They were words Jesus had spoken of to Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. He said, “But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42).

As I thought on this word from God about one of His women—a woman Jesus was defending from criticism with this statement—I found myself looking straight into the core meaning of “a heart after God,” and I was greatly comforted.

First, I was comforted about Lois. Although her life with us was over, she had sought to make it count every day and for eternity. She had chosen the one thing, the necessary thing, each day for most of her life. She had chosen with her whole heart to seek to live her life for God. She loved God, worshiped God, walked with God, served God, and looked forward to being with Him in eternity. In spite of a painful cancer and being twice

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**To be God’s women,  
to love Him fervently  
with whole hearts, is  
our sole desire.**

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widowed, Lois knew true inner peace and joy as she nurtured a heart of devotion to God. I have no doubt that my mother-in-law's life had definitely counted for the kingdom.

I was also comforted about my own life. After all, God knows the desires of my heart—indeed, He has put them there (Psalm 37:4)! He knows the amount of daydreaming—and praying—I do about becoming the kind of woman He wants me to be. He also knows that while I am daydreaming I am frightfully aware that the years are drifting by and that there is less and less time left for becoming that woman. But God's peace became mine as I was reminded one more time that when, day by day, I choose the one thing necessary—which shall never be taken away from me—my life too makes a difference. God wants my heart—all of it—and my devotion. When I choose to give it to Him, when I choose to live totally for Him, He makes it count. He wants to be Number One in my life, the priority above all priorities!

And, dear friend and woman after God's heart, I am comforted for you too because I know you join me in yearning for the things of God. To be God's woman, to love Him fervently with a whole heart, is our sole desire. And whether you're pushing a stroller or a grocery cart or an aluminum walker, whether you're single, married, or a widow, whether your challenge is eight children or no children, whether life has you nursing children with measles, a husband with cancer, or your own osteoporosis, your life counts—and counts mightily—as you face its challenges with a heart full of devotion to God.

As I said earlier, I had not planned to open this book with thoughts like these. But because of the life Lois nurtured and chose each day to live, a tribute to her is a fitting beginning for a book about a woman after God's own heart. Lois showed me how important it is to choose to love God and follow after

Him...with a whole heart...each day...as long as we live. Every day counts when we are devoted to God!

## **A Heart Devoted to God**

A closer look at Mary, a woman who sat at Jesus' feet and received His praise, further opens up for us the meaning of a heart devoted to God. What did Mary do that moved our Savior to praise her?

*Mary discerned the one thing needed*—The events leading up to Jesus' words set the scene for us to look into Mary's heart (Luke 10:38-42). Jesus (probably accompanied by His disciples) arrived at the home of Mary's sister, Martha, for a meal. I'm sure it was a joyous and festive time. Imagine, God in flesh coming for dinner! He was total love, total care, total concern, and total wisdom. It would be heaven on earth to be in His presence—the presence of God.

But Martha, Mary's sister, didn't discern the miracle of God in the flesh. Consequently, she marred His visit by her behavior. She crossed over the line of graciously providing food and became overly involved in her hostessing. When Jesus opened His mouth to impart words of life—the Word of God spoken by God Himself—and Mary slipped out of the kitchen to sit quietly at His feet, Martha broke. She interrupted the Teacher, her guest, to say something to this effect—"Don't You care that I'm putting this meal together all by myself? Tell Mary to help me!" Martha failed to discern the priority and importance of time with God.

Mary, a woman after God's own heart, made the choice that indicated her heart's devotion: She knew it was important to cease her busyness, stop all activity, and set aside secondary things in order to focus wholly on the Lord. Unlike her sister,

who was so busy doing things *for* the Lord that she failed to spend time *with* Him, Mary put worship at the top of her to-do list.

*Mary chose the one thing needed*—Because Mary was a woman after God's own heart, she was preoccupied with one thing at all times—Him! Yes, she too served. And she too tried to fulfill her God-given responsibilities. But there was one choice that Mary made that day in Bethany, a decision to do the one thing that mattered most: Mary chose to spend time worshiping God. She knew that nothing can take the place of time in God's presence. Indeed, time spent sitting at His feet fuels and focuses all acts of service. And, as her Master noted, time spent hearing and worshiping God can never be taken away, for it is time spent in eternal pursuits, time that earns permanent and everlasting dividends. Mary chose to spend that precious time with Him.

### **Yes, But How?**

How can you and I become women devoted to God, women who love God deeply and live for Him daily? What can we do to follow Mary's example and begin making choices that tell the whole watching world that we are women after God's own heart, choices that position us so God can impassion our hearts toward Him?

1. *Choose God's ways at every opportunity*—Commit yourself to actively choose God and His ways—as Mary did—in your decisions, words, thoughts, and responses. *A Woman After God's Own Heart* is about living according to God's priorities, and we want the choices we make to reflect that God is our Ultimate Priority. After all, the word “priority” means “to prefer.” We want to choose to prefer God's way in all things. And several

guidelines help. This is simple but, believe me, I know how easy it is to let our guard down.

*Proverbs 3:6*—“In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” could be the theme verse of this book—and of life! This well-loved verse describes a two-step partnership with God. Our part is to stop and acknowledge God along the way, and His part is to direct our paths. This means we are to consult with God regarding our decisions, thoughts, words spoken, or responses. Before we move ahead or merely react, we need to stop and pray first, “God, what would You have me do—or think or say—here?”

What exactly does *Proverbs 3:6* look like in daily life? Let me share two examples. I wake up and the day begins. As I merrily go about the business of life, a crisis suddenly arises. The phone rings, and it’s bad news or a decision needs to be made. I try to remember to mentally—and maybe even physically (as Mary did)—stop and check in with God. I pray, “God, what do You want me to do here?” I endeavor to simply pause in my mind and spirit and acknowledge God. That’s my part of the partnership. It may take a split second or some minutes in prayer.

Or I’m again merrily going about my day—and I run into someone who says something that hurts me. Before I blurt something out (this is my goal anyway!), before I give an eye for an eye (or a word for a word), I try again to stop...pause...sit mentally in God’s presence...and lift my thoughts to Him: “OK, God, what do You want me to do here? What do You want me to say? How do You want me to act?” I even ask Him, “What expression do You want on my face as I listen to this person say these things?” I acknowledge God. That’s my part.

And then God takes over and does His part—He directs my paths. Often it’s almost as if the next thought to enter my mind

is from Him. Because I ask Him for direction and want to do things His way—not my way—He directs me. He instructs me and teaches me in the way I should go (Psalm 32:8). He guides me in what to do, how to act, and what to say. God is faithful to His promise: “Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it’” (Isaiah 30:21).

*The saying “good, better, best”*—Perhaps as a child you heard your teacher at school say,

Good, better, best,  
never let it rest,  
until your good is better,  
and your better best.

Well, I try to apply this saying in very practical ways to my own decision-making and choices. That’s what Mary did. According to Jesus, she chose the *best* way. Here’s just one way that doing so has helped me.

In Los Angeles people can spend a lot of time in the car, and I was no exception. There in the car—all alone—I had options about what I could think and do. For years I drove around with

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**Choosing God and  
His ways deepens our  
devotion to Him.**

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an easy-listening music station on the radio. That was a fairly good choice. However, after some thought, I decided a better choice for me would be to listen to classical music (a passion of mine). After thinking about my choice a little more, I decided an even better choice would be playing a CD of uplifting Christian music. Then I moved up the “better” scale again as I chose to listen to sermon CDs instead—recordings of

a man of God teaching the Word of God to the people of God. Next, playing CDs of the Bible seemed even better. Then one day I turned the whole audio system off and landed on what for me was the best choice for my car time—memorizing Scripture. Good to better to best!

When I was a new Christian, I heard a more spiritually mature woman at church tell about a choice—a Mary kind of choice—she made each day as soon as her husband left for work. She said she could do almost anything she wanted—turn on the TV and watch a soap opera or talk show, read the *Los Angeles Times*, or—her choice—pick up her Bible and have her quiet time. Here was a woman—a woman after God’s own heart—paying close attention to what was good, better, and best, and striving to make the best choices.

That, dear reader, is our challenge too. Choosing God and His ways deepens our devotion to Him.

*Standing in awe of God*—A favorite passage of mine ends with these words: “Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but *a woman who fears the LORD*, she shall be praised” (Proverbs 31:30).

Author and Bible teacher Anne Ortlund expressed her own awe of God: “In my heart I do have a fear....I long to grow more godly with each passing day. Call it ‘the fear of the Lord,’ being in awe of Him and scared to death of any sin that would mar my life at this point.”<sup>1</sup>

This same heart for God and fear of missing His best because of faulty choices was shared by another woman I admire, Carole Mayhall of the Christian discipleship organization The Navigators. Twice I’ve heard Carole share at women’s retreats, and both times she said, “Daily I live with [one] fear—a healthy fear if there is such a thing. [It is] that I will miss something God

has for me in this life. And it is mind-expanding to contemplate all that He wants me to have. I don't want to be robbed of even one of God's riches by not taking time to let Him invade my life. By not listening to what He is telling me. By allowing the routine, pressing matters of my minutes to bankrupt me of time for the most exciting, most fulfilling relationship in life."<sup>2</sup>

Are you in awe of God and what He wants to do in you, for you, and through you?

2. *Commit yourself to God daily*—Our devotion to God is strengthened when we offer Him a fresh commitment each day. Every morning, in a heartfelt prayer either written or silent, start fresh with God by giving Him all that you are, all that you have... now... forever... and daily. Lay everything on God's altar in what one saint of old called the "surrendered life."<sup>3</sup> Give God your life, your body (such as it is), your health (or lack of it), your husband, each child (one by one), your home, your possessions. Nurture the habit of placing these blessings in God's loving hands to do with them what He will. After all, they are not ours—they are His! A daily prayer of commitment helps us to release what we think are our rights to these gifts. As the saying goes, "Hold all things lightly and nothing tightly." I also find these words from nineteenth-century devotional writer Andrew Murray helpful: "God is ready to assume full responsibility for the life wholly yielded to Him."<sup>4</sup>

So aim at some kind of commitment to God made daily. It can be as simple as this prayer, the first of F.B. Meyer's seven rules for living: "Make a daily, definite, audible consecration of yourself to God. Say it out loud: 'Lord, today I give myself anew to you.'"<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the prayer of commitment I love best (and have written on the front page of my Bible) is that of Betty Scott Stam,



a China Inland Mission worker. She and her husband were led through the streets of China to their execution by decapitation, while their baby lay behind in its crib. This was her daily prayer:

Lord, I give up all my own plans and purposes, all my own desires and hopes, and accept Thy will for my life. I give myself, my time, my all, utterly to Thee to be Thine forever. Fill me and seal me with Thy Holy Spirit. Use me as Thou wilt, send me where Thou wilt, work out Thy whole will in my life at any cost, now and forever.<sup>6</sup>

In this case, the cost was high. This total commitment to God cost Betty Stam her ministry, her husband, her child, her life. But that kind of commitment is indeed our high calling as His children (Romans 8:17).

3. *Cultivate a hot heart*—I am especially challenged about the temperature of my own heart whenever I consider these words spoken by Jesus: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” (Revelation 3:15-16). According to this scripture, which heart condition do you think God considers the worst?

Think about these chilling facts: To be cold-hearted means to be decidedly below normal, to be unemotional, unaware, unconscious of God. Imagine...being unemotional about the things of God! And then there's the lukewarm heart. It's only moderately warm. It's indifferent! Imagine being indifferent toward God!

Hot—the third option—is where we want to be. That's having a high temperature, characterized by violent activity, emotion, or passion. It's fiery and excited. Now that's the heart of someone committed to God!

Have you ever been in the presence of a person who is hot-hearted toward God? I have. Mike was asked to say grace at a potluck dinner. Well, when you have a hot heart for God you

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**We should be fiery  
and excited about  
God, and God will  
fuel our fire.**

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can never just say grace. Prostrate in his heart and soul, Mike began a prayer of heartfelt worship. His passion tumbled out of his mouth as he thanked God for His salvation, for the fact that he had been transferred from darkness into the kingdom of light, that he had been

lost but was now found, blind but could now see. On and on Mike went until I, frankly, lost my appetite because I had found other meat—for the soul! Mike's hot heart moved me to forget about a mere hot meal for my stomach.

Our heart for God should be like a boiling pot. Our heart should be characterized by a God-given and intense passion for our Lord. After all, when a teakettle is boiling on your stove, you know it. It sputters and steams. It actually hops up and down and jiggles from side to side, empowered by its violent heat. Hot to the touch, it shares the heat that is within. There is no way to ignore its fire. Likewise, we should be fiery and excited about God, and God will fuel our fire.

That's what I want for you—and for myself. I want Jesus' presence in our lives to make a difference. I want us to overflow with His goodness and praise. I want our lips to speak of the great things He has done for us (Luke 1:49), to tell of His wonders (Psalm 96:3). "Let the redeemed of the LORD say so" (Psalm 107:2)!

## HEART RESPONSE



Oh, dear sister, how would you rate your heart condition? I pray that your heart belongs to Christ, that you have entered into an eternal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus. If this is true for you, thank Him for the wonderful privilege of being called a child of God!

However, if you are unsure about where you stand with God or if you know quite clearly you are living your life apart from God, purpose to make things right with Him. Spend time in prayer. Confess and deal with any sin. Invite Jesus to be your Savior, and by doing so, welcome Christ into your life and become a new creature in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17). Your prayer might go something like this:

God, I want to be Your child, a true woman after Your heart—a woman who lives her life in You, through You, and for You. I acknowledge my sin and receive Your Son, Jesus Christ, into my needy heart, giving thanks that He died on the cross for my sins. Thank You for giving me Your strength so that I can follow after Your heart.

Go ahead. Turn your heart heavenward. Open up your heart. Invite Christ in. He will then make you a woman after His own heart!

Now you can begin—or begin anew!—to put yourself in a position where God can grow in you a heart of devotion. Every activity in this book is aimed at helping you place yourself before God so He can turn your heart toward Him. Our goal is to have no will but His will. Right now utter a prayer for more heat!