

Embracing the Beauty of Change

*A Scriptural Guide
for Women*

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First Edition

Preparatory Reflection

A woman's middle-age years bring many changes. From family life to finances, mental health to spiritual well-being—everything in life is subject to change as we navigate through this time. We may look back nostalgically on earlier phases of life, a time when (more than likely) we took our youth for granted. It's not uncommon to miss what we now might call “the carefree days.”

Perhaps at some point in our forties, we find ourselves thinking about neck lifts and tummy tucks—something to reset the decline of our bodies. At the same time—whether consciously or not—we ignore the spiritual slump we're likely to experience. When we scan social media, we find ourselves drawn to articles with titles like “What to Wear After Fifty” and “How to Look Lovely at Any Age.”

One of the truths we face is that we never expected to feel a sense of loss over our youth. Sometimes we find ourselves remembering a time of vitality. When

it didn't hurt so much to do simple things. When we could sit cross-legged on the floor and get up without a second thought. Our muscles and tendons remind us that our bodies age. Our focus often shifts to our physical strength and well-being, while our spiritual vitality—which has the potential to reach its zenith during this phase of life—is eclipsed by other concerns.

As we wrestle with these changes in identity and a sense of loss over our younger selves, we must learn to age “lovely” and leverage the beauty of this period of our life. Youth, though lovely, is not the only lovely thing; it's not even the most lovely thing.

Let's consider Philippians. When St. Paul talks about “whatsoever is lovely” in his Letter to the Church at Philippi, he didn't have clothes and cosmetic surgery in mind, and he probably wasn't thinking of achieving a more svelte figure before his mission trips and imprisonment. “Whatsoever is true, whatsoever is honorable, whatsoever is just, whatsoever is pure, whatsoever is gracious, whatsoever is lovely...think on these things.”

And so we ask ourselves: What *did* St. Paul have in mind? And how can a study of Philippians 4:8 help women ages forty to sixty-five redefine and refine the ever-changing time of the middle years?

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Introductory Prayer
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Before we delve fully into exploring the answers to the questions posed earlier, let us pray to become less obsessed with what we might be losing and focus more on what our Lord is doing in us today. Remember, you may be on the threshold of your best spiritual life.

Jesus, I am making a deliberate decision to seek your will and embrace what you have planned for me today. Help me to learn from the women discussed on these pages about how to recognize and embrace the gift of this time of my life. Amen.

Unwinding the Scripture

Whatsoever is True

Naomi comes to us by way of the Book of Ruth in sacred Scripture. We see her in her middle years, entrenched deep in a season of mourning, having lost a husband and two sons. She informs her two daughters-in-law that she is leaving Moab and returning to Bethlehem.

The famine that drove her family from Bethlehem is over, and she longs to return to the home of her younger years. One daughter-in-law, Ruth, refuses to leave Naomi's side and insists on going with her. Despite all the loss Naomi has experienced, the precious love and loyalty of her deceased son's wife gives us an example of a woman still living a blessed life.

After arriving in Bethlehem, this reality continues to evolve when God raises up a man named Boaz who falls in love with Naomi's daughter-in-law, Ruth, and the two marry. The couple's son, Obed, became the father of Jesse, who was the father of David. All of these relatives of Naomi are named in the lineage of Jesus Christ. Though Naomi was sure her life was over and had destined herself to return to her hometown and die in poverty, she soon learned that what had seemed an ending was truly a beginning. God had something else in mind for her. Yes, even the Moabite, Ruth, is one of four women in all salvation history to be recorded in a genealogy that links humanity with divinity. The relationship between Naomi and Ruth is part of the greatest story ever told.

Like Naomi, you may look with bitterness on what you've lost and wonder if anything can ease your pain. Instead, ask yourself: *How can I modify the way I see myself now to fit the truth of who God wants me to be in this phase of life? Am I ready for new things to spring forth?*

Isaiah 43:19 says:

*See, I am doing something new!
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
In the wilderness I make a way,
in the wasteland, rivers.*

God did this for Naomi in her middle years. And he can do it for you, too.

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LOOK INWARD
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How can I be honest about the woman God has molded me into and best use the wisdom I have gained in the first four to six decades of my life? How can I be open to learning to look for ***whatsoever is true*** rather than dwell on whatsoever is lost?

*He will restore your life and be the support of
your old age.*

RUTH 4:15