

Choices In A Changing World

By Dr. Ethel Chapman, from a speech presented at the Girls' Conference

To introduce her subject, "Choices in a Changing World," Dr. Ethel Chapman referred to a book written some years ago, "What Men Live By," by Dr. Richard Cabot. In this book, Dr. Cabot took the premise that we live by four things: Work, Play, Love, and Worship; that these elements make up life and that how we deal with them will largely determine our happiness or our misery, our personal growth or the opposite, and our usefulness or futility.

Dr. Chapman said, "This book might not have many ideas relevant to a girl's world today but there's nothing out-dated in the pattern of work, play, love and worship. So I thought we might look at current choices in each of these areas. Some of them are the most important choices a girl will ever make in her whole life; the career you decide on, the person you marry, whether you are going to be the sort of person who adds to the world's problems or the sort of person who helps to solve the world's problems.

"Work. You have to choose a vocation, and when you seriously go to work you start to give yourself an education that no school can give you. Years ago choices of vocations for girls were limited; today the opportunities seem endless. It seems now, too, that in the years ahead most women will be working for a good part of their married life. So you want the kind of work that you can really like, that you can learn to do well, and that is worth putting your life into. If you choose wisely, more than material gain will be the joy you get from work you like. Even if your dream seems hopeless, don't give it up — it may mean extra time in school, may be hard to finance, but if you have a gift, that means a lot to you. It will be worth it."

Dr. Chapman then told the story of a student who asked the playwright, Henry Ibsen, what he could do to be the most help to society. Ibsen said, "There is nothing you can do now that will help more than coining the metal you have in yourself" (getting your abilities trained into a shape where they can be put to use).

"Another trend in these changing times is toward a shorter work week. What are you going to do with your extra spare time?" said Dr. Chapman. "If you do not use it constructively you'll soon feel very dull, bored and altogether miserable."

The speaker suggested spending the extra leisure time with voluntary community work, with developing special interests, music, art, drama, sewing, and planned reading.

"Play. In our pattern I suppose play would include whatever recreation we enjoy or recreates us for our work," continued the speaker, "and play in these changing times brings other choices. You are lucky if your friends feel pretty much as I suppose you do about drinking and drugs and staging late parties at some isolated place or in a home where the parents are absent. Decisions regarding these situations will be yours to make. Every girl decides for herself.

Love. Dr. Chapman suggested that love will have to do with all human relations, that the girls were fortunate to belong to a generation with a sense of social justice, that they have fewer prejudices against other races or religion or social classes than any generation before them. She referred to the book, "The Greening of America," by Charles Reich, quoting, "There is a revolution coming. It will not be like revolutions of the past . . . This is a revolution of the new generation and it is built on the sort of love that cares about the welfare of all people everywhere."

The girls were urged to stand by their own opinions. Dr. Chapman said, "Don't let it worry you if you are the only person voting for what you believe in," and quoted a verse written by Overstreet:

"You say the little efforts that I make
Will do no good. They never will prevail,
To tip the hovering scale where justice
hangs in balance,
I don't think I ever thought they would.
but I am prejudiced beyond debate
In favor of my right to choose which side
Shall feel the stubborn ounces of my weight."

"Then you have personal relationships. First there is your family. In these changing times some new cult is always suggesting abolishing family life altogether. Don't be afraid to let yourself go in showing your family — not only how much you love them but how proud of them you are. They need this more than you know.

"If there is one time more than another when your choice must be right, it is when you start friendships with the opposite sex," warned the speaker. "Some wise man once said, 'In choosing the person to marry, far