THE DAILY BREAD

The Magnificat of the Beloved



Building Virtue One Choice at a Time

A FORMATION BOOK BY

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The Everyday Apostle

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One Choice at a Time

The Daily Work of Becoming Good

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INTRODUCTION

Virtue Is Built, Not Wished

A woman may admire the virtues, long to be patient, courageous, temperate, and loving, and still find herself year after year much the same, wishing for virtue she does not have. The problem is not that virtue is beyond her but that she is waiting for it to arrive rather than building it, hoping to become virtuous somehow rather than doing the actual work by which virtue is formed. For virtue is not wished into being or received by longing, but built, one choice at a time, through the patient accumulation of small decisions to do the good, until the repeated choices settle into the stable strengths of character that virtue is. The woman who wants to grow in virtue must learn how it is actually built, in the concrete work of choosing the good again and again.

This book is about that work, the building of virtue one choice at a time. It will show how to start where she is, choosing which virtue to work on; the power of the single choice, each one building or eroding virtue; how to choose the good when it is hard, acting against inclination; what to do when she fails, getting back up rather than quitting; the small habits, repeated, that build virtue more than heroics; how growth in one virtue lifts the others; and how to persevere over a lifetime. The aim is thoroughly practical, to give a woman not merely an admiration of the virtues but a method for building them, so that she can stop wishing for virtue and begin, choice by choice, to become the woman she longs to be.

Do not despise the day of small things. — Zechariah 4:10

The Scripture tells a woman not to despise the day of small things, and the building of virtue is a work of small things, small choices accumulated over time into great strengths of character. This book will give her the method: starting where she is; using the power of the single choice; choosing the good when it is hard; rising after failure; building small habits; letting one virtue lift the others; and persevering over a lifetime. A woman cannot wish herself virtuous. This book will show her how to build virtue, one choice at a time, so that she becomes, through the patient work of small good choices, the virtuous woman she longs to be.

CHAPTER ONE

Start Where You Are

Choosing Where to Begin

The building of virtue begins not with trying to acquire every virtue at once, which overwhelms and defeats, but with starting where a woman is, choosing one virtue to work on, the one she most needs or that God is prompting. Understanding how to start where she is, by assessing her own character and choosing where to begin, gives a woman a focused and achievable starting point rather than a vague and overwhelming ambition.

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. — Proverbs 4:23

You Cannot Build Them All at Once

A woman cannot build all the virtues at once, for trying to work on everything scatters her effort and overwhelms her, so that she must focus on one or a few rather than attempting the whole at once. The ambition to become fully virtuous all at once is self-defeating, for a woman who tries to work on every virtue simultaneously scatters her attention, overwhelms herself, and makes progress in none, so that the building of virtue requires focus, choosing one virtue or a few to concentrate on rather than attempting the whole architecture of character at once. This means a woman should not try to build all the virtues simultaneously but should focus her effort, choosing a particular virtue to work on, so that her attention and effort are concentrated where they can actually make progress rather than scattered across an overwhelming whole. The woman who understands she cannot build them all at once focuses her effort on one virtue, making real progress rather than scattering herself. You cannot build them all at once, for trying to work on every virtue scatters a woman's effort and overwhelms her, so that she must focus on one or a few rather than attempting the whole at once.

Knowing Your Own Heart

A woman chooses where to begin by knowing her own heart, assessing honestly where she is weakest or where growth is most needed, so that she works on the virtue that will do her the most good. To choose which virtue to build, a woman must know her own heart, examining honestly where she is weakest, which disordered tendencies most trouble her, which virtue she most lacks, where her sins and struggles cluster, so that she can identify the virtue whose growth would most help her, keeping watch over her heart from which the springs of her life flow. This means a woman starts by honest self-knowledge, assessing her own character to see where she most needs to grow, so that she chooses to build the virtue that addresses her real weakness rather than one chosen at random, directing her effort where it will do the most good. The woman who knows her own heart chooses the virtue she most needs, directing her effort where growth is most required. Knowing your own heart is how a woman chooses where to begin, assessing

honestly where she is weakest or where growth is most needed, so that she works on the virtue that will do her the most good.

Choosing One Thing

Having assessed her heart, a woman chooses one thing to work on, a single virtue or even one aspect of it, so that she has a clear and focused goal rather than a vague intention to be better. The practical step is to choose one thing, a single virtue, or even one concrete aspect of a virtue, to focus on for a season, so that a woman has a clear and specific goal, patience in a particular relationship, honesty in a particular area, courage in a particular fear, rather than a vague ambition to be generally better, her effort aimed at one achievable target. This means a woman begins building virtue by choosing one specific thing to work on, giving her effort a clear focus, so that she is not pursuing a vague improvement but building a particular virtue in a particular way, a concrete starting point she can actually act on. The woman who chooses one thing has a clear and focused goal, building a particular virtue rather than pursuing a vague betterment. Choosing one thing gives a woman a clear and focused goal, a single virtue or aspect of it to work on, so that she has a concrete target rather than a vague intention to be better.

CHAPTER TWO

The Power of One Choice

Each Decision Builds or Erodes

The building of virtue happens through single choices, for each decision a woman makes either builds the virtue a little or erodes it, so that the next choice, always available, is the unit of which virtue is made. Understanding the power of the single choice, that each decision builds or erodes virtue, focuses a woman on the concrete moments where virtue is actually formed.

I have set before you life and death. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live. — Deuteronomy 30:19

Each Choice Counts

Every choice a woman makes to do the good or to fail it counts, building the virtue a little or weakening it, so that no choice is neutral or wasted in the forming of character. In the building of virtue, every single choice counts, for each decision to act virtuously, to choose patience, honesty, courage, or temperance in a given moment, builds the virtue a

little, strengthening the disposition, while each choice to fail erodes it, weakening the habit, so that no choice is neutral in the forming of character, each one either building or eroding the virtue a woman is cultivating. This means a woman's character is formed by the accumulation of her individual choices, each one counting toward or against the virtue, so that she gives weight to her single decisions, knowing that each is building or weakening the person she is becoming. The woman who knows each choice counts gives weight to her single decisions, aware that each builds or erodes the virtue she is forming. Each choice counts in the building of virtue, for every decision to do the good or fail it builds or erodes the virtue, so that no choice is neutral in the forming of character.

The Next Choice Is Always Available

Whatever a woman's past choices, the next choice is always available, so that she can begin building virtue in the very next decision, never trapped by her history but always able to choose the good now. The power of the single choice means that a woman is never trapped by her past choices, for the next choice is always available, so that whatever her previous failures, she can in the very next decision choose the good and begin or resume building the virtue, the present choice always open to her, independent of what came before, so that she can start again at any moment. This means a woman always has the power to build virtue in the next choice, never bound by her history or her past failures but always able to choose the good now, so that the building of virtue is always within reach in the decision immediately before her. The woman who knows the next choice is always available begins building virtue now, never trapped by her past but always able to choose the good. The next choice is always available, so that whatever a woman's past, she can build virtue in the very next decision, never trapped by her history but always able to choose the good now.

Choices Compound Over Time

Single choices compound over time, for the accumulation of many small decisions to do the good builds, gradually, the strong and stable virtue, so that the patient repetition of good choices produces great strength. Though each single choice makes only a small difference, choices compound over time, for the steady accumulation of many small decisions to do the good gradually builds a strong and stable virtue, each choice adding to the last, so that the patient repetition of good choices over months and years produces the great strength of character that no single choice could create, the virtue built by compounding. This means a woman should trust the compounding of her choices, knowing that each small good decision, repeated and accumulated over time, builds toward a real and lasting virtue, so that she values her single choices as the building blocks of a character formed by their patient compounding. The woman who understands

that choices compound over time trusts the accumulation of her small good decisions to build lasting virtue. Choices compound over time, for the accumulation of many small decisions to do the good gradually builds a strong and stable virtue, so that the patient repetition of good choices produces great strength of character.

CHAPTER THREE

Choosing the Good When It's Hard

Acting Against Your Inclination

The choices that build virtue are precisely the hard ones, the decisions to do the good against a contrary inclination, so that a woman builds virtue most by choosing rightly when everything in her pulls the other way. Understanding how to choose the good when it is hard, acting against inclination and before feeling, reveals where virtue is actually forged and how to make the costly choices that build it.

If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. — Luke 9:23

The Hard Choices Build the Most

Virtue is built most by the hard choices, the ones made against inclination, for choosing the good when it is easy costs nothing, while choosing it when everything resists builds real strength. The choices that most build virtue are the hard ones, for when doing the good is easy and agreeable it builds little, costing nothing and requiring no strength, but when a woman chooses the good against a strong contrary inclination, against her fear, her desire, her irritation, her reluctance, the choice costs something and builds real strength, so that the hard choices, made against the grain of her inclinations, are where virtue is most forged. This means a woman should expect the virtue-building choices to be hard, and should value the difficulty rather than avoiding it, for it is precisely in choosing the good against her inclinations that she builds the most virtue, the hard choices forging her character. The woman who understands that the hard choices build the most embraces the costly decisions, knowing they forge real virtue. The hard choices build the most, for choosing the good against a contrary inclination costs something and builds real strength, while choosing it when easy builds little, so that virtue is forged in the hard decisions.

Doing It Before You Feel It

A woman builds virtue by doing the good before she feels like it, acting on her will and her resolve rather than waiting for the feeling, so that she does not let the absence of feeling stop the building of virtue. The building of virtue requires doing the good before one feels like it, for if a woman waited to feel patient before acting patiently, or to feel brave before acting bravely, she would rarely act at all, so that she must act on her will and her resolve rather than her feelings, choosing and doing the good act even when she feels no inclination to it, letting her will lead and the feelings follow. This means a woman does not wait for the right feeling to build virtue but acts in its absence, doing the good before she feels it, so that the building of virtue proceeds by will and choice rather than being stalled by the absence of feeling, her action leading and her disposition gradually following. The woman who does it before she feels it builds virtue by acting on her will rather than waiting for the feeling, her disposition following her choices. Doing it before you feel it builds virtue by acting on the will and resolve rather than waiting for the feeling, so that a woman does not let the absence of feeling stop the building of virtue.

The Daily Cross

Building virtue involves a daily taking up of the cross, the repeated self-denial of choosing the good against inclination, so that a woman accepts the daily, small sacrifices that the forming of virtue requires. The building of virtue is a form of taking up the cross daily, for each hard choice to do the good against inclination is a small act of self-denial, a daily dying to self, so that a woman who builds virtue accepts the daily cross of these repeated self-denials, the small sacrifices of choosing the good over her own ease and inclination, embracing the cost as part of following Christ. This means a woman understands the building of virtue as a daily taking up of the cross, accepting the repeated self-denials it requires, so that she does not expect the forming of virtue to be comfortable but embraces the daily small sacrifices as the cost of becoming good, the cross taken up anew each day. The woman who accepts the daily cross embraces the repeated self-denials of building virtue, taking up the cost of becoming good each day. The daily cross is involved in building virtue, the repeated self-denial of choosing the good against inclination, so that a woman accepts the small daily sacrifices that the forming of virtue requires.

CHAPTER FOUR

When You Fail

Getting Back Up

No woman builds virtue without failing along the way, and so the building of virtue depends not on never failing but on how she responds to failure, getting back up and continuing rather than quitting in discouragement. Understanding what to do when she fails, rising again rather than giving up, keeps a woman building virtue through the inevitable failures of the process.

The righteous falls seven times and rises again. — Proverbs 24:16

Failure Is Part of the Process

Failure is a normal part of building virtue, for no one acquires virtue without stumbling along the way, so that a woman should expect to fail sometimes and not be surprised or defeated by it. The building of virtue is not a smooth and failure-free ascent, for everyone who works at virtue fails along the way, falling back into the very faults they are trying to overcome, so that failure is a normal and expected part of the process, not a sign that a woman cannot build the virtue but the ordinary experience of one who is building it, the stumbling that accompanies real growth. This means a woman should expect to fail sometimes as she builds virtue, not being surprised or defeated by her failures but recognizing them as a normal part of the process, so that she does not mistake stumbling for final defeat but understands it as part of the long work of growth. The woman who understands that failure is part of the process is not defeated by her stumbles, expecting them as part of building virtue. Failure is part of the process, for no one builds virtue without stumbling, so that a woman should expect to fail sometimes and not be surprised or defeated by it.

Rising Again

What matters after failure is rising again, for the righteous fall and rise, so that a woman builds virtue not by never falling but by always getting back up and resuming the work. The decisive thing in building virtue is not whether a woman falls but whether she rises again, for the Scripture says the righteous falls seven times and rises again, revealing that holiness lies not in never falling but in always rising, so that a woman builds virtue by getting back up after each failure, returning to the work, resuming the practice, refusing to let a fall become a final stop. This means a woman's response to failure is to rise again, to get back up and continue building the virtue rather than lying in her failure, so that her falls, however many, do not defeat her as long as she keeps rising, the repeated rising itself a part of the virtue she is building. The woman who rises again after failure keeps building virtue, her repeated getting-up more important than her never-falling. Rising again is what matters after failure, for the righteous fall and rise, so that a woman builds virtue not by never falling but by always getting back up and resuming the work.

Not Letting Failure Undo You

A woman must not let failure discourage her into quitting, for the real danger is not the fall but the despair that abandons the effort, so that she refuses to let a failure undo all her progress. The greatest danger in failure is not the fall itself but the discouragement that can follow, the temptation to conclude that she cannot build the virtue, to despair of progress, to abandon the effort, so that a woman must guard against letting failure undo her, refusing to let a single fall or even many falls persuade her to quit, knowing that the only true failure is to stop trying. This means a woman resists the discouragement that failure brings, not letting a fall defeat her resolve or undo her progress, so that she keeps building virtue through her failures, guarding her perseverance against the despair that is the real threat. The woman who does not let failure undo her guards against discouragement, refusing to quit over her falls and keeping on with the work. Not letting failure undo you means guarding against the discouragement that follows a fall, for the real danger is the despair that abandons the effort, so that a woman refuses to let failure stop her from building virtue.

CHAPTER FIVE

Small Habits, Repeated

The Discipline That Builds Character

Virtue is built less by occasional heroic efforts than by small habits repeated daily, the ordinary disciplines and routines that train a woman in the good until it becomes second nature. Understanding how small habits, repeated, build virtue more reliably than heroics shows a woman the practical disciplines that actually form character over time.

Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. — 1 Corinthians 9:25

Small and Consistent Over Heroic

Virtue is built more by small and consistent practice than by occasional heroic effort, for the daily repetition of modest disciplines forms character more reliably than rare bursts of intensity. The building of virtue favors the small and consistent over the heroic, for while occasional grand efforts may feel significant, they do little to form a stable disposition, whereas small practices repeated daily, modest disciplines consistently kept, gradually train a woman in the good until it becomes habitual, so that steady small consistency builds virtue more reliably than rare bursts of heroic intensity. This means a

woman builds virtue best through small, consistent practices rather than occasional heroics, so that she values the daily modest disciplines over dramatic but sporadic efforts, trusting the quiet consistency that actually forms character. The woman who chooses small and consistent over heroic builds virtue through daily modest disciplines rather than rare bursts of effort. Small and consistent over heroic is the way virtue is built, for the daily repetition of modest disciplines forms character more reliably than occasional heroic effort.

Training Like an Athlete

Building virtue is like athletic training, a disciplined and repeated exercise that strengthens a woman in the good as training strengthens the body, so that she approaches virtue with the regular discipline of one in training. The Scripture compares the Christian life to athletic training, in which an athlete exercises self-control and disciplines the body through repeated practice, and this is how virtue is built, through a disciplined and regular exercise of the good, so that a woman trains herself in virtue as an athlete trains, by consistent practice, deliberate discipline, and the repetition that builds strength, approaching the building of virtue as a training to be undertaken regularly. This means a woman builds virtue by training like an athlete, through the regular, disciplined exercise of the good, so that she undertakes the building of virtue not casually but with the deliberate discipline of one in training, repeating the practices that strengthen her in the good. The woman who trains like an athlete builds virtue through regular, disciplined exercise, strengthening herself in the good by consistent practice. Training like an athlete builds virtue through disciplined, repeated exercise of the good, so that a woman strengthens herself in virtue as an athlete trains the body, by consistent practice.

Shaping Your Environment

A woman builds virtue more easily by shaping her environment and routines to support the good, removing temptations and building in the practices and reminders that make virtuous choices easier. Virtue is built not only by direct effort but by shaping one's environment and routines, for a woman can make virtuous choices easier by removing the temptations and occasions that trip her, building in routines and reminders that support the good, surrounding herself with helpful influences, so that her environment works with her rather than against her, making the virtuous choice the easier one. This means a woman wisely shapes her surroundings and habits to support the virtue she is building, arranging her life to make the good easier and the bad harder, so that she does not rely on willpower alone but enlists her environment and routines in the building of virtue. The woman who shapes her environment makes virtuous choices easier, arranging her life and habits to support the good. Shaping your environment helps build virtue, a

woman arranging her routines and surroundings to support the good and remove temptations, so that the virtuous choice becomes easier.

CHAPTER SIX

One Virtue Lifts the Others

How Growth Spreads

The virtues are connected, so that growth in one lifts the others, and a woman who builds a single virtue finds it strengthening and supporting the whole of her character rather than standing alone. Understanding how one virtue lifts the others encourages a woman that her focused work on a single virtue benefits her whole character and that the virtues grow together into an integrated life.

Supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness. — 2 Peter 1:5-7

The Virtues Are Connected

The virtues are not isolated but connected, each supporting and requiring the others, so that they form an integrated whole rather than a collection of separate qualities. The virtues do not stand alone but are deeply connected, each one supporting and depending on the others, for prudence guides all the virtues, courage is needed to practice the others under difficulty, temperance frees a woman to act virtuously, and charity gives life to them all, so that the virtues form an integrated whole, a connected architecture in which each strengthens and requires the rest rather than a collection of separate, independent qualities. This means a woman understands the virtues as interconnected, each one bound up with the others, so that she builds not isolated qualities but an integrated character in which the virtues support one another, the whole stronger than any part alone. The woman who understands the virtues are connected builds an integrated character, knowing each virtue supports the others. The virtues are connected, each supporting and requiring the others, so that they form an integrated whole rather than a collection of separate qualities.

Growth in One Helps the Rest

Because the virtues are connected, growth in one virtue helps the others grow, so that a woman's focused work on a single virtue strengthens her whole character and makes the other virtues easier to build. The interconnection of the virtues means that growth in one

helps the rest, for as a woman builds patience she also grows in the self-control that serves temperance and the endurance that serves fortitude, and as she builds any virtue she strengthens the general discipline and ordered will that all the virtues require, so that her focused work on a single virtue spreads its benefit to the others, lifting her whole character. This means a woman's concentrated effort on one virtue is not narrow but far-reaching, for growth in that virtue helps the others grow, so that building one strengthens the whole, and her focused work benefits her entire character rather than only the single virtue she targets. The woman who sees that growth in one helps the rest builds her whole character through focused work on a single virtue. Growth in one helps the rest, for the virtues are connected, so that a woman's focused work on a single virtue strengthens her whole character and makes the other virtues easier to build.

Building an Integrated Life

As the virtues grow together, a woman builds an integrated life, a character whole and unified rather than good in parts, so that the virtues together form a coherent and beautiful whole. The ultimate fruit of building the connected virtues is an integrated life, a character that is whole and unified rather than virtuous in some areas and deficient in others, for as the virtues grow together and support one another, they form in a woman a coherent and beautiful wholeness, an integrated character in which all the strengths work together, so that she becomes not a patchwork of some good qualities but a unified, virtuous person. This means a woman's building of virtue aims finally at an integrated life, a whole and unified character formed as the connected virtues grow together, so that she becomes not merely good in parts but whole, her virtues integrated into the coherent beauty of a fully formed character. The woman who builds an integrated life grows the virtues together into a whole and unified character, coherent and beautiful. Building an integrated life is the fruit of the connected virtues growing together, a character whole and unified rather than good in parts, so that the virtues form a coherent and beautiful whole.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Work of a Lifetime

Persevering in Building Virtue

The building of virtue is not the work of a season but of a lifetime, requiring a woman to persevere patiently over many years, trusting the slow growth and relying on grace to sustain her through the long work. Understanding that building virtue is the work of a

lifetime, requiring perseverance and patience, prepares a woman to keep building through the long years rather than expecting quick results.

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. — Philippians 3:14

A Lifelong Project

Building virtue is a lifelong project, not completed in a season but pursued across the whole of a woman's life, so that she settles in for a long work rather than expecting to finish quickly. The formation of virtue is the work of a lifetime, for character is not built in a few months or years but slowly across the whole course of a life, each virtue deepened, each weakness gradually overcome, each strength built up through decades of choices, so that building virtue is a lifelong project, never finished in this life but always continuing, a work a woman settles into for the long haul rather than expecting to complete quickly. This means a woman should understand the building of virtue as a lifelong undertaking, not expecting to finish it soon but committing to the patient work over the years, so that she measures progress not by quick completion but by steady growth across a lifetime. The woman who understands virtue as a lifelong project commits to the long work, building her character patiently over the years. A lifelong project is the building of virtue, pursued across the whole of a woman's life rather than completed in a season, so that she settles in for a long work rather than expecting quick results.

Patience With Slow Growth

Because virtue grows slowly, a woman must be patient with her own slow progress, not despairing at how gradually she changes but trusting that steady effort over time produces real growth. The slow pace of growth in virtue can discourage a woman who wants faster results, but she is called to patience with her own slow growth, recognizing that character changes gradually, that the stubborn faults yield slowly, that real virtue takes years to build, so that she does not despair at the slowness but trusts that her steady effort, sustained over time, is genuinely forming virtue even when the progress is hard to see. This means a woman cultivates patience with her own slow growth in virtue, not demanding rapid change or despairing at the gradual pace, but trusting the slow work and persevering through it, confident that steady effort over the years builds the virtue she longs for. The woman who has patience with slow growth perseveres through the gradual pace, trusting that steady effort builds real virtue over time. Patience with slow growth is required in building virtue, for character changes gradually, so that a

woman does not despair at the slow pace but trusts that steady effort over time produces real growth.

Sustained by Grace

Through the lifelong work of building virtue, a woman is sustained by grace, for she does not persevere by her own strength alone but by the grace of God that empowers and upholds her effort over the years. The perseverance that builds virtue over a lifetime is not sustained by a woman's own strength alone, which would fail, but by the grace of God, who empowers her efforts, upholds her through discouragement, restores her after failure, and carries the long work forward, so that she builds virtue not merely by her own willpower but sustained by grace at every step of the lifelong project. This means a woman relies on grace to sustain her through the long work of building virtue, not depending on her own strength to persevere but on the grace that empowers and upholds her, so that she presses on toward the goal confident that grace will carry her through the lifelong effort. The woman who is sustained by grace perseveres in building virtue not by her own strength but by the grace that upholds her through the long work. Sustained by grace, a woman perseveres in the lifelong building of virtue, for she does not rely on her own strength alone but on the grace of God that empowers and upholds her effort over the years.

CONCLUSION

Build, One Choice at a Time

The woman who wished for virtue she did not have now knows how to build it. We have seen that she should start where she is, choosing one virtue to work on; that each single choice counts, building or eroding virtue, and the next choice is always available; that the hard choices, made against inclination and before feeling, build the most; that when she fails she must rise again, not letting failure undo her; that small habits repeated build character more than heroics; that growth in one virtue lifts the others toward an integrated life; and that building virtue is the work of a lifetime, requiring patience and sustained by grace.

Through all of it runs a single method: build, one choice at a time. Virtue is not wished into being or received by longing but built, choice by choice, through the patient accumulation of good decisions over a lifetime. You cannot become virtuous all at once, but you can make the next good choice, and then the next, until the choices become the stable strengths of character you long for.

So build, one choice at a time. Start where you are, choosing the virtue you most need. Give weight to each single choice, knowing it builds or erodes, and remember the next choice is always available. Make the hard choices, doing the good against your inclination and before you feel it, taking up the daily cross. When you fail, rise again, and do not let failure undo you. Build small habits, repeated, training like an athlete and shaping your environment for the good. Trust that growth in one virtue lifts the others toward an integrated life. And persevere over a lifetime, patient with slow growth and sustained by grace. You cannot wish yourself virtuous. But you can build virtue, one choice at a time, until you become, by grace and choice, the woman you were made to be.

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