

Ordered Steps



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Dedicated to:

My Lord and Savior,
who is my heart's greatest Treasure.

My parents,
who taught me to love the Lord
and yield to His hand.

My sister,
whose encouragement caused this book to be,
and whose friendship blesses my life.

My brothers,
who help me to balance my perspective
and keep a lively sense of humor.

Amanda,
for giving me good advice
and, inadvertently, the title for this book.

Introduction

Amy Carmichael, in her introduction to *Rose from Brier*, told how that poignant collection of “letters” was born out of the need for books written “by the ill for the ill.” She explained from personal experience that material written by the well for those who suffer illness “does not do much for us. It can, indeed, be exceedingly irritating.” Thus she compiled her treasure chest of encouragement for fellow “soldiers with another commission” from our heavenly Captain—that of physical pain.

Ordered Steps came about in much the same way, for much the same reason. Having spent my life-to-date single, I’ve had the opportunity to read many items written for single women. Very little material out there brings encouragement and purpose, simply because it is too often written by those who have never traveled far in the single lane. While I have gleaned helpful kernels from such writings (and there are a few perceptive writers I appreciate who, though married, have the ability to empathize), I must admit that a lot of the writings out there “do not do much for [me].” Sometimes they “can, indeed, be exceedingly irritating.” Thus I have compiled, out of my own journey, what I hope to be a treasure chest of encouragement to my fellow soldiers with (for a season or a lifetime) “another commission” from our heavenly Captain—that of the single life.

This little book does not offer a polished masterpiece or claim to be an authority on the subject. As you read further, you will find that I am neither polished nor an authority! Also, not every entry will fit every reader, and some parts do not address the topic of singlehood

at all—they simply reach out into the many facets of a Christian woman’s life, married or single, young or old.


It is my prayer that this collection of simple, heartfelt poems and “letters” will fortify and inspire single women to honor and glorify our wonderful God, learning “in whatsoever state [we are], therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11).

From one who has not attained, and yet by His grace I press on.

—*Jessica Dorfsmith*

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“...He will teach us of his ways,
and we will walk in his paths.”

Isaiah 2:3

The Life of Ordered Steps

“Do you think something’s wrong with me?” I asked half-seriously, looking across the small kitchen table at my friend. “Here I am, single as an odd sock—and I just turned 32 yesterday!”

I made a face, and Amanda laughed merrily, then sobered. “I don’t mean to laugh, but you take such an extreme view of yourself,” she chided, pouring me another cup of tea. “Of course there’s nothing wrong with you, and you certainly aren’t an ‘odd sock’! You’re one of the most enjoyable people to be with. If it’s God’s will for you to marry, you’ll make His choice of a man very happy.”

I gratefully smiled my thanks and took a sip of hot liquid. “I guess I’m just a little discouraged to see yet *another* year go by without those special hopes fulfilled,” I admitted. “It’s not that I lack fulfilling work and ministry—” I paused and grinned wryly. “But of course most

women hope that God will give them some of His sweetest gifts: marriage, children, and a home to keep.” I stroked Amanda’s two-year-old daughter’s curly head, and was rewarded with a dimpled smile before Katie toddled away to her toys.

“I know just how you feel.” Amanda reached to squeeze my hand. “I struggled with those same emotions myself many times over the years—as you probably remember! I’m 30, and Philip and I have only been married for three years. But...” she paused. “Well, I must say that although wife- and motherhood are blessings, I wouldn’t choose to have missed those single years. They were a growing time in my life that I’m grateful for—now that I see them in hindsight! I wish I would have valued them more at the time.” She laughed softly, shaking her head in remembrance. “I can already see some of the reasons why waiting longer than usual for marriage was best for me, though. Looking back, I realize my single years had nothing to do with having ‘something wrong’ with me or whatever else to worry about! They were simply God-ordained.”

God-ordained. The words hit me, clung to me, and have followed me ever since. There are times when I can easily grasp the restful fact that my heavenly Father plans life for me. But other times, like when a birthday rolls around, or a friend has their tenth wedding anniversary, or someone comments, “Oh! You aren’t married? Why not?!” the peace of that knowledge eludes me and discouragement gnaws at my mind and emotions. Doubts bombard me. Did I accidentally fail somewhere and miss my “chance”? Am I living amid the wrong circumstances? I’ve always wanted to be a happy homemaker, so why doesn’t God answer my prayers? Maybe even *He* thinks I’m not special enough! Is there really something wrong with me, after all? Suddenly I’m embarrassed to show my face in a world where so few are still single at 32.

This dark train of thought can cloud all of life’s joy. But wait! If my

lot in life is truly *God-ordained*, then how can I find fault with it or be ashamed of it? The Bible tells me that God does all things well (Mark 7:37) and never makes a mistake (Deuteronomy 32:4). It promises that if I am yielded to Him and walking in obedience, He will order my steps (Psalm 37:23). It clears up all fear that God considers me of lesser value than others (John 3:16). It reminds me of the cross, and helps me to accept painful ordered steps.

Ordered steps? This truth illuminates my heart with joy. Too often we think of God's plans for us as something elusively future, a part of life to "look forward to." But when we remember that ordered steps mean an ever-present, right-this-minute type of walk, an in-His-will place to be, we discover the wonderful truth that we are living in God's plans for us *now*, this instant! Difficult or simple, painful or glad, our steps are God-ordained. Why, then, do I so often struggle?

The question makes me dig below the surface. What is the root of much struggle in our lives? Why do we murmur, doubt, or ask, "Why, Lord?" about anything? I've discovered the root in my life—it's an ugly word: *distrust*. Discontentment and asking "why" are always the offshoot of distrust. Distrusting God's wisdom, His promises, His purpose, and His plan is followed by discontentment, unhappiness, fear, and that relentless question, "Why?"

After my conversation with Amanda two whole years ago, I sought God earnestly for a new focus, a focus on *Him* above all. The word "God-ordained" spoke deeply to me about letting Him order my steps, my days, my years—not according to my own desires, but simply and only as He sees fit.

Am I now the joyful wife of a good man, contentedly keeping our own home? If so, you might shrug and say, "Ah, no wonder she speaks so boldly! See, God blessed her with all she desired. Of course she smiles now." But no, I am not married. There aren't even any remote

possibilities on the horizon! Outwardly, not much has changed in the past twenty-four months. Yet I'm grateful to notice bright, glad changes inside! Clinging to the fact that, as a yielded child of God, He orders my steps, I experience a joy far deeper than I've ever known before. Instead of greeting each day with a sigh for what I *don't* have, I find myself rising eagerly to meet what God has planned for me. Instead of being wounded by the common idea that to be single at 34 denotes a "problem of some sort," I look up cheerfully to my God and say, "But we know that's not true, so who cares what misinformed people might think?!" And we walk on together in the path He chose for me today, undisturbed.

Does that mean my life is all roses now, without a ripple on the sea of peace? No! Unfortunately, I'm still bound in human clay and face as many battles as before, though perhaps different ones. But I'm grateful to find that I *have* grown. I've come to realize that the single life isn't something to be ashamed of if my all-wise, eternal God Almighty has placed me there. And I know I am not alone in the single state, today or in the past. Think of the Apostle Paul—he was single!

At the same time, never would I suggest that marriage and our desire for it is something to be ashamed of. Far from it! The same all-wise God who has called me to singlehood (perhaps only for a season), is the One who designed marriage. He does all things well. Married people aren't alone today or in the past. Remember the Apostle Peter? He was a married man.

But neither calling should distress us. Neither should it boost our pride or make us feel worthless. If we are living lives yielded to God, where we're at is *His* doing, not ours. We can take no credit or give no complaints. Let our daily focus be not on our circumstances, but rather on our heavenly Guide; content to do His will and daily walking in joyful surrender the life of ordered steps.

God Knows, God Sees

How well God knows,
How well He sees
The inner depths, the mysteries
That form my life, that trouble me—
GOD KNOWS, GOD SEES.

How well God plans!
How well He leads!
Guides through the darkness to the things
So clear to Him, though veiled to me—
GOD KNOWS, GOD SEES.

And since God knows,
And since He sees,
I can then trust, I can believe
That He who planned will pilot me—
GOD KNOWS, GOD SEES.