



CONTENTS



Foreword	9
Especially for . . .	10
1. Diamonds in the King's Crown	11
2. Advanced to Royalty	31
3. For Such a Time as This	49
4. Removed from the Garden	67
5. Jewels in the Mud	79
6. Jewels on Layaway	97
7. Miracle on a Mountaintop	117
8. Resetting the Stone	133
9. An Emerald Called Grace	147



DIAMONDS IN THE KING'S CROWN



Have you ever stopped to admire the dazzling gems displayed in a fine jewelry store? Spotlights ignite beautiful sapphires, rubies, emeralds, and diamonds, setting them ablaze with color. Gold gleams, silver shines, and a glittering array of gemstones captivates us with its fire. It's difficult to walk by a jeweler's window without taking a moment or two to look a little closer.

A jewel is an exquisite object, sparkling with light, something that is prized and treasured. It is looked upon with awe and wonder. Those who see it partake in its beauty, finding themselves delighted simply by having been in its presence. Usually when we have the opportunity to see a fine jewel on display, we feel a longing to possess it, wishing we had the money to buy it. Most of us can only dream of obtaining something of such fine quality. It is far too expensive for us.

More exquisite than any other is the rare jewel we call a diamond. A diamond is not easily attainable, and its value far exceeds the worth of regular jewelry. Women everywhere dream of the day when a man who loves them will buy a beautiful diamond ring to symbolize the rare eternal love that exists between them. For most women, a ruby or sapphire will not do. Although they are both beautiful stones, they are not worth as much. A diamond is more precious because it is uncommon and nearly indestructible. A diamond does not declare its value in a flashy or obnoxious way; only subtly does it reveal its quiet beauty.

The lucky person who has the opportunity to own such a treasure will certainly handle it with care. Diamonds are often kept in security boxes, not brought out except

on a few occasions—very special occasions. A diamond is protected and cared for with great diligence. Why? Because it is not only a jewel of great beauty; it is also rare.

Webster's dictionary describes a jewel as "a precious stone or any person or thing that is very dear to one." The dictionary goes on to describe the term *rare* as "not frequently found; scarce or uncommon; unusually good or excellent." By putting those two definitions together we can infer that rare jewels are things or people who are precious because they are good, excellent, and not frequently found.

JEWELS FOR THE KING'S CROWN

In our lives the Lord blesses us by placing different people in different seasons to give us what we need at those particular times. He uses their weaknesses and strengths to remind us of what He expects of us. I have encountered some women who exemplify dignity and distinction—they are rare jewels. I have learned from them by observing them, and I hope that you, too, can learn from them and their struggles.

You've probably heard of Elisabeth Elliot. She is a woman of God if ever I have known one. I've never had the privilege of meeting her, yet I feel as if I know her. I have faithfully listened to her radio broadcasts. I have read every book she has authored that I could get my hands on. My name is on her mailing list, and I want to hear everything she has to say. Why? Because I'm convinced that Elisabeth Elliot is a woman of distinction.

In her writings she will tell you that she has never considered herself to be a beautiful woman. She sees herself as an average person. However, she does not let this deter her from presenting herself as a woman of the King's court. She has followed the Lord and lived for Him in every way that she can. She was and remains a quiet woman who is disciplined in her service to Jesus Christ. Elisabeth ministers to thousands of people all over the world. They are touched by the godly confidence she has in herself, and she teaches others to gain the same confidence.

Most people know of her because of her wisdom regarding dating and relationships. She is an expert not because of academic studies, but because of what she has been through: Elisabeth Elliot has had her heart broken.

Years ago Elisabeth met a man named Jim Elliot, and the two fell in love with each other. For five years, they waited on God to bring them together. This entire time they remained pure and holy before the Lord.

Elisabeth esteemed herself highly enough to wait for the appointed time for her union to the man whom she believed was the one for her. She did not chase him, even when he seemed disinterested or when she felt impatient. She waited on God to move. At last they were married, and only a year and a half later he was killed—martyred in South America while doing Christian missionary work.

What immense pain and anguish Elisabeth must have felt after the loss of the only man she'd ever loved. But still she served God wholly and loved Him all the more because of His goodness. Much more than that has taken place in the life of Elisabeth Elliot—she has been through both good things and bad things. The way she has handled both the triumphs and the heartaches of her life speaks of her high view of her position in Christ Jesus. She is a woman of excellence whose life's goal is to adorn the crown of her Master. Elisabeth Elliot is a diamond in the King's crown.

A NNE GRAHAM LOTZ

About a year ago I had the privilege of meeting Anne Graham Lotz. She amazed me with her sense of dignity and pride as God's woman. Anne Graham Lotz is the daughter of Billy Graham. She is a speaker who boldly proclaims the good news of Jesus Christ.

Before I was introduced to her at a conference in Atlanta, I had heard about her and was delighted to finally meet her. I immediately recognized an air about her that made me want to get to know her better. I automatically wondered what made this woman tick. What was the force behind her power? She is stunningly beautiful on the outside, but that has absolutely nothing to do with the amazing presence that she has.

My mother had told me that a group of friends were sitting down to eat dinner one evening and Anne was asked to pray over the meal. My mom couldn't help but open her eyes and watch her as Anne talked to the Lord. The tone in her voice and the power that filled the room through her words were awesome. To hear Anne Graham Lotz speak is an experience, but to hear her pray is amazing!

When I met Anne, one particular experience cemented my opinion that surely she recognized her position as a woman in the King's court. At one point during the conference, she walked right up to me and smiled sweetly. She took my hand and said some words that I will never forget:

“Priscilla, both of our fathers are famous guys who have a huge following. People always want to know and hear what they have to say. But I want to encourage you to do what the Lord has called you to do and not worry about how big your father's ministry is. God has not called you or me to do what our fathers are doing. He has called us to do something different.”

We were standing in the foyer of a very prestigious hotel. There were big-name authors, musical artists, and preachers everywhere. Anne looked around and said, “Priscilla, half of these people with these big ministries are going to get to heaven and find out that they weren't even on the front lines. I just want to be on the front lines. I want to get to heaven and find out that God was pleased with what I did for Him here.”

How powerful those words were to me! Anne was not concerned with what other people thought of her or her ministry. She wanted what the Father wanted for her, and nothing more. She wanted to share Jesus with as many people as possible. She was not concerned if her ministry was not as big and recognizable as her earthly father's; she was concerned only with pleasing her heavenly Father. She is a woman whose eyes are fixed not on the things of this world but on the things of the Lord.

Anne Graham Lotz is a diamond in the King's court, an adornment on His crown.

MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a woman of excellence. She not only gave birth to our Lord and Savior, but she was the one who reared Him and loved Him so that He might love the world. In a day and time when pregnancy outside of marriage was punishable by death, this woman trusted God with her circumstances. She believed that God had spoken to her and that He knew just how to take care of her despite the problems that she might face because of her situation.

Mary had just become engaged to Joseph when an angel spoke to her and told her what was in store for her life. How afraid she must have been! Not only was she going to have a baby, supernaturally fathered by the Holy Spirit, but she also had to tell the man to whom she was betrothed that she was pregnant, and that the baby was not his. I imagine Mary was very worried that Joseph would reject her and refuse to be with her.

How ludicrous her story must have sounded! Can you imagine telling your boyfriend that, yes, you're pregnant with somebody else's baby, but an angel has appeared to you and told you that the child you're carrying will save the world from its sins? Joseph would surely think that she had lost her mind. Worse yet, he had the legal right to cause Mary to be stoned to death on charges of promiscuity.

Yet despite all of these fears, Mary trusted God and believed that He was going to take care of her. She had faith in Him and His plan. She relied on His promises, even when the circumstances said that she was in big trouble.

How godly and upright Mary must have been to be chosen as the mother of our Lord. God looked down on the earth and saw many women who were potential mothers for Jesus, but after the search was complete, He chose Mary. She was a virtuous woman who loved and cherished both herself and her Lord enough to go through what was undoubtedly the most agonizing experience of her life. No matter what the cost, she counted it all joy to suffer for the sake of her Lord. This woman, the mother of Jesus, was a diamond in the King's court. Today she still shines as an adornment on His crown.

ELIZABETH CANNINGS

Elizabeth Cannings is also a woman of excellence. She is my mother's sister, and my father describes her as the godliest woman that he knows. She is a beautiful woman who desires only to serve Christ. She has all of the qualities of the virtuous Proverbs 31 woman. She is a hard worker and is known for diligence in her service.

Elizabeth has been involved in ministry of some form or fashion for many years. She works without complaining or grumbling because she knows that her reward comes from the highest Source. She was very instrumental in raising us four Evans kids, and we all call her "Auntie."

To me, Auntie has always been a powerful example of the way a woman should be and act. She holds the Bible in high esteem and lives her life according to its precepts. She has had many suitors but has remained single and a virgin all her life. Her standards are very high because she is a rare jewel. At forty-three years of age, she doesn't allow men in her home unless others are there. This is a rule most people my age don't think to follow.

My aunt Elizabeth wants to make sure that she glorifies God with her body as well as her mind and spirit. She is never in the limelight; she just quietly does her work with a smile. She is loving and caring and very dependable. She is godly and the world knows it, not because she tells everyone with her words, but because she tells everyone with her life. This is one woman whom I would love to pattern myself after. Elizabeth Cannings adorns the King's crown as a diamond in His court.

HANNAH

Hannah, the mother of the Old Testament prophet Samuel, was a woman of excellence. She prayed for years that the Lord would give her a son. She was heartsick because she couldn't get pregnant. But she did not let this ruin her relationship with her Lord. She kept her eyes focused on Him and on what she believed He could do for her.

In the ancient world where she lived, when a woman could not conceive, she was looked upon with contempt and scorn. She was considered worthless to her husband, her family, and her community. Because of her plight, Hannah could have become embittered toward God. There she was, serving and loving Him as she should be, and the one thing that would make her acceptable in the sight of others, He would not grant to her. Yet even though Hannah was discouraged about her inability to conceive, she kept her eyes focused on God and His righteousness.

Hannah probably felt both worthless and powerless. She knew that she was disgraced in the eyes of the people. She knew that when others looked at her, they were dissatisfied with the outcome of her life. She felt like she had little value. However, we assume from Hannah's story that she believed that God had a plan that was bigger than either her longings or her timetable. She seemed to cling to the confidence that God was working to

do something even greater than fulfilling her desire for a child. She seemed to know that her heavenly Father could and would accomplish something wonderful in her life if she would just trust Him and wait on Him.

Hannah recognized that her God was able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that she could ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). God strongly supports women who rest in Him and are willing to wait on Him to complete things in their lives. He is pleased when women believe that He knows what He is doing and are willing to submit themselves to His timing.

Have you ever felt worthless? I know I have at times. Maybe your friends and family have been disheartened by the fact that you never finished high school or college. Perhaps you have not achieved what they thought you should have. Possibly you just don't quite measure up to their standards. If that describes your situation, you can be sure of one thing: God has a mighty plan for you just as He did for Hannah. And right now, this very minute, God is working all things together for the good of those who love God and have been called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

If Hannah had been outside of the will of God, she would not have experienced all the joy and blessing that God intended for her. If she had given birth to Samuel any earlier than at the intended time, it would have been the wrong time. God had a plan that exceeded Hannah's deepest desire. He was interested in what her son would do for the entire nation of Israel.

What does God want to do for you? If you will wait to receive it, your blessings will be tenfold. If God does it according to your timetable, you might just miss out on the entire blessing that He has for you. Women of excellence must remember that God has far bigger, far better plans than ours.

Hannah is a woman in the King's court; she is a diamond who adorns His crown.

*T*ERRY WILLITS

Terry Willits is a woman of excellence. She is an author and speaker who uses her skills as an interior decorator to teach women how they can best make their homes glorifying to God. Her quiet yet bubbly personality has changed the lives of many women who want to make their homes places where their families can find rest.

Terry and her husband have been married for twelve years and would love to have children, but God seems to have other plans. Terry, like a modern-day Hannah, has trusted the Lord for her children and has asked the Lord, “Well, if not children, then what?” She doesn’t complain and cause a commotion. She just rests and trusts that God has another plan.

Terry’s willingness to simply rely on Jesus has touched me deeply. I am humbled by this woman who is tiny in stature yet huge in faith. Terry knows that the Lord has birthed a ministry through her that has helped women everywhere. She is an awesome example of how women of the kingdom should make sure that their homes come first. She has made her husband and her home her first priority, and even though she travels extensively, she still focuses on home and the beauty and rest that her family is able to find there.

Terry Willits is a diamond in the King’s court, beautifully adorning His crown.

MARTHA

Martha was a woman of excellence, even though many people continue to give her a hard time. When Jesus visited their home, the two sisters, Mary and Martha, greeted Him and served Him. Mary was the one who took time to sit at His feet and bask in His presence. Martha was the one who was in the kitchen preparing for Him, trying to serve Him well and make everything perfect.

Although Mary’s position at Jesus’ feet was very important, so was Martha’s position in the kitchen. As she hurried around to prepare things, she asked the Master why Mary wasn’t helping her. She felt as if she were doing everything on her own. She was tired and frustrated because she was wiping herself out for Jesus.

Martha sets an amazing example for all of us who seek to serve the Lord. Of course we must not allow our service, labor, and responsibilities to distract us from our intimate relationship with Christ. We must keep our priorities in order. But what is more beautiful than a woman who diligently serves and waits on the Master? She doesn’t serve Him leftovers. She gives Him only the best. Martha’s desire was to make sure that Jesus was well taken care of. Her service was excellent.

I think we can safely say that the only reason that Mary could relax and enjoy the presence of Jesus was because Martha was diligent. If Martha had done her work sloppily, Mary would have had to get up, get busy, and help her. Mary could sit at the feet of Jesus because Martha had swept the floor on which she sat. Although Martha's actions kept her away from positioning herself in front of Jesus, her heart was one of service and diligence. Martha is a diamond in the King's court, adorning the King's crown.

TERRY MEEUWSEN

Terry Meeuwsen is a woman of excellence. She is a precious gem who exudes the beauty and femininity of womanhood. I have become fairly well acquainted with this godly woman because I've been a speaker with the Aspiring Women Conference, and Terry is the cohostess of the event.

Terry is a former Miss America and is presently the cohostess of the *700 Club*, along with Pat Robertson. I had watched her on TV for years and had always thought that she was a beautiful woman. But how much more gorgeous she is to me now that I know her. She is warm and caring and loves the Lord with all of her heart.

In my travels I have encountered many women who are well known, and I have been disturbed to find that many of them are so consumed by what they have accomplished that they have forgotten the real reason they've accomplished it. They don't seem to remember that their efforts should be focused on giving God glory, not on glorifying themselves. Terry is a woman who knows whose daughter she is, and she uses her status in life to give her Father glory.

Terry is humble and a pleasure to be around. Some women make you want to know them better and better, and she is one of those women. Her warmth draws you to her. As I sat and talked with her on the first day we met, she asked me whether or not I was married. I said no, but I went on to tell her about some of the guys who were hanging around trying to get my attention. I mentioned one man in particular, whom I was considering marrying.

I will never forget the power and gentleness of Terry's advice as she used Scripture to encourage me to wait on the Lord and trust in Him for guidance. She offered the truth

of God with wholehearted sincerity. Terry knows God's Word so well that she is able to minister to anybody anywhere in a gentle and profound way. Her style draws people not only to herself but also to Jesus. I pray that as I grow in the Lord, I will be able to minister to others as Terry Meeuwsen ministers to me. She is a diamond in the King's court!

These women are jewels. They are rare jewels, priceless, beautiful, and full of light and life. They are examples of godly women who know who they are in Christ Jesus. Their self-esteem is rooted in their relationship to Him, and others are blessed because of it.

While at first glance women like these may seem out of reach to us, they are just like you and me. They have faced issues like dating, singleness, marriage, children, divorce, disease, loneliness, debt, and anxiety. These women have been right where you are.

Satan has attempted at many times to get them to forget their value as daughters of God. However, these women of the King's court have decided never to let him have the upper hand. They have chosen to stand on the authority and promises of God's Word. They possess no more strength than you or I do. They too have faced failure and made mistakes, but they have chosen to remember that the Bible says He "has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3).

LOIS EVANS

Of all the beautiful gems I have encountered in the King's court, I want to tell you about one who truly is a rare and precious jewel. My mother, Lois, is a diamond of extremely high quality. Perhaps it is a cliché to refer to our mothers as priceless women, but it is no secret that because my mother realizes her worth as a woman of the King, everyone around her benefits from it.

Just as the beauty of a diamond speaks for itself, my mother doesn't speak often and she never speaks too loudly, but what she does say with her life is inevitably profound. She never announces her entrance in loud clothes, heavy makeup, or a strident voice. But everyone knows when she has entered the room. She smiles sweetly and has a graciousness about her that draws admiration from all. No wonder my father was attracted to her some thirty years ago, and no wonder he is still in love with her today.

When my mother was in her teenage years and early twenties, she was quiet and meek. She looked after her younger brothers and sisters with great affection and pride, and made an early decision that her life would be dedicated to ministry. She was never rambunctious and didn't get into trouble. She listened, learned, and obeyed my grandmother and grandfather.

My mother met my father when she was eighteen years old. At the time, she made it very clear to him that she was the daughter of King Jesus. Because of her position in Christ, there were certain things that she would not do and certain places that she would not go. She didn't believe that she was superior to others, but she knew that she was in a position of royalty that required her to conduct herself in a unique way. My mother has always treasured her role as a woman in the King's court, and she has always taught her children to treasure that position as well.

As women in a royal position, serving a royal God, we must give our very best. My mother has always lived by this standard of excellence. My father often jokes in his sermons that she fell in love with him first, but I truly doubt that. My mother's sweet spirit, high value of herself, and willingness to go where God leads are what attracted my father to my mother. They continue to attract many others to her even now.

When they were newlyweds, my parents had very little to call their own. They lived on three hundred dollars a month, yet my mother still held her head up high because she refused to let her external circumstances determine her worth. In fact, I have often found that women who have had to go through a period of struggle often have a higher estimation of themselves. Sometimes material things strip from us what really matters the most.

My mother is never flamboyant. In fact, she goes out of her way to make sure that she isn't. As a child, I watched my mother trying on the clothes that she planned to wear to one event or another. She would walk in front of the mirror in the hallway to check out her ensemble's taste and modesty. If she would be singing that evening, I can remember seeing her try out the movements that she might make while singing in order to be sure that her skirt would not reveal too much of her body. I find myself doing the same thing as I get older.

As my mother has matured, she has become an excellent wearer of hats. In the African-American culture, everybody knows that the first lady of the church is always

adorned in the finest hat around—it's a tradition. Well, my mother has never been the traditional pastor's wife. She hardly ever wore hats until I was well into my teenage years. But when she does, the hats and outfits that she wears are magnificent. She looks marvelous in them.

My mother has always wanted to look nice in order to represent her status as a daughter of King Jesus. Yet she does not want to draw undue attention to herself and away from her Savior. She has the perfect blend of respect for herself and honor for the house of God. If you are royalty, you don't have to flaunt it—people will just know. They will know because of the air that you carry, not because of the stuff that you carry. My mother is a prime example of a woman in the King's court. A diamond doesn't have to be flashy or flamboyant to be breathtakingly beautiful.

SHINING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

If you're like me, you may find yourself a little discouraged after meeting the women of excellence I've described for you. Maybe their godly attributes and spiritual qualities seem unattainable. The good news is, they're not. The most amazing thing about being women in the King's court is that all of us—no matter how we see ourselves—are beautiful in His sight. He continues to polish and refine us to make every facet of our personalities a shining reflection of His love. But of course His refining work takes time—often a lifetime.

One day as I was reading Scripture, I came across 1 Peter 3:4, which states that women are to have a gentle and quiet spirit. As soon as I read that, I felt very dismayed because I am neither quiet nor gentle. Quite to the contrary, I am loud and obnoxious and always wanting to be involved. I felt kind of upset. It seemed that in order to be a woman who adorned the Father's crown as a precious jewel, I had to exhibit characteristics that I was certain I did not have.

"It isn't fair," I told the Lord. "You know I can't be quiet. I talk for a living, for goodness' sake! I'm rather brash on occasion and would find it quite hard to be gentle in speech and action."

That was one time in my life that the Lord spoke very clearly to me, almost audibly. He said, "Priscilla, why would I ask you to be something that you don't have the

potential to be? In fact, why would I create you in a way that is contrary to My Word?" He wouldn't. I just thought that I couldn't be that way because of the characteristics that I was most accustomed to exhibiting. Those words from the Lord meant just one thing: *change*.

When we come to the cross of Jesus, everything changes—especially our inner selves. Whatever we are accustomed to in our personalities or character, if those qualities don't line up with Scripture, they must cease. Just because some actions are the norm in your life doesn't mean that they are right.

Sometimes it is relatively simple to change ourselves on the outside. We can stop wearing short dresses, and stop drinking, and maybe even stop hanging around with people who don't treat us like royalty. But the issue is deeper than that. God wants to change everything that you thought made up your very existence—everything you thought made you who you are. Is He asking too much? No, He is not. You are a woman in His court and, more importantly, you are His daughter. You are called to "present your body a living and holy sacrifice" to the Lord (Romans 12:1). Maybe we don't feel like it, but offering everything we are to God really is our "reasonable service." Christ has done so much for us. Isn't this the least we can do to thank Him? He wants everything. He wants you and He wants me. He wants to teach us how to know and believe that we are the royal women He has destined us to be. He wants us to recognize the call that He has on our lives and to act accordingly. He doesn't want us to put on a show. He wants us to truly believe in ourselves and our potential *in Him* to achieve great things in His kingdom.

THE POWER TO SHINE

You know, it's really not that difficult to look like we are doing all right. How many times have you met someone who made an absolutely wonderful first impression? However, once you took a closer look, you found out that there really wasn't much to her.

I once heard Chuck Swindoll tell a story that illustrated this point wonderfully. There was a man who was on a journey one day, and he came to a large body of water. He couldn't walk around it; it was far too big. It looked so intimidating. It was huge, and it made a whole lot of noise as the water ran over the rocks and rushed against the shore.

He worried and fretted, but he finally decided that the only way he was going to make it to his destination was if he went straight through the middle.

He took a step in and found that the water close to the shore was only two inches deep. He took a few more steps and realized that it did not get any deeper. He kept walking and soon realized that all the way across the body of water it was only two inches deep. He made it safely to the other side with nothing wet but his shoes.

Unfortunately, that is the way a lot of our lives are. We look really important and we sound really intimidating, but when people take a step into our lives they find that we are only two inches deep! There is nothing to us. We are shallow. There is no quality of character, no depth, and no beauty beyond the surface of our existence. Now, I have to be honest with you—this is one of my greatest fears in life: that I will be more wide than I am deep. My prayer for you and me is that when people take a step into our lives they will find that they are stepping into a deep, clear spring filled with value, glory, and power. I pray that they will find limitless attributes that are waiting to be poured freely out upon the world.

Many things have caused me to look at the issue of self-esteem very seriously. Relationships, friendships, bad decisions, and other elements have played a part in my concern. In the chapters that follow, I want to expose self-esteem for what it truly is and explore what it really means in the life of every woman in the King's court.

It dawned on me one day that many people look at me and see the daughter of a famous minister, a well-educated, fairly beautiful, and intelligent woman who has won several pageants, contests, and awards. They immediately assume I have it all together, even though they know little about me beyond those external things. In the same sense, I have seen women who look fabulous and have wonderful husbands and families. They own great cars and lavish houses; they are popular and seem to have everything going for them. I have wondered what could possibly be wrong in their lives. Then it occurred to me: "Wow, I could be just as wrong about them as they could be about me!" Outward appearance is oftentimes a very incorrect indicator of the internal.

It's not difficult to look one way and feel another. In fact, many of the women who look awesome on the outside work very hard to do so with the specific intent of covering up the pain and emptiness they feel on the inside. The truth is, unless you are connected

to God—the power source on the inside—you can forget all the work that you are trying to do on the outside. It won't get the job done.

There was a young woman who needed to buy a brand-new refrigerator. She was determined to buy the best one she could find. She wanted the top of the line. So she went to the top-of-the-line store and asked for the top-of-the-line salesman, whom she told to show her the top-of-the-line refrigerator. Well the sales guy showed her a refrigerator for \$4,500! Naturally, it was an awesome refrigerator. She purchased it and had it delivered to her home. She went to the grocery store and bought new vegetables, milk, ice cream, and everything else she could think of to put into her new refrigerator. She stocked it and went to bed.

She got up the next morning, and much to her dismay, she found that the ice cream was running down the side of the freezer, the milk was spoiled, and the vegetables had gone bad. The refrigerator was not working. Now she was a Christian, but she was evangelically ticked off! She went to the phone and called the store that had sold her this new refrigerator. When the clerk answered the phone, she proceeded to inform him in no uncertain terms that she had not purchased this brand-new refrigerator only to have all of her food spoil. Her new, top-of-the-line fridge simply did not work.

The sales clerk was mortified and apologized profusely for the mistake. "I am so sorry ma'am. I can't imagine what the problem could be, but before we come out to your house to fix the problem, can I ask you a few questions over the phone?"

The woman was very upset, but she rather haughtily agreed to answer the questions.

The sales clerk said, "Ma'am, will you go over to the refrigerator, and open the door, and see if the light comes on?"

She laid down the phone and went over to the refrigerator. She opened the door. She went back to the phone and said, "No sir, the light did not come on."

He said, "OK, Ma'am, will you put your head down by the base of the refrigerator and see if you hear a motor running?"

She went over to the refrigerator and leaned down to the bottom.

She went back to the phone. "No, I don't hear the motor running. As I told you, the refrigerator does not work!"

Then the clerk said, “Ma’am just one more thing. Will you please look behind the refrigerator? There is a black cord back there. Will you check to see whether or not it is plugged into the wall?”

She set the phone down and walked to the back of the refrigerator. Wouldn’t you know it, lo and behold, she hadn’t plugged it in.

The woman walked back to the phone and said, “For \$4,500, I shouldn’t have to plug it in!”

You may laugh, but unfortunately, that is precisely the way that many of us live our lives. We spend all kinds of money on our Bally memberships. We invest in our makeup, hair, and nails. We buy classy cars and elegant houses and carry fine leather briefcases to our impressive jobs. But even though we spend all the money in the world on the outside of ourselves, we can never fully cover up the mess on the inside. Sooner or later, somebody is going to find out that we aren’t what we claim to be.

We can’t shine on the outside unless God’s power is at work on the inside. No matter how much work we put into the outside, it will be worthless unless we are plugged into the true power source of our beauty. All the makeup in the world will not matter when the inside is a mess.

*D*IAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

Have you ever thought of yourself as a diamond in the rough? That’s how God sees us all—even the beautiful women we talked about earlier. He is always at work in our lives, helping us shine brighter and more radiantly for Him. I want to explore with you the inside of ourselves. I want to help you discover whatever may be hindering you from reaching your true potential as a beautiful, rare jewel in the King’s court. Let’s take a long, clear look at ourselves today and ask the Lord to show us what He’d like to do in our hearts and lives.

Are you prepared to allow God’s power to transform you from within? That’s what this book is about. Isn’t it time for you to stop blaming everybody else for your failures, for your seeming inability to excel at anything? Maybe you are reading this book today and you are successful and everyone looks at you in awe. You are talented and captivating. Are

you using your talents to cover up the mess that needs to be cleaned up on the inside? Are you ashamed of what someone might discover if she took a step into your life and saw the real you? Is there a storm inside that needs the Master's soothing voice to say, "Peace; be still"? Let's look inside and be honest with ourselves about what we find there.

What keeps us captive to disappointment, disillusionment, and despair? All we need to be women of the kingdom we already have in our possession. All of those external things that can be wrong in life—negative relationships, bad habits, dishonesty, debts, fear, and anger—are reflections of a much deeper issue. It is time for us to see ourselves as God Almighty sees us. Time to stop allowing others to dictate our value and worth. Time for us to take off the masks that disguise the truth about ourselves and to get real with God.

He knows all about our hurt and our pain. He knows that we struggle when we have to wait on Him and rely on Him. He also knows that it is during our times of struggling and waiting and wondering that we develop character that will last for a lifetime. There is a big plan at work that we can't see right now. According to Romans 8:28, God is working everything together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. Can you believe that?

My desire is that we will strive to be women of excellence, following the example of women like those I've introduced to you. Let's lay everything aside that could possibly steal our self-esteem from us and remember that God has created us with inestimable value. Naturally, Satan wants us to forget who we really are. He knows that we will fall for anything if we fail to see ourselves as God sees us. He knows that we'll go places we're not supposed to go and that we'll do things we're not supposed to with people we're not supposed to hang out with—all in an attempt to seize what God has already promised us in His Word. Satan knows that the key to our success or failure in this life is found in our self-esteem. That's why it's so important for us to acknowledge today that we are women of the King's court.

The effect that the information in this book will have on your life is entirely up to you. Pray right now that the Lord will help you to drop the walls of protection that you have built up. Ask Him to help you get real about the trash in your life and to come clean with Him. It is time! Today is the day for change and for the renewal of power in our lives.

We are about to embark on a journey that will open us up to truth. I am determined to take back what the devil has stolen from me and to reclaim my position as God's rare and precious jewel.

How about you?

C O N S I D E R T H I S



What does the Lord want to teach you about being a woman of God?



*What things have you done that have steered you away
from being a woman of excellence?*



How do you see yourself?



How do you think others see you?



Are you the woman who is profiled in 1 Peter 3:1–5 or in Proverbs 31?

Why or why not?



*As a diamond in the rough, what things can you see
in yourself that Christ needs to refine?*



How do you hope to begin to see yourself differently after you read this book?

Prayer
O F D E D I C A T I O N

Dear Lord, I, _____ ,
am tired of feeling negatively about myself. For some reason I have been discouraged and have not lived in a way that tells the world of my royal status in Your kingdom. I admit that I am not perfect and that I need help in these areas:

I pray that You will help me begin to develop into the woman that You have always meant for me to be. I am making a new commitment to You today, Lord. I don't want the devil to have the victory in my life in these areas ever again. I want to always feel as though I am Your woman and that I am in the center of Your will for my life. As I read this book, please show me those things that I need to work on most and give me the right spirit to make the effort to make changes for the better. My goal is to live for You. I love You, Lord.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Today's Date