

# **“The Fruitful Wife – Cultivating a Love Only God Can Produce” by Hayley DiMarco**

## **Discussion Questions**

### **Chapter 1 - Love**

In the opening chapter Hayley says, “As I understood it, love was about what you felt or experienced in your life that you deem good. So I learned to say things like “I love horses,” “I love Big Macs,” and “I love watching TV.” Talk about your use of the words “I love....” How was the word ‘love’ used in your family growing up?

What did you learn about the idea of love from looking at 1 Corinthians 13:4-8?

Talk about how Hayley said that love is the foundation of all other fruit.

#### **Love is not just a feeling**

What do you think of the idea that love is not just a feeling? How does thinking love is primarily feeling get us into trouble in marriage or other relationships?

#### **The Opposite of love**

What did you think of Hayley’s description of the opposite of love being selfishness rather than hate? How does this change how you think about love?

Hayley said, “Whenever our own well-being, happiness or hope is wrapped up in what another person says or does, we are not living the love of 1 Corinthians 13, and we most definitely not living life from the Spirit, but from the flesh.”

Have you seen this in your life? Have you wrapped up your happiness in another person?

#### **Why is love commanded?**

Did you get an answer to this question? Can you remember it?

“The wife who says she loves God must act in love to her husband in order to display her love for her God.” How do these words make you feel?

#### **How do we love?**

Was this section on what love looks like in relationship hard for you to read? Which parts of it bothered you or convicted you?

#### **The Humility of Marriage**

How would you define humility? How would you explain humility in marriage?

Which of these things listed as humility in relationship to a man is the hardest for you, and why?

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Turning the other cheek  
Not allowing his sin to be an excuse for yours  
Not taking his sin personally  
Praying for his sin rather than saying something about it to him

Read Ephesians 5:33 and Romans 12:10 and discuss.

“Loving your husband isn’t about being in love with him, but about serving him.” How do you feel about this idea? Agree? Disagree? Discuss.

**Read Ephesians 5:22** and discuss how this exists or does not exist in your marriage. If you aren’t married then discuss your feelings on it for your future relationship.  
How has your idea of love changed?

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## Chapter 2 - Joy

In her book, *The Woman of Mystery*, Hayley made this statement about joy, “I have found that my lack of joy firmly rests on my inability to consistently agree with God.” Can you see that in the moments in your life when you lack joy? Discuss.

### The joy of fleas

Read James 1:2, talk about ways that you have been able to consider trials in your life to be joy.

What do you think about the difference between happiness and joy?

Hayley said that, “we have to understand that to rejoice is to do something, not to feel something. Joy is consummated not with the heart but with the voice.” Does this change the way you think about your emotional life and your actions? Why or why not?

“We must allow Him to redeem our pain and make it something important, rather than destructive.” Do you have any pain in your past that has been redeemed and is now being used for good for either yourself or others?

What do you think of the idea that “Joy is knowing and being mindful of God the Holy Spirit and his never ceasing work in your life.” Are there areas in your life where you cannot see the Holy Spirit working? Are there areas that you’ve come through where now, looking back, you can see how God was working in your life? Discuss.

What do you think it means to be a temple of the Holy Spirit? And how does this impact your ability to find joy in even the hard times?

In the story about the mother who couldn’t find joy in her life after losing her child, do you see the potential for her to allow God to redeem her pain and use it to grow us rather than destroy us? Or is pain as bad as this meant for destruction only? Discuss your thoughts on such a terrible loss and the ability to rejoice always.

In this chapter, Hayley talks about the fruit of the Spirit in the analogy of a tree. What did you think about the idea of the fruit being meant for others and not for the tree alone? Do you agree that “we can’t be honest in our joy when we are dishonest about our suffering.” In what way do you think it’s hard to be honest about your suffering, and/or your joy?

2 Corinthians 7:10 says “*For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.*” Talk about the difference between godly grief and worldly grief. What are these words talking about in the life of modern woman?

Discuss the idea that “joy is your purpose not just your pleasure.”

### **Joylessness**

Hayley listed six joyless thoughts or emotions in life. Which of these can you identify with and why?

The joylessness of doubt

The joylessness of tired faith

The joylessness of hopelessness

The joylessness of life on earth

The joylessness of discontentment

The joylessness of a life out of control

### **The joyful wife**

In the Joyful Wife section Hayley lists several ways that a woman can express joy to her husband. What did you think of them? Are there any that you can't see yourself ever doing? Or some that you want to add to your life?

Be mindful

Choose optimism

Smile

Encourage one another

Play

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## Chapter 3 - Peace

Hayley confessed her problem with peace when it comes to environment. Do you have a similar problem with peace? If you would like, talk about your peace problem with one another.

What did you think about the definition of peace in the book?

What do you think about the idea that “Peace in this life comes for your acceptance of suffering not your exemption from it.”?

### Peace with God

The first and most important part of peace is finding peace with God. Do you believe that you have peace with God? If not, discuss why.

Where do you find peace? Keeping a clean house? Alone time? Reading?  
Is this the peace that is the fruit of the Spirit kind of peace? Why or why not?

Have you ever noticed that your peace is situational? Discuss.

What four things did Hayley say were the result of peace with God?

### God’s Commands for Peace

Why do you think that God commands peace?

How much peace do you have in your life? What are some of the interruptors of peace?

In what ways do you feed the people in your life peace?  
In what ways do you feed the people around you anything but peace?

How might your peace nourish those around you?

### Peace Thieves

Hayley lists eight peace thieves. Can you relate your lack of peace to any of these?

- Self-protection
- Rivalry
- Self-interest
- Wanting to be right
- Distrust
- In ability to find comfort in God

Self-injury  
Idols

### **Living in Perfect Peace**

What do you think of the idea of surrender? If peace requires complete surrender to the Holy Spirit how does that happen? Have you ever experienced this surrender?

“The mind set on the things of the Spirit is willing to lose.” How willing are you to lose to your husband?

Has your husband ever offended you? Is there something he has done that you haven't forgiven? If you aren't sure, then look at how Hayley describes forgiveness.

“And peace requires the forgiveness that doesn't somehow supernaturally forget the offense, but that vows not to bring it up again as leverage in future disputes. Forgiveness that promises not to speak of it to friends and family, reliving it and pouring more salt on the wound. And forgiveness determines not to obsess over it, bringing the pain back up to the surface for a closer examination. When forgiveness is given this way, peace is the result, both for the offender and the offended, a peace that refuses to relive or reopen the scab that is meant to bring healing and hope.”

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## Chapter 4 - Patience

### What is patience?

“Patience is more than the ability to wait. It involves a capacity to resist the temptation to play God.” What do you think Hayley means by ‘playing God?’

### A patient look at impatience

#### Discuss the following statements.

“Putting up with the stupidity, error and obstruction of others is a sign of patience.”

“Complaint, most often, expresses the inability to endure suffering (2 Timothy 4:5)”

“Taking control can often be a sign of nothing more than our impatience.”

“Another symptom of our impatience that you may never have labeled as such is boredom.”

“Impatience fails to find rest because it mistakenly believes that work is the answer to those feelings of discontent.”

“People who are nervous or high-strung are similarly plagued with their own impatience.”

### Patience Fruit

Our patience imitates God’s patience with us. In what ways has God been patient with you?

In what ways is patience an enemy of self?

### Just be Patient

In this section Hayley lists some ways that you can practice patience. Which of these make the most sense to you and look like something you could start to do right away? Which sound impossible?

Talk less

Be patient with God

Allow your man to be a mirror and to point out your sin

Allow him to be wrong

Prioritize

Quit Complaining

Break your law

Cling to God

## Chapter 5 - Kindness

### What is Kindness?

What do you think about the idea of kindness as a synonym for grace?

What do you think of this definition of kindness? *“Kindness is me giving up my right to hurt you for hurting me”.*

### Kindness Killers

Hayley lists 3 Kindness killers:

- A sense of Justice
- The Fear of Rejection
- Pure Ignorance

Which do you struggle with the most and how does it manifest itself in your relationship(s).

In the discussion of living a frugal life, Hayley said this, “Many of us have trained ourselves in the area of frugality, working hard to be measured in our use of stuff. And while this is admirable and beneficial to the home, it can also be easily perverted into stinginess. To be stingy is to make the principal of lack more important than the beauty of abundance.” Have you ever seen how frugality can turn into stinginess or bragging your lack over your abundance?

### His Kind Commandments

In verse Luke 6:35, it says this, *“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.”*

Do you find it hard to love your enemies? In what ways do you think that God would have you love them?

### Becoming a Grace Giver

There are times in any relationship where you feel less than loving. In fact, you might even feel like enemies to the very one you used to love. When that’s the case God wants you to love them anyway. Hayley lists some practical ways to do that. Take a look at this list and then talk about how you might do some of them in your home.

- Allow him to make mistakes
- Get Over it
- Don’t keep a record of wrongs
- Don’t punish him as his sins deserve

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Forgive him over and over  
Give him more than he deserves  
Apologize quickly

- Which one of these is the hardest for you to swallow?

## Chapter 6 - Goodness

### What is goodness?

What would you say that it means to be good?

Can you explain how goodness is a fruit of the Spirit and how it is defined?

### Goodness is imitating God

In Ephesians 5:1 we are called to “*be imitators of God, as beloved children.*” What do you think that means practically in your life?

How do you understand this in the light of Romans 3:10?

### Goodness is living in the light

What does it mean to live in the light?

Is there an area in your life where you feel you are keeping the lights off? Walking in the dark?

If you feel compelled and safe then feel free to discuss or seek a safe person to confess to.

If 1 John 1:10 it says that “*If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us*” (1 John 1:10, ESV).

How do you think this affects the “perfection” we were talking about in the beginning of this chapter?

Discuss the paradigm of all of mankind as imperfect sinners and God’s desire for us all to be perfect.

### Goodness is satisfying

What is the opposite of goodness?

In what way does our goodness serve God?

Hayley said that goodness “is completely foreign to the flesh. We know this because of Romans 8:8 which says, “*Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*” When we serve our flesh rather than the Holy Spirit we feel a thing and then we act on that feeling. We are so used to living with emotion and responding to it that we oftentimes are closer to our feelings

than we are to our God.” Does this make sense to you? Have you experienced the voice of self being louder than the voice of God? In what ways?

### **Growing in Goodness**

What did you learn about growing in goodness this week?

As a reminder Hayley listed these ways that goodness can be brought to the front of your mind and your thoughts can become more tuned with the Holy Spirit.

Find out what pleases God  
Renew your mind  
Be thankful  
Draw near to God  
Love God’s precepts  
Confess your failure  
Live in unity  
Encourage him  
Intercede

Looking at this list, is there one area where you would like to spend more time this week?  
What do you plan to do?

## Chapter 7 - Faithfulness

What is your definition of faithfulness? Did it change after reading this chapter?

### **Faithfulness does what is true**

What did you think of these words, “faithfulness isn’t a steadfast devotion to your spouse but to your God?” What implications does this have in the rocky points in a marriage relationship?

How can this kind of faithfulness change the way many of us relate to the men in our lives?

### **Faithfulness agrees with God**

Do you think that unfaithfulness always involves deception? In what ways might people be unfaithful without deceiving others?

### **Faithfulness isn’t self-deceptive**

Do you believe that self-deception is a common condition amongst women? In what ways? Have you found any self-deception in your own life? If not, would you be willing to consider seeking God on this and spending some time looking at your thought patterns, and interactions with your husband to see if there is any?

### **Faithfulness doesn’t over exaggerate**

Hayley said, “if exaggeration adds to the truth in order to make it more appealing, then the exaggerator doesn’t covet the truth as much as they think they do.” Would you agree with this statement? Disagree?

What are some examples of acceptable exaggeration? Why do you think we accept this kind of deception in our lives?

### **Faithfulness isn’t fond of drama**

Hayley stated that drama was untrustworthy. In what ways do you think that might be true?

### **Faithfulness isn’t unreliable**

How do you feel when someone you love can’t be relied on? Do you often struggle with doing what you say you will do in any of these areas?

Being on time

Getting things done

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Forgetting things you've said you would do  
Claiming busyness as an excuse for not doing things

### **Faithfulness isn't hypocritical**

Would you agree that hypocrisy is one of the most glaring problems in the church today?  
How does it affect those inside the church? Outside the church?

Do you see any hypocrisy in your own life?

### **Why are we unfaithful?**

What do you think of these words? "A woman cannot be faithful to her man if she serves Him over her savior, and if she makes of him an idol she will surely become locked in some area of unfaithfulness, because man was never meant to take the place of God."

Have you seen times in your life when you have let another person, like your husband, or your children, become your idol or obsession. When do you find yourself putting their happiness before God's?

### **Finding Faithfulness**

There are several ways that Hayley talks about the acts of faithfulness in this chapter. Are there any that bothered you, or that really hit home? If so, then which and why?

Guard your tongue  
Support him  
Control your spending  
Avoid emotional affairs  
Don't retaliate

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## Chapter 8 - Gentleness

What did you think about this quote, “Too often we sigh and look within; Jesus sighed and looked without. We sigh, and look down; Jesus sighed, and looked up. We sigh, and look to earth; Jesus sighed, and looked to Heaven. We sigh, and look to man; Jesus sighed, and looked to God.” Theophilus Stork

Can you relate to Hayley’s statement that gentleness doesn’t come natural to her? In what way?

### What is gentleness?

What did Hayley say was the foundation of all righteousness? Does this idea make sense to you? Can you explain it in your own words? Or would you disagree?

Conversely, what did she say was the foundation of all sin?

What would you say is the opposite of gentleness?

### Gentleness is never harsh

Would you consider any of your interactions with your husband, friends or family to be harsh? In what way?

Hayley said that “When strong emotions are acted on in disagreement with Christ’s gentle and meek nature then the fruit of the Spirit is choked and the flesh is fed.” What strong emotions do you tend to act on? Do you find harshness the fruit of your flesh in these instances?

Would you like to be less harsh? Or do you see some benefit in your harshness? How does your harshness reflect God’s attitude toward you?

Sarcasm, contempt, and ridicule are all listed as examples of harshness in relationship. Would you argue against this or agree? How do you feel when people act in these ways towards you?

### Gentleness is teachable

Do you consider yourself teachable? Why or why not?

Why do you think that teachability would be a part of gentleness?

## Gentleness isn't strict

Do you believe that strictness is a biblical concept?  
Did Hayley's argument against strictness change your attitude?  
Can you see how strictness might be in conflict with gentleness?

This chapter also included the following thoughts. Are there any here that you have a hard time believing or acting upon? If so, why?

Gentleness isn't meddling  
Gentleness is polite  
Gentleness isn't trying to be perfect  
Gentleness isn't vengeful  
Gentleness is quiet

**Living Gently** In this fruit in action section we see these different descriptions of the fruit of gentleness in relationship. Which of these do you find the most challenging? In what way?

Be easy going  
Accept correction  
Live a modest life  
Be kind to those who can do nothing for you  
Remain calm when offended  
Be polite  
Unstuff

After reading this chapter do you feel like you better understand gentleness as a fruit in your life? Do you have the desire to find out more and to grow in this fruit? If so, what things do you foresee changing in your life?

## Chapter 9 - Self-Control

Andrew Murray said, "You were trusting in yourself, or you could not have failed. If you had trusted Christ, He could not fail." What do you think of this idea? Do you agree with him?

Hayley said that self-control requires weakness. Would you agree? Or disagree?

### What is self-control?

**Hayley listed seven descriptions of self-control.** Which of these statements do you struggle with in your life the most?

The ability to obey - "self-control is about subduing self, restraining it and turning over the control to God Himself."

Self-surrender - "self-control, or the ability to follow Christ, begins in self-death."

Desiring God for more than approval - "it is out of this deep desire to satisfy God over self that self-control is born."

Self-restraint - "self-control is exercised in those areas where self is seeking to be satisfied at the expense of God's will, but you choose God over all the impulses to satisfy yourself."

Self-Indulgence or Self-control - "Self-indulgence is the act of giving in, of choosing pleasure over obedience, flesh over Spirit."

Indulging your personality - "what used to define you will begin to melt away as you become more like Christ and less like man. The personality that serves itself fails to serve God."

The indulgence of comfort - "We comfort ourselves with food when we indulge in more than we need. We comfort ourselves with emotions like bitterness, resentment, revenge, even lust. We comfort and serve ourselves with our self-pity, rather than trusting that whatever God has allowed is for our good. And as we comfort ourselves we reject the notion of self-control in favor to self-indulgence."

### But how?

What did Hayley mean when she said, "the root of the problem is that we trust ourselves too much."?

AW Tozer said, "The Holy Spirit is not a luxury meant to make deluxe Christians, as an illuminated frontispiece and a leather binding make a deluxe book. The Spirit is an

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imperative necessity. Only the Eternal Spirit can do eternal deeds. Millions take for granted that it is possible to live for Christ without first having died with Christ. This is a serious error and we dare not leave it unchallenged.”

Do you see how you have thought the Holy Spirit to be a luxury in your life? And have you ever thought the fruit of the Spirit wasn't meant for you in totality?

### **Is obedience possible?**

Can you answer this question? How did Hayley answer it and did it sound freeing or foreboding?

### **Is a lack of self-control respectable?**

In what ways do we excuse and allow self-control in our lives? If a lack of self-control is a sin, why do we excuse it in our lives as a part of our nature?

### **Why do we need self-control?**

After reading this chapter has your idea of self-control changed? Do you believe that self-control is possible for you in areas where you used to believe that it wasn't? Discuss.

### **Growing Abundant Fruit**

In this final wrap up we see a good summary of the things that happen in the life that grows abundant fruit. First, Hayley says we must admit we have a problem. Why would this be essential to a changed life? How does the Bible support this idea?

Next, we must surrender. What does it mean to surrender?

Then she suggests that we adore his omnipotence. Why would this be an essential part to a more abundant life? In what ways might we do this?

The next part of growth is dying to self. This is a difficult concept. As we look back in our lives, where are areas you have died in the past? Are there areas that you see now in your life that you believe you need to die to? Are you willing to discuss them?

Hayley also talked about discipline. In this section she talked about a story told by Jerry Bridges about his love of ice cream. Is there something in your life that might be your ice cream that you could use as an exercise in discipline?

Focusing on the truth is another part of living a fruitful life. If you have tried this in your life, share it with others. How do you focus?

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Putting on your spiritual armor does amazing things in your life. Do you have some experiences with this that you could share? Or questions?

Do you practice a quiet time, or morning watch as Hayley said? Talk about your thoughts on early morning worship as opposed to evening worship? Do you see a difference in how they affect your life?

Finally, is there anything else you'd like to say about The Fruitful Wife? What kinds of changes have you seen in your way of thinking, and even in your way of interacting with the one you love?

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