Becoming a Woman of *excellence*

CHAPTER SEVEN

*excellence*

GUARDED BY DISCRETION

“Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh forward things;”

Proverbs 2:11-12 (KJV)

Solomon wrote, “As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion” (Proverbs 11:22). Our looks, abilities, and knowledge fade into the background if discretion is not evident in our behavior. Learning to exercise discretion is essential to becoming a woman of excellence, for a woman who wants to please God by her life will honor him with gracious and thoughtful speech and actions.

Discretion has been defined as saying and doing the right thing in the right way at the right time. Bill Gothard defines discretion as the ability to avoid words, actions, and attitudes that could result in undesirable consequences. Discretion comes from the Greek word, *sophron*, meaning sound mind, self-controlled, sane, temperate, sensible. Applying discretion in our everyday lives will help us so that we will never be misplaced jewelry!

**Discretion Defined**

1. For a well-rounded understanding of discretion, look up the following words in the dictionary. Jot down the primary and secondary meanings.

   *discreet –*

   *discretion –*

   *prudence –*

   *self-controlled –*

   *sensible –*

2. Proverbs is a major scriptural source for learning about wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and discretion. What observations about discretion can you make from the following verses?

   Proverbs 2:11

   Proverbs 5:1-2

   Proverbs 8:12
Read Titus 2:3-5. Why do you think Paul asked the older women to teach discretion, or self-control, to the younger women?

Discretion Demonstrated: *Slow to Speak*

3. How do these Proverbs describe one who is discreet or indiscreet in her conversation?

   Proverbs 15:28

   Proverbs 17:27-28

   Proverbs 18:13

   Proverbs 29:20

   *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.* — James 1:19-20

4. Esther was a Jewish woman who was chosen to be the queen of Persia. During her reign, the king’s prime minister, Haman, convinced the king to sign an edict to destroy all the Jews in the land. Mordecai, Esther’s cousin, encouraged her to approach the king about the edict to slaughter the Jews.

   Read Esther 4:15 – 7:10

What do you think helped Esther to be able to wait in sharing what was on her heart? (Had I been in her position, I would have immediately exposed the evil Haman and emotionally appealed to my husband’s conscience!)

How does Esther exemplify discretion?

5. Read Luke 2:15-20. After all that Mary, the mother of Jesus, had witnessed of God’s miraculous work in her life, how did she respond?

   How do you think Mary exemplified discretion?
6. What guidelines does Paul provide in Ephesians 4:29 for those who want to be discreet?

If I can enjoy a joke at the expense of another; if I can in any way slight another in conversation, or even in thought, then I know nothing of Calvary love.

*Amy Carmichael*

**Slow to Anger**

7. “The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.” (Proverbs 19:11). Another translation is: A [woman’s] discretion makes [her] slow to anger, and it is [her] glory to overlook a transgression. What do these Proverbs have to say about being slow to anger?

Proverbs 12:16

Proverbs 15:1

Proverbs 16:32

The key to patience under provocation is to seek to develop God’s own trait of being “slow to anger”: (Exodus 34:6). . . . The best way to develop this slowness to anger is to reflect frequently on the patience of God toward us. The parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:21-35) is designed to help us recognize our own need of patience toward others by recognizing the patience of God toward us. . . . We are like the unmerciful servant when we lose our patience under provocation. We ignore God’s extreme patience with us. We discipline our children out of anger, while God disciplines us out of love. We are eager to punish the person who provokes us, while God is eager to forgive. We are eager to exercise our authority, while God is eager to exercise his love. This kind of patience does not ignore the provocations of others; it simply seeks to respond to them in a godly manner.

*Jerry Bridges*

**Dresses Discreetly**

8. What guidelines are given in 1 Timothy 2:9-10 to “women making a claim to godliness” in regard to their dress?

Do these verses apply to us today? If so, how?

9. In 1 Peter 3:3-4, what perspective does Peter add to our consideration of how we dress?
**Plans Ahead**

10. Part of prudence is the ability to have foresight. What do the following verses teach about “planning ahead”?

Proverbs 14:15

Proverbs 31:21

Proverbs 31:25, 27

11. Matthew 25:1-13 records the parable of the ten virgins. What does Jesus teach us about foresight in this story?

**AUTHOR’S REFLECTION** – Discretion is such a need in my life that I have memorized Psalm 69:5-6: “O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee. Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.” These verses are special because I don’t want my lack of discretion to be an embarrassment or hindrance to others.

To apply discretion in my life, I have set these goals:

- **Slow to speak** – trying to remember to think before I speak.
- **Slow to anger** – being slow to anger not only toward my family, but toward those whom I don’t know who frustrate me! (other drivers, people who wait or don’t wait on me in stores, etc.)
- **Dressing discreetly** – trying not to attract or detract attention by the way I dress.
- **Planning ahead** – making a basic schedule and keeping a list of things that need to be done in the future.

Our purpose for being discreet is given in Titus 2:5 – “that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

**Discretion Applied**

12. To guard means to defend, to keep in safety, to provide or secure against objections or attacks. After studying discretion, how do you think discretion can guard your life?

13. Applying discretion to our lives brings immediate results. Being slow to speak or slow to anger will become quickly evident to those close to us!

What needs do you have in the area of discretion?
What is one specific thing you can begin to do to meet that need? (For example: memorize a verse, become accountable to an older woman in the Lord, ask someone’s opinion of your dress, get a notebook and begin to plan ahead.)

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE MEMORY: James 1:19

The Lord give you discretion and understanding. Read 1 Chronicles 22:12