



CONTENT  
TO BE GOOD,  
CALLED  
TO BE GODLY



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## Introduction

This book is written for those who have a personal relationship with God but want to walk with him on a higher level of Christian maturity. Spiritual growth can be like physical growth. Children mature naturally and rapidly. One day we are reaching down to tie a shoe and soon we find ourselves reaching up to adjust a mortarboard or wedding veil. The changes from youth to adulthood are easy to measure and natural to expect. Maturity becomes more of a choice in our adult years. The same can be true spiritually. The lessons taught in this book are for those who want to make that choice to mature in their faith. You may, like many Christians, go to church faithfully each week, attend Bible studies, and try to follow the lessons you've learned. But what if your faith becomes routine and loses the powerful joy that accompanied your salvation?

I've been there as a pastor's wife and a Bible study leader. My normal routine requires me to be involved in church activities and the preparations for them. I spend a lot of time reading the Bible and other resources so that I can teach a lesson or speak to a group. I had to learn that *using* the Bible to prepare a lesson wasn't the same thing as taking time *with* the Bible to grow personally. I was in full-time ministry but realized that I was trudging spiritually because my relationship with God had become a monotonous routine of fulfilling time commitments

and meeting expectations. I knew how to give the appearance of spirituality, but I had lost the joy and power of a vital relationship with the Father. This book describes my spiritual life—lessons—lessons that may be beneficial to you, too.

*Content to Be Good, Called to Be Godly* is a self-contained Bible study. It can be used in small group settings or for larger group discussion. It can also be used as a tool for personal study. The book contains my thoughts, Scripture passages, and thought-provoking questions to help you examine your spiritual life and encourage you to experience the life God has called you to live. God told the prophet Jeremiah, “I know the plans *I* have for you” (Jeremiah 29:11, emphasis added). God has a plan for your life, but he created you with free will; therefore, following his plan will be a choice. This book also has an appendix with further helps. But that’s just the starting point. Your spiritual journey will not change dramatically until you really dig deep into Scripture. God’s Word has the power to change your life. The most important part of this book isn’t what I have said, but what God will say through his Word as you study.

The reason most Christians plateau spiritually is because they have an unbalanced spiritual diet. They consume too much milk and not enough meat. It’s a common fact that when a mother consumes food, her body processes it into milk. It’s not that different for us who are growing spiritually. We expect to grow primarily through the “milk” of sermons, books, lectures, and lessons. A pastor, teacher, or author takes the Word of God, processes it, and gives it to the people listening. But just as milk isn’t enough nourishment to sustain an adult, the same is true for our spiritual diet. The “meat”

you consume will be the lessons you are taught directly, by the Holy Spirit, as you prayerfully study the Scriptures for yourself. Paul told the church in Corinth,

*Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in the Christian life. I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. 1 Corinthians 3:1-2*

This book has both milk and meat. You will need to consume both to fully benefit from each lesson. Spiritual health requires a balanced diet so that we can grow to be mature Christians, strong enough to follow God's plan.

This book was born on my morning walks. I don't walk for the rush of endorphins or because I hope to be a size four someday. I walk for the reward of ice cream, pasta, and the opportunity to think. I enjoy having quiet time to think, so I walk. For me, morning is the best time to walk. I love the way the world looks and sounds in the morning. The day is new and fresh with promise.

Every morning I pass people beginning their days—retrieving their paper from the driveway, driving to work, taking the kids to school, jogging past me. I often wonder who among the people I see are going to heaven. I'm certain many of them are Christians, but which ones will choose to walk closely with Jesus for the day?

My husband and I have served wonderful churches over the years. But at every one of those churches I see people come each Sunday simply because they know they should.

They attend worship and Bible study, then leave—believing they have met God’s expectations for the week. I can recognize those who are content with being good instead of godly because I saw that person in my own mirror for a long time. When Jesus taught his disciples—including us—to pray “Give us this day our daily bread,” he was saying that we need God’s presence and nourishment on a daily basis.

There is a difference between finding joy in moments and being filled with the joy and peace of a solid relationship with Jesus. I pray this book will help you rediscover your passion for Jesus and reconnect with him on a deeper level. When you think of the impact the early Christians had on their society, just imagine the potential impact we could have on our world.

I don’t want you just to be a good parent; I want you to be a godly one. I don’t want you to know success in this world; I want you to receive a heavenly reward. I don’t want you to have a good reputation; I want others to see Jesus in you. I don’t want you to be content to be good; I want you to understand that you are called to be godly.

More important, I want *you* to study Scripture and listen to what God tells you through his Holy Spirit. I wrote this book for the Christian who knows there is a better way to live faithfully and desires to do so. All of us yearn to hear God say, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.” The chapters of this book hopefully will teach you how to live the godly life of a faithful servant, the life we have been called to live. As you read the lessons I needed to learn (and am still learning), maybe you’ll find you need to learn them too. Let’s both be willing to follow our godly calling.

## CONTENT TO BE GOOD, CALLED TO BE GODLY

**E**arly morning has always been my favorite time of the day. I love to work in those quiet hours when most of the world is either asleep or barely getting started. For years I've risen early, grabbed a cup of hot coffee, and spent time with God. Each week I routinely set aside one morning to prepare my weekly Bible study, a teaching ministry that I have had for many years. It is my privilege to teach women of all ages and from a variety of backgrounds who come to our church. Some have a great deal of Bible knowledge, while others are just beginning to read the Scriptures. They meet together in small groups to discuss a portion of Scripture, and then I present a more in-depth look at the passage.

One beautiful fall morning several years ago, my routine changed. In the past, I had usually anticipated the chance to study, but as I headed upstairs my feet seemed heavy. I had no desire to prepare my weekly Bible lesson. We were studying the life of Christ, and the week's lesson focused on the temptations of Jesus in the desert. Here I was with one



of the most well-known passages in the New Testament, and I was completely uninspired. It is always more difficult to teach a well-known passage. Most of the ladies had heard this Bible story in Vacation Bible School and had been hearing it in lessons and sermons ever since. I couldn't imagine that I would have anything new to add.

I sat in my favorite chair and carefully read through the passage, studying each verse. When I finished, I got to my knees, asking God for *something* I could say that would be new and interesting. I finished praying and looked again at the fourth chapter of Luke, hoping that I would be led to *at least* three points and a clever introduction. Still, nothing new came to mind. *Perhaps I just need more caffeine to fill in the gaps where God's silence seems to be growing,* I thought to myself. In the kitchen I poured another cup of coffee and then sat for a long time at the kitchen table looking out the window. The leaves of the oak trees were just beginning to turn, and they held the promise of the full array of fall colors. The sun poured through the windows, and the house was hushed and peaceful. Once again my mind drifted to the Scripture I had just read.

*Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry. Then the devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become a loaf of bread." But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone.'" Then the devil took him up and revealed to*

*him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. “I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them,” the devil said, “because they are mine to give to anyone I please. I will give it all to you if you will worship me.” Jesus replied, “The Scriptures say, ‘You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.’” Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, “If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, ‘He will order his angels to protect and guard you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.’” Jesus responded, “The Scriptures also say, ‘You must not test the LORD your God.’” When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came.*

**Luke 4:1-13**

As I looked again at the familiar passage, my mind filled with a steady stream of silent questions. *Why did the Spirit lead Christ into the wilderness? Was this really necessary? God is omniscient and already knew how Christ would respond. Why did the devil choose those temptations for Christ? Did Satan think Jesus would agree with his ideas?* I began to think about all the things Satan offered Jesus. To be honest, there didn’t seem to be anything wrong with the devil’s suggestions. *Why should Jesus go hungry? Why shouldn’t he prove to the world that he is the Son of God?* Looking objectively at Satan’s offers, they all seemed like pretty *good* ideas.

A few moments later God’s Spirit began to author the quiet thoughts that answered my questions. His presence was tangible. As God gave me the lesson I had been struggling to create, I realized it was more important than an outline for a weekly Bible study lesson—it was a life lesson

for me. That morning I came to realize the temptations of Christ were *not* just his. . . . They were mine as well.

It made me think: *How many times in my life has Satan presented me with offers similar to what Satan offered Christ—offers of personal gain or glory that I have willingly accepted?* In fact, I believed that these offers would result in a valuable service for God. I counted off the times I had driven home from a speaking engagement or Bible study quite proud of how things had gone. When people complimented me on how I “ministered to the crowd,” I assumed God was as pleased as they were. In reality, I had been led to a temple and I had jumped.

I stared quietly at the empty, stained coffee cup in my hands, realizing that my soul was just like that cup. Yes, I had been working hard, but to what end? That morning I honestly questioned if I was busy with the Lord’s agenda for my life or if I was simply caught up in the devil’s suggestions. I had a ministry . . . but was it mine, or God’s?

That quiet fall morning was an appointment with God. Realizing the significance of this moment, my next prayer to God was to seek his help, not just for a message to teach, but for my life. I had wanted God to help me write a lesson that was clever and new so I could impress those who came to listen. I wanted to turn stones into bread so I could feed my ego. I wanted to do a good job so that the Bible study would grow and I would look successful. I was working for those kingdoms and glories the devil had offered. I wanted to be inspired so that others would see that God had chosen me and was using my ministry. I wanted to jump from

the Temple. I wanted precisely what the devil was offering, never realizing that the good things I was busy doing were much more about me than they were about God. I was paying Satan's high price as I spent my time, my energy, and my passion on his delusions; the currency required was depleting my soul. My calendar was full and I was actively doing things the world called ministry, but I was exhausted, joyless, and spiritually bankrupt. I wanted to rediscover the life God wanted me to have. The life he could bless.

God heard my prayers and answered them that beautiful fall morning. He gave me something new to say about those verses from Luke, not so I could entertain or impress an audience, but so I could learn the message myself. He led me to a new understanding of what would be necessary if I wanted to live by God's plan and for his purpose. In those early morning hours, alone with my Father, he began to teach me what would become a central message of my ministry and a passion for my own life. God called me to reorder my priorities and to ask myself if I was busy doing good things—or God things. Now he wants to ask you that same question.

## POINTS TO PONDER

**Consider your life. What obligations involve your time and energy? How did you decide to become involved in this work? What has been your reward?**