

GOD, GUTS, AND GALLANTRY

Discussion Questions for Mothers, Women's Church/Bible Study Groups, or Women's Mentoring

Women who lack a copy of the book may obtain it at www.willjoslin.com.

This section was co-authored by Mrs. Pat Stainke, main editor of God, Guts, and Gallantry, to bring a woman's perspective. There is enough material here for three or four sessions, or more if there is a lot of discussion. Please ask the women to bring their Bibles and a copy of God, Guts, and Gallantry, or have some copies of each on hand.

The Major and Sue had a strong desire to both affirm womanhood and see that women had the opportunity to receive an education and a vote. They also believed strongly in motherhood.

The Major was ever mindful of how much his wonderfully strong mother Hannah had influenced him. Rev. C. L. McDowell said, "his mother [was] a woman of beaming intelligence and lovable Christian character. They worshipped with their children in the old Welsh Neck Church..."ⁱ An inspiring role model for any generation, she knew the Bible thoroughly, had a fine education, and integrated her knowledge with loving care for her children. Surely, Major Coker had her in mind when, concerning his decision to found Coker College for Women, he said:

The members of our Board believe in education for all, but especially for the potential mothers of the land whose influence will soon be the most powerful of all influences for good to those who come after us... We confidently launch our new enterprise with great hope for its future usefulness and asking the favor of God and the good will of our fellow men.

In 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul affirms the mighty contribution Timothy's mother and grandmother had made to Timothy's spiritual birth, growth, and calling: "For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well."

Similarly, in [Chapter 1](#) and the beginning of [Chapter 2](#), we see the great spiritual investment that Major Coker's mother Hannah made in his life. Before proceeding, please reread these chapters.

1. In his boyhood, how was Major Coker's mother, Hannah, engaged in his life?
2. Looking at Major Coker's entire life, what effect do you think Hannah's careful spiritual guidance have on him?

As a group, pray for the young people, in and outside your family, whom you may influence. Can you pinpoint a few strategies to make your spiritual input into their lives a higher priority? When you are in a position to give them counsel, how is it usually received? Are there ways that you can make your spiritual coaching more effective?

3. Proverbs 15:2 underscores that the manner in which we teach children spiritual truth is important: "The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable." And Psalm 19:10 says that God's word is "sweeter than honey." How can we present spiritual truth to our children or grandchildren in such a gracious way that they are inclined to receive it into their hearts?
4. Proverbs 22:6 says: "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it." Are you taking the time to carefully invest in the relationships that you have with your children or grandchildren, to offer spiritual guidance, and to present a godly example for them to follow?
5. Is there anything more important than this kind of investment in our children and grandchildren?

James's mother was involved in his life and was a quality person he could lean on. She taught him to read before he began school at St. David's, and he had a healthy emotional connection with her. Also, she allowed him to play aggressively at school, as George Norwood observed.ⁱⁱ These factors helped James to build a reservoir of masculinity and emotional health that never ran dry. Even after he was crippled, he harbored no spite toward God or society, and only wanted to spend his life helping others.

If mothers and fathers want to produce constructive manhood in their boys, how might they help them to experience emotional intimacy, release anxiety through hard play, and to overcome shame?

Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore having been justified [unconditionally pardoned] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And Romans 8:1 assures us that "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

6. How do these passages address the issue of removing shame? How can we make God's forgiveness and acceptance real to our children? Are we reflecting these qualities of grace and mercy to them?

Girls have the same need for emotional intimacy and freedom from shame.

7. What roles can mothers, grandmothers, and women in general play to make sure the girls in their lives are anchored in emotionally healthy ways?

We will not always see immediate results. Encourage members of the group to share a story or two from their own experience about how God honored their faithfulness in this area, many years after their words had been spoken, their example had been set, and their prayers had been prayed. These stories of eventual victory will encourage other women in the group who may feel that their influence has been less than effective.

The Major, Sue, and the early Coker College staff wanted to preserve what was feminine. Read the following passages together:

- 1 Samuel 25
- Esther 4:15-16
- Proverbs 31:10-31
- Ephesians 5:22-24,33 (Just so you know, the husbands also get the verses on their duties in Ephesians 5:25-33 in the men's questions)
- Titus 2:3-5, which we'll go ahead and write out here:

"Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, *to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored."

Based on these Bible verses, what attributes do you see in the scriptural descriptions of women of God?

Using this evidence from the Bible, what attributes do you see in the scriptural descriptions of women of God?

12. How do you think the Bible's view of femininity differ from what the world says?

Following the example of Jesus, who, after rising from the dead, appeared first to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18), the Major made it a priority to meet the needs of the women of his day. In discussing the post-Civil War plight of Southern women, Mrs. Charles Kupfer commented:

[When people] read *Gone with the Wind*, they... realize not only the lack of educational advantages [for] women in this great devastated South.... The hardships that women [had to] endure would have undermined much that was lovely and feminine, but by culture, that feminineness has been preserved [and] their character only enhanced in all of its beauty... How farsighted was the Major when he gave us a college.

8. Do you think Mrs. Kupfer and Major Coker were right in wanting to preserve what is feminine?
9. What does it mean to you to preserve what is “feminine”?

Hartsville farmer and businessman Mclver Williamson regarded Major Coker’s commitment to nurture women and promote their educational opportunities as too idealistic, and said that James’s generosity towards these ends was foolish. He told him it would be better to start a meat packing plant than to finance a school for women! He exclaimed: “Putting in a female plant! You’d better put in a packing plant and buy these farmers’ hogs.”

10. How do you think Major Coker’s priorities and vision of cultural ideals for women differed from Mclver Williamson?

Regarding the progressive elements in his vision of womanhood, Major Coker once said, “Women should be good scientists, for they are close observers.” The Major was also in favor of women’s suffrage. The Nineteenth Amendment, which gave women the right to vote, passed Congress in January of 1920, just eighteen months after Coker passed away.

Taken in the right context, the Bible has some progressive views on women. Ask someone in the group to read Proverbs 31:13-14 aloud.

11. What does God’s Word say here about the woman of God regarding entrepreneurship, merchandising, and investing?
- 12.. What insights does it give about a Christian mother having a business?

In what some call the “post-Christian” world of today, we women receive many conflicting messages regarding our duties at home and our relationships with our husbands. Author and preacher John MacArthur wrote expressed a strong opinion regarding spiritual warfare and society when he wrote:

For the past several hundred years western society has been bombarded with the humanistic, egalitarian, sexless, classless philosophy that was the dominant force behind the French Revolution. The blurring and even total removal of all human distinctions continues to be masterminded by Satan so as to undermine legitimate, God-ordained authority in every realm of human activity – in government, the family, the school, and even in the church.... This philosophy is self-destructive, because no group of people can live in orderliness and productivity if each person is bent on doing his own will.ⁱⁱⁱ

13. What are your thoughts on John MacArthur’s assessment of the attack on the authority structures in our society, including marriage?

Before proceeding further, please know that in the corresponding men’s questions, the men are also being challenged regarding their roles in the home, including the command to love their wives unconditionally and sacrificially, as Major Coker did.

14. What do you think Sue Coker might have said about the Biblical instruction on marriage of a wife adapting to her husband (Titus 2:4-5), respecting him, and submitting to his leadership (Ephesians 5:22-33)?

15. When the Apostle Paul said to “preach the word, be ready in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2), what do you think he meant regarding God’s truth and the trends of society?

16. Do you think a wife should try to complement her husband, seek her own individualized success, or a combination? Why?

17. Do you think that complementing one’s husband looks the same in every marriage? Why or why not?

Titus 2:3-5 addresses many issues with women: everything from gossip to wine to husbands. Have all present turn to this passage, and read it aloud in the group,

18. What does Titus 2:3-5 say about the priorities of older women?

19. What does it say about the priorities of younger women?

20. As women, we do not live in a vacuum. Our values have been shaped by many factors: family, peers, history, nationality, culture, and, of course, scripture. Which of these influences should carry the most weight for a woman of God?

How are we doing regarding the priorities that Titus addressed? How can we improve? Discuss this question in relation to trends in our society and as a set of values you live by among your circle of friends.

21. Ephesians 5:33 says: "The wife must see to it that she respects her husband." Do you praise your husband in front of the children? Do you honor him with your actions and your choices in their presence? If you disagree with him on a particular issue, do you agree with him in public, or before the children, then wait until you are in private to voice any disagreements?

Regarding sexual purity, 1 Thessalonians 4:3 admonishes us: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality." The Major's wife, Sue Coker, stayed morally pure her whole life, focusing entirely on her life mission. She left the world a shining example of a great Christian testimony. Presbyterian pastor Eugene T. Peterson said, "The Christian life is a long obedience in the same direction."

22. What is your specific plan for staying morally pure all your life?

23. What are your verbal, emotional, and spatial boundaries when it comes to the men you know? If you don't yet have any boundaries, discuss this with your Christian sisters, and create some limits right now. It is especially powerful when you choose a small handful of friends among whom you can be mutually accountable in this area, bonding over your choice to keep these limits and praying for one another.

In keeping with Titus 2:3-5, Sue Coker mentored young ladies in meaningful Christian service. She was not one of those Christians who punts when it comes to mercy ministries and social justice. She carried out 1 Timothy 2:10, which encourages us to clothe ourselves "with good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness." Mrs. J. F. Ousley said, "Mrs. Coker would plan a sewing bee where she would furnish material, letting the girls help to make

garments for needy families. Then she would let the girls take turns about to accompany her to visit and present garments to these families.”^{iv}

Regarding concern for the poor, please read Proverbs 31:20-21 out loud.

24. With Sue Coker’s example of good works in mind, what do you think God would have us do to shine His light in our community when it comes to mercy ministries and social justice?

ⁱ Rev. C. L. McDowell, *Centennial Celebration of Major Coker’s Birth* (Hartsville, SC: Coker College, 1937), p. 14.

ⁱⁱ J. W. Norwood quoting his father George Norwood in Appendix 1 of Furman Professor Harvey Toliver Cook’s book, *Rambles in the Pee Dee Basin, South Carolina*, (The State Company, Columbia, SC), 1926, Volume I, p. 414.

ⁱⁱⁱ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, Ephesians, (The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago: 1986), p. 282.

^{iv} Mrs. J. F. Ousley, *Recollections of the Major: James Lide Coker, 1837-1918* (Hartsville Museum: 1997), p. 43.