

## *Introduction*

While traveling across the United States with my family before I got married and afterward with my husband, I learned there are many more facets to the woman's role in ministry than merely sitting on the pew or playing the piano. The skill and finesse pastors' wives portrayed in their homes fascinated me. Many of these women warmly greeted us at their doors with gracious hospitality, never having laid eyes on us before. They set beautiful tables, cooked delicious meals, and found time to hold my children and entertain us as well.

Where did this education come from? How did they come up with the beautiful way to set a table? Or how did they overcome their fear of having people in their homes? Many of these ladies learned these skills in the "school of hard knocks." In other words, they made mistakes, learned and tried again, eventually perfecting the skill. To some the cooking came easy, but the social aspect was uncomfortable. These ladies had to work on their communication skills. Others could talk a blue streak, but shuddered to think an evangelist would eat the food they cooked, adding their names to the list of endangered species! Some are still in the process of perfecting their skills in various areas of social activities. This is the process of learning social graces.

When I was first asked to teach a course called *Social Graces* at Christian Life College, I began searching for resources. After searching many bookstores and libraries on the subject, I was dismayed to find there was no single source that would serve as a textbook for this class. As I compiled my material from the resources available, I stumbled upon another revelation. From the limited sources put out by Christian companies, many emphasized areas of concern that would not apply to our Pentecostal ladies. When I approached the subject on appearance, I groped for material, refusing to put vain suggestions into the hands of students who were trying to be more Christ-like. The need for a Christian perspective on the subject of beauty and other areas of etiquette inspired this writing. Soon this inspiration blossomed into a desire to put it in the hands of Pentecostal women everywhere.

What does *Social Graces* mean? Webster's Dictionary defines *social* as pertaining to society or companionship, and *graces* as beauty or charm of form, movement or expression. *Social Graces* would mean *beauty or charm of form in the circles of society*. Some people move comfortably in social circles, others find it difficult.

It may seem that the ability to exhibit charm and beauty naturally is a gift. One may say that only extroverts feel comfortable entertaining and interacting with others. Beginning with self-worth, we will walk through the process of preparing you to feel comfortable in the role you play in society. Whether you are shy or outgoing, you can learn to be at ease with social graces.

Social graces is not a gift, it is a skill. A skill can be acquired through education and practice. You can learn to

walk, sit, serve, and look gracious; but if you don't feel good about yourself, this will become mechanical and superficial. After we establish the foundation, then we will tackle the social aspect of etiquette. The difference between entertaining etiquette and exhibiting the spirit of hospitality through *social graces* is the difference between putting the skills into practice and a desire to serve others with self-assurance. Whatever areas of social weakness you may suffer, they can be strengthened and overcome.

I hope as you read these pages you will see through research and real-life illustrations that you are one of the most important, beautiful women on earth. You have been chosen by God to exemplify the very bride that He is coming back for. For that reason, it is important to be the best you can be and strive to do your best in all things.

Although this book does not exhaust the subject of etiquette it will help as you begin to nurture your knowledge in this area. Aware of the fact that there is much more information available on the subjects covered in this book, I have included footnotes and a resource list to help you study further if you wish. Along with you, I am still striving to master the skills in social etiquette. The desire to do the right thing the right way is a goal we should always strive for.

My desire for the projected outcome of this book is three-fold:

1. To help you learn basic skills in *Christian* etiquette involving hospitality, communication, and other social concerns.

2. To locate your weaknesses and learn how to rise above them in order to be able to accomplish *Social* skills with *Grace*.
3. To learn how to apply these *Graces* in your everyday life as a Christian woman whether you are single or married and whether you are the wife of a pastor, missionary or layman.

Reading this book will help you gain confidence in yourself. As you accomplish the basic skills in etiquette, learn the value of true hospitality and understand your value in the Kingdom of God, you will be on your way to mastering the best in social graces. You will master ***Christian Social Graces***.