



Daily Encouragement

for Homeschooling Mothers



Charlene Notgrass

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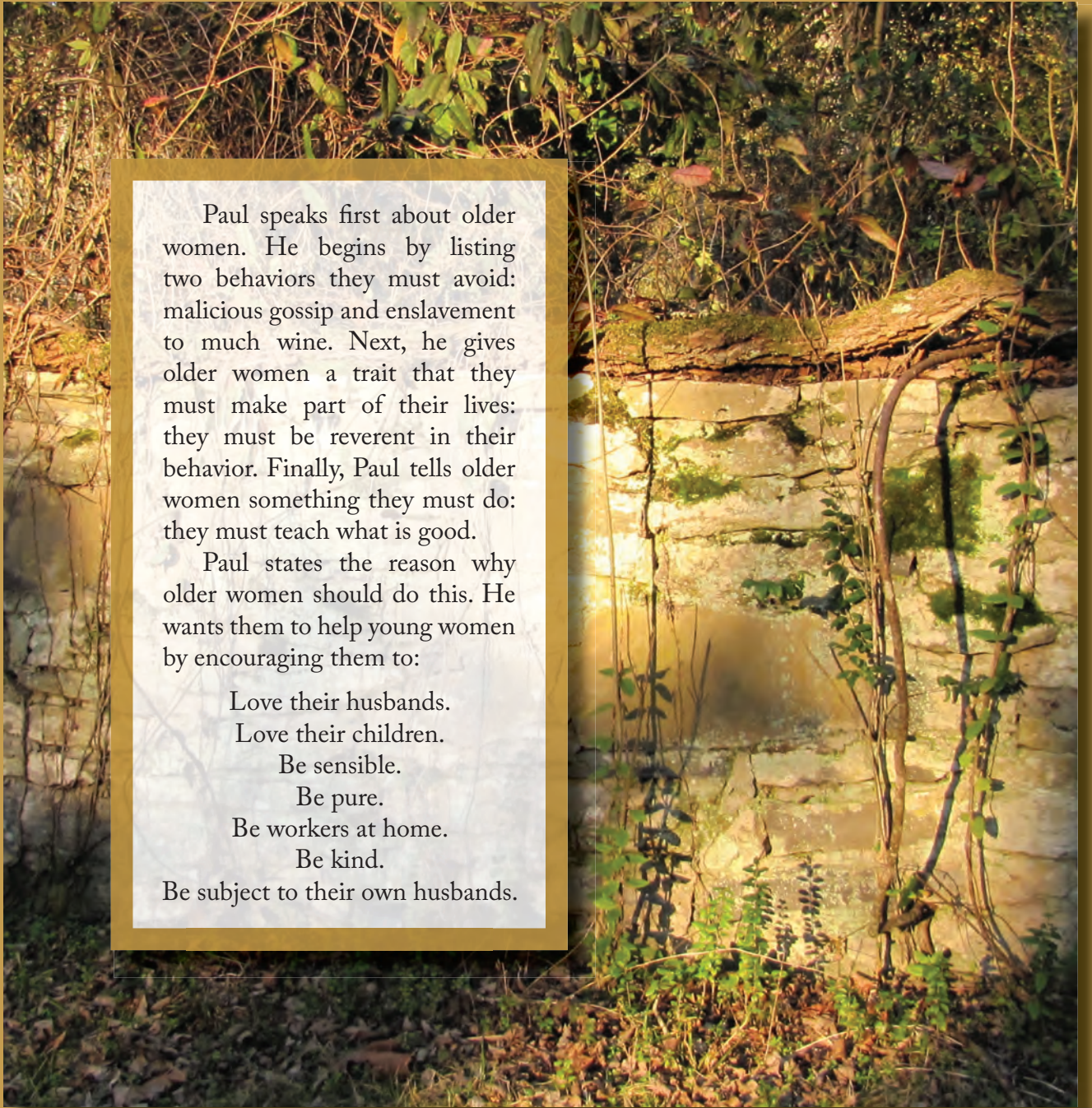
For Molly Perry,
a sensible, pure, kind,
young woman,
who works at home,
who loves and is subject
to her husband,
and who loves her children.



Precious Homeschooling Mother,

I admire homeschooling mothers. You love your children deeply and make daily sacrifices to do what you believe is best for them. You are one of my heroines. I know that there are days when you don't feel like a heroine at all. On those days you need encouragement.

The heart of this book comes from Titus 2:3-5, where Paul gives instructions about godly characteristics and behavior for older women and for younger women. Though these verses give wisdom for all women, there are specific lessons here for the homeschooling mother.



Paul speaks first about older women. He begins by listing two behaviors they must avoid: malicious gossip and enslavement to much wine. Next, he gives older women a trait that they must make part of their lives: they must be reverent in their behavior. Finally, Paul tells older women something they must do: they must teach what is good.

Paul states the reason why older women should do this. He wants them to help young women by encouraging them to:

Love their husbands.

Love their children.

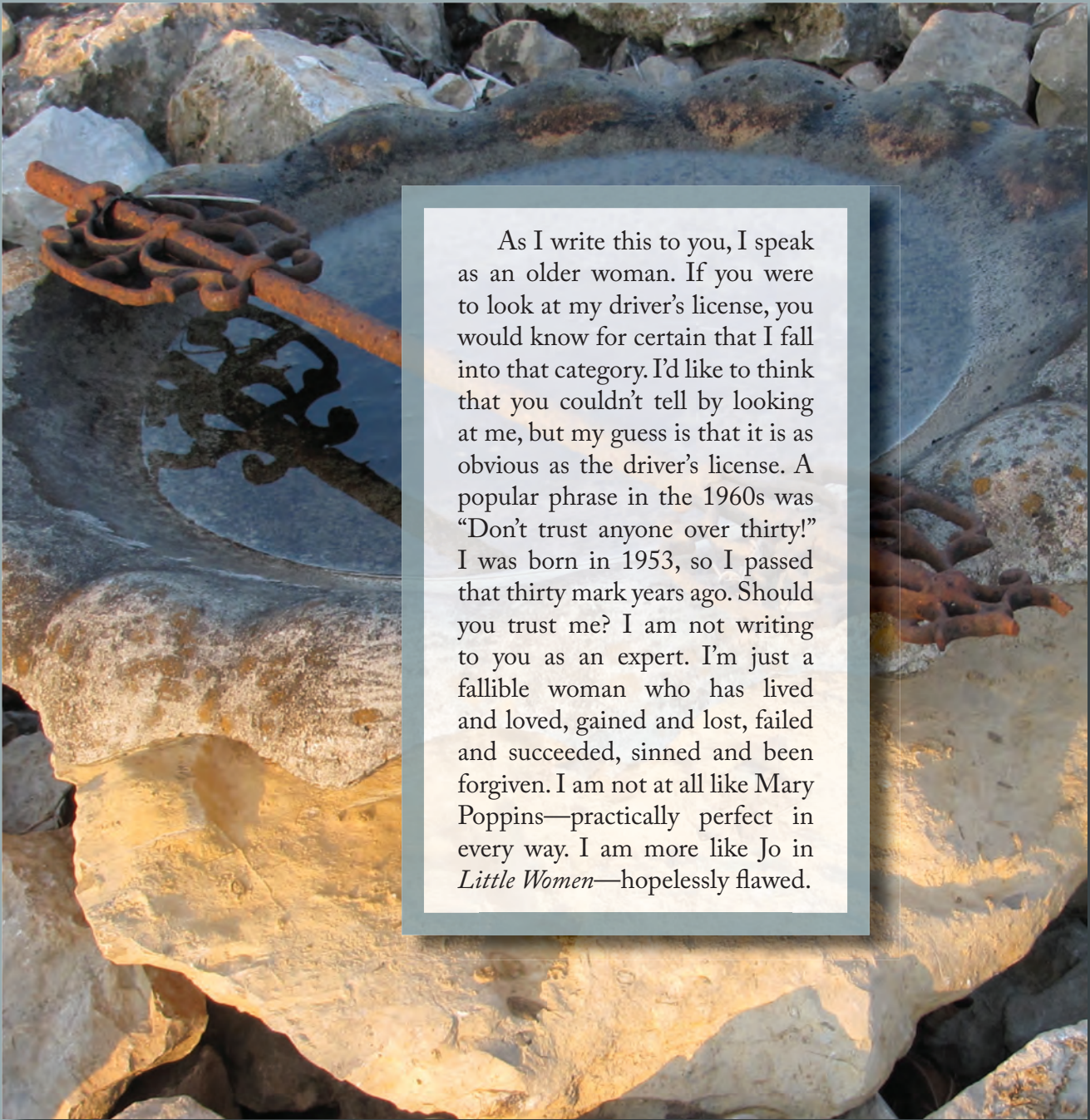
Be sensible.

Be pure.


Be workers at home.

Be kind.

Be subject to their own husbands.

A photograph of a rocky shore. In the foreground, a large, light-colored rock is partially submerged in shallow water. A rusted metal anchor is attached to a wooden post, lying on the rock. The water is calm, reflecting the sky and the anchor. In the background, more rocks and a piece of driftwood are visible. The overall scene is serene and somewhat melancholic.


As I write this to you, I speak as an older woman. If you were to look at my driver's license, you would know for certain that I fall into that category. I'd like to think that you couldn't tell by looking at me, but my guess is that it is as obvious as the driver's license. A popular phrase in the 1960s was "Don't trust anyone over thirty!" I was born in 1953, so I passed that thirty mark years ago. Should you trust me? I am not writing to you as an expert. I'm just a fallible woman who has lived and loved, gained and lost, failed and succeeded, sinned and been forgiven. I am not at all like Mary Poppins—practically perfect in every way. I am more like Jo in *Little Women*—hopelessly flawed.

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a mossy rock. A prominent, thorny branch, likely from a rose, runs vertically down the left side of the image. The rock is covered in vibrant green moss, with some greyish-white patches visible. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The overall composition is framed by a solid green border.

The women that Paul encouraged Titus to teach were also hopelessly flawed—the older ones and the younger ones. I'm sure that you go to bed each night knowing it is true for you, too. If older women and younger women are all fallible, why does Paul give older women responsibility for teaching younger ones? Perhaps one reason is that we have had so many experiences living, loving, gaining, losing, failing, succeeding, sinning and being forgiven.

Since I married my husband Ray in 1974, I have been amazed at his knowledge. I call Ray my dictionary, encyclopedia, and Bible concordance. Sometimes when I am once again dumbfounded at his knowledge, I'll ask, "How did you know that?" and he tells me again, "I pay attention."

I think one advantage of being older is that we have had longer to pay attention. All that living, loving, gaining, and losing teaches us, if we pay attention. In Psalm 37:25, the psalmist writes: "I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his descendants begging bread." He had been paying attention.



One advantage of age is learning that there is gain after loss, joy after sorrow, relief after pain. We have simply lived long enough to experience that over and over again. We have learned that God is with us in all of life, when things are going the way we want them to and when they are not.

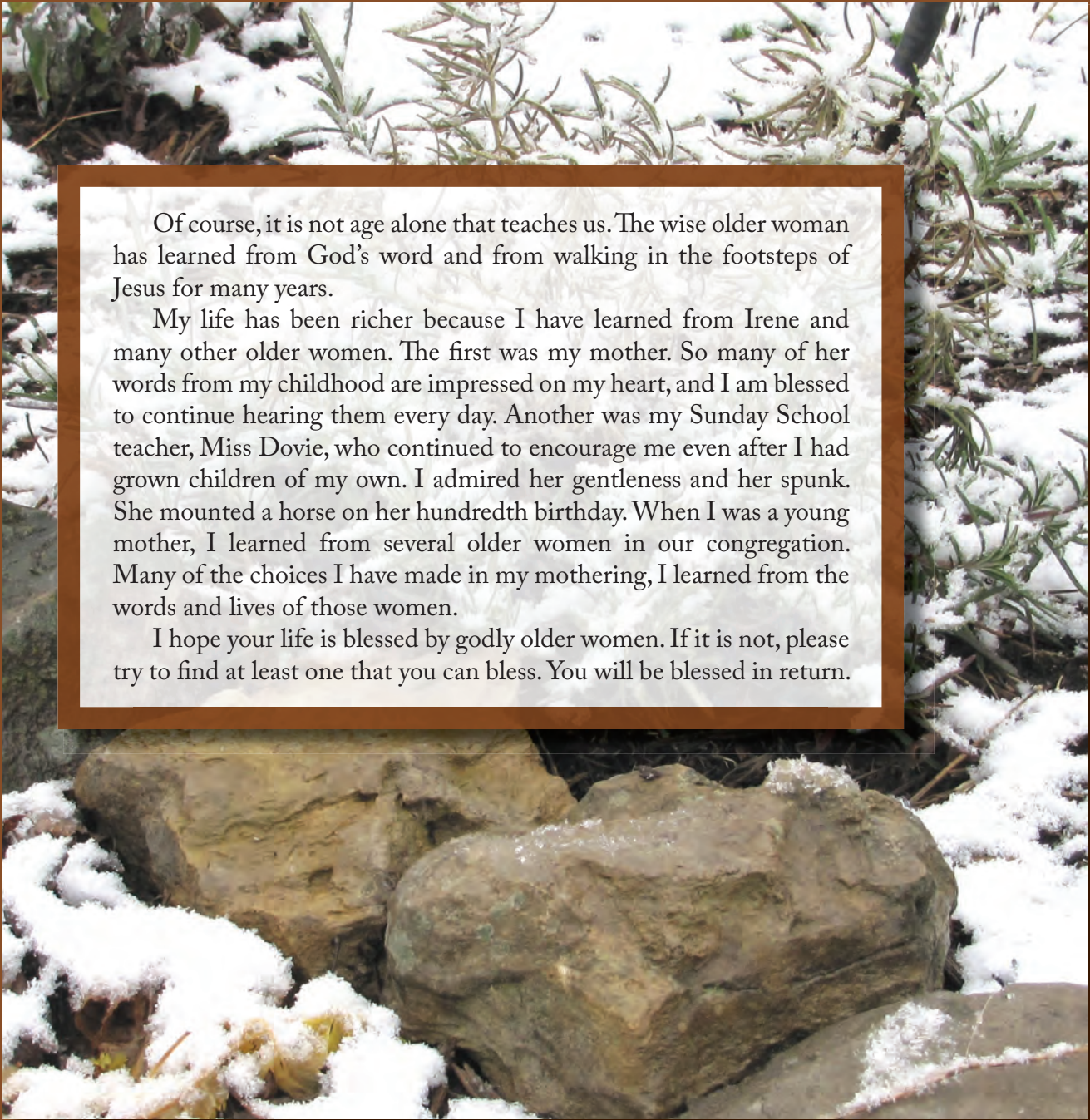
Older women also know that problems have solutions. We learn that problems do not mean that God doesn't love us anymore; they really mean that He does.

In Job we learn that God does not cause our suffering. However, He does allow it. I believe that this allowing is a form of His discipline. "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines" (Hebrews 12:6). "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29).



One of the most positive women I have known was my friend Irene. How I admire this Christian lady who lived to be ninety-seven. I knew her for her last twenty-seven years. She was a widow for twenty-five of them. When Irene was a young woman, health issues made her infertile after giving birth to one daughter. She lost a breast to cancer around age forty.


“All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:11). Irene’s life had the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Her righteousness showed in many ways: in attitude, in service, and in generosity. When our children were young, she would invite them over to play croquet and board games. Irene regularly transported a blind lady in her nineties to church. One Sunday Irene fell on the ice and broke her cheekbone while doing that. When volunteers remodeled our church building, there was Irene with a brush staining molding.



Of course, it is not age alone that teaches us. The wise older woman has learned from God's word and from walking in the footsteps of Jesus for many years.

My life has been richer because I have learned from Irene and many other older women. The first was my mother. So many of her words from my childhood are impressed on my heart, and I am blessed to continue hearing them every day. Another was my Sunday School teacher, Miss Dovie, who continued to encourage me even after I had grown children of my own. I admired her gentleness and her spunk. She mounted a horse on her hundredth birthday. When I was a young mother, I learned from several older women in our congregation. Many of the choices I have made in my mothering, I learned from the words and lives of those women.


I hope your life is blessed by godly older women. If it is not, please try to find at least one that you can bless. You will be blessed in return.

A photograph of a stone wall and a metal gate, with a large evergreen tree in the background. The stone wall is made of rough-hewn blocks and has a dark, possibly black-painted, section. A metal gate with ornate scrollwork is partially open, leading to a grassy area. The background is filled with the dense foliage of a large evergreen tree, with some sunlight filtering through the leaves.

In these pages, I have shared God's Word and I have shared my heart. Through photographs I have also shared my little corner of the world.

I'd like to tell you about my little corner. After years of praying and searching for a piece of the countryside that would fit our very small budget, we found a beautiful spot with a very old, drafty house and an unbelievably low price tag. We have been enjoying the beauty, fixing up the house, and trying to figure out how to stay warm in the winter since 2003. Let me give you an idea of just how much fixing there was to do. A few months after we moved in, I visited our small town museum and met two ladies from the county historical society. When I introduced myself, I said that we had bought the Crabtree house on the Gore farm. One of them hugged me and said, "We were afraid someone would tear it down."

I took each photograph in *Daily Encouragement* in our yard or a short walk from our home. We are blessed to live in a beautiful area. I like what our daughter-in-law Audra said when she visited here for the first time: "It's like living in a calendar." I agree. I thank God for bringing us here.



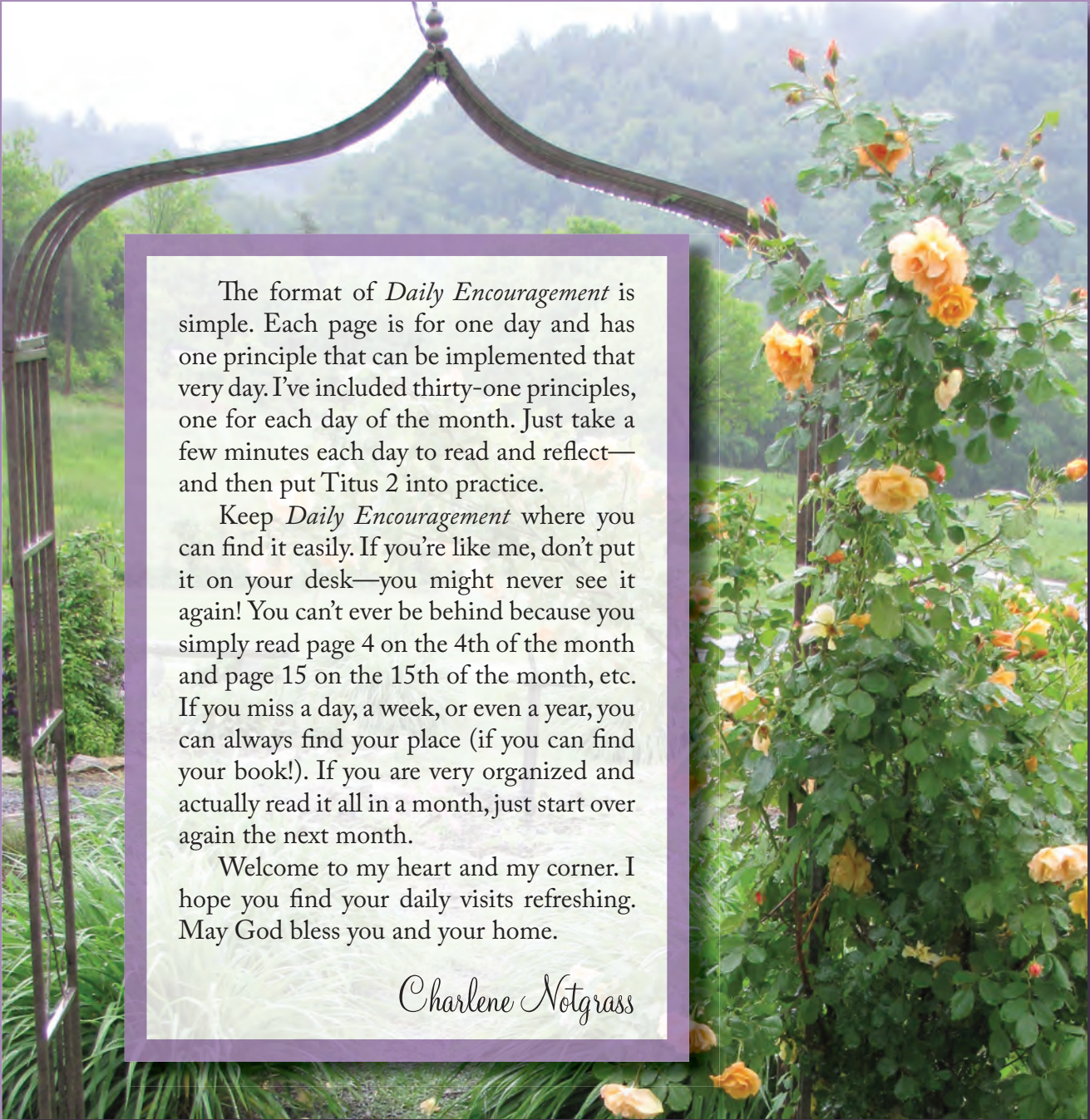
I marvel at the world God created—the big things like mountains and the little things like leaves on a wall. Many of the photos I have chosen simply show God's creations in their natural settings. Some are of Roaring River, which rarely roars these days. Others are of our neighbor's pretty barn and pasture. I have included several of the stone walls and iron fence of the cemetery just beyond our backyard. People buried in the oldest graves there were living, loving, gaining, losing, failing, succeeding, sinning and being forgiven before the Civil War.

I also included photos of my flower garden. God has made the climate so perfect and the ground so rich here in this river bottom that even I can have a flower garden. I used to feel sorry for any plant that came into my home, because I knew it was not going to be in the world much longer. I would surely kill it or ignore it until it faded away. However, I was determined that here I would have a flower garden.



Flower gardens grow like children do, little by little and day by day. Our job is to be patient while they do. We must be attentive gardeners: tending, nurturing, training, and loving like only a mother can do.

Paul didn't just talk about mothering in Titus 2, he talked about being wives as well. I encourage you to take care of your marriage. My heart aches for the young adults I know personally who are suffering because of their parents' divorces after they grew up. Some are homeschool graduates. While you are tending your garden, your home, and your children, tend to your marriage, too.



The format of *Daily Encouragement* is simple. Each page is for one day and has one principle that can be implemented that very day. I've included thirty-one principles, one for each day of the month. Just take a few minutes each day to read and reflect—and then put Titus 2 into practice.

Keep *Daily Encouragement* where you can find it easily. If you're like me, don't put it on your desk—you might never see it again! You can't ever be behind because you simply read page 4 on the 4th of the month and page 15 on the 15th of the month, etc. If you miss a day, a week, or even a year, you can always find your place (if you can find your book!). If you are very organized and actually read it all in a month, just start over again the next month.

Welcome to my heart and my corner. I hope you find your daily visits refreshing. May God bless you and your home.

Charlene Notgrass

Loving Your Children: Be Their Mother

You are a homeschooling mother. It's easy to get bogged down in that first word "homeschooling," and not concentrate enough on the second one, being a mother. Children need a mother—a sweet, soft, cushy, loving, kind, gentle, devoted, caring mother. Concentrate today on the mother part. Give extra hugs, kisses, and cuddles. Think of something especially mothering you can do. Perhaps you could sing a lullaby or hold your child in your lap and read a bedtime story. Your son might be sixteen years old and might not have heard a lullaby in years, but try it just for fun.

*But we proved to be gentle among you,
as a nursing mother tenderly cares
for her own children.*

1 Thessalonians 2:7

Loving Your Children: Trust God's Choice

Be confident. Out of all the women in the world—out of all the women in the history of the world—God chose you to be the mother of your children. That's right. You. Fallible you. Worried you. Sinful you. Trust His choice. No one on earth can be a better mother for your children than you can. Don't be afraid that you cannot give them what they need. Thank God today for making you the mother of your children.

*Behold, children are a gift of the Lord,
The fruit of the womb is a reward.
Psalm 127:3*



Loving Your Children: Teach Them

You have important lessons to impart to your children. Solomon told his son:

*Hear, my son, your father's
instruction and do not forsake
your mother's teaching;
Indeed, they are a graceful wreath
to your head and ornaments
about your neck.
Proverbs 1:8-9*

Your children need the teaching of their mother. Be confident that you personally have lessons to teach them. What is something you want to make sure they learn above all else? Impart a life lesson.

Loving Your Children: Discipline Them

Benjamin Franklin is credited with this statement: "Let the child's first lesson be obedience, and the second will be what thou wilt." Today make sure that your children obey you, not just in certain areas but in everything. Now that takes hard work. You have to be diligent. It's hard to follow through and make sure your child obeys your every command. Which of God's commands do you want your child to omit? Letting him ignore your instructions teaches him that he can ignore God's commands, too.

*A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.
Proverbs 10:1*

Being Subject to Your Husband: As to the Lord

Being subject to another involves trust. Who told us to be subject to our husbands? God did. Do we trust Him? Isn't it wonderful to know that God has put us in subjection? We don't have the responsibility of leadership that our husbands do. Today be thankful that God is trustworthy and that He has given you your husband whom you can trust. Let's also recognize the responsibility our husbands carry and tell them how much we appreciate them for what they do.

*Wives, be subject to your
own husbands, as to the Lord.
Ephesians 5:22*



Loving Your Husband: Be Gentle

Today be gentle with your husband. Smile gently. Give him a gentle pat every chance you get. Give him gentle hugs and kisses. Speak gently. Enjoy the assurance that this is precious in the sight of God.

*[Let your adornment be]
the hidden person of the heart,
with the imperishable quality
of a gentle and quiet spirit,
which is precious in the sight of God.*

1 Peter 3:4



Being Kind: Teach Your Children to Forgive

God cares about how we treat each other. He knows that we are going to disappoint one another. Since He has thought of everything we need, He has even provided a way for us to handle those disappointments. He has not only given us His forgiveness for our sins, but has also taught us and given us the capacity to forgive one another. Forgiveness is one of the kindest things we can do for one another. Teach your children to settle their differences with others and truly forgive from the heart. It is one of the best gifts you will ever give them.

*Be kind to one another,
tender-hearted, forgiving each other,
just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
Ephesians 4:32*





Being Subject to Your Husband: Rise Above Fear

“Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.” That is what God tells us in 1 Peter 3:6. How much of what we do in homeschooling is controlled by fear? Let’s obey our husbands and not be frightened by any fear. Let’s fear God and not let worldly fears dictate what we do or how we feel.

*There is no fear in love;
but perfect love casts out fear,
because fear involves punishment,
and the one who fears
is not perfected in love.
1 John 4:18*

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