

## GUIDELINES FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW

By Dr. Ethel Chapman

Note: The following are excerpts from the address presented at the Annual Girls' Conference for 4-H Homemaking Club Members.

"A lot of people don't like guidelines. They think they're something that keeps saying 'you shouldn't do this and you shouldn't do that' but that says very little about what you should do. And a life spent only in keeping clear of what we shouldn't do could be a very insipid, negative life. The great purpose of guidelines should be to steer us into doing the sound, progressive, lovely things we might never do without them; they should help us to find this kind of life so satisfying and so exciting that nothing less has any attraction for us. We might go farther if, instead of thinking only about what we should or should not do, we set our hearts on what we should be."

### The Quest for Freedom

"Another fact about guidelines is that the ethics you believe in, the girl and the woman you grow into, the life you make for yourself depends on you. You may say 'Then if I'm to live my own life I've got to have freedom to do what I want with it.' There's some truth in this.

"But it's well to be cautious about how you handle your freedom. By insisting on complete freedom to do what you want to do today, you may cut off the freedom you need to do what you want still more to do tomorrow. You may want to be a trained nurse. You have the ability for it and you know you'd never be happy doing anything else. But you find mathematics difficult so you quit school and your dream of professional nursing is as lost as if someone else had taken it from you. If you are going to make your own rules take a good look at what they may do to you."

### The Menace of Materialism

"Another reason why we need guidelines is that the customs of these times are changing too fast for any of us, and they're breaking down traditions that used to help us decide what to do. One of these old values was a sentiment for things that last. Now it seems that the chief end of man is to be a great consumer, to use things that can soon be thrown away and so keep the industries busy. If you have read **Future Shock** you'll remember the paper wedding dress. It doesn't cost much so you can wear it for a day, then throw it out with the rest of the garbage. Only a dress of course, but associated with one of the great

events of the family's history, but that is what marriage means to some people.

According to **Future Shock** the trend to throw things away is getting into our human relations too. The author tells of the way manufacturers of Barbie dolls keep improving them from year to year, just like automobiles, and encouraging little girls to turn in their old dolls and get an allowance on a new model. I suppose it doesn't matter about a doll, but it's pretty bad if this short term view gets into your relations with people. Are we more interested in our new friends than in the old ones? Do you feel that you don't have to try too hard to make a marriage work because you can always get a divorce?

"Another problem testing our standards today is the trend to materialism. Sometimes things seem to count more than people.

"Most of us have some problems, and we shouldn't let them discourage us. They may even develop a strength and resourcefulness we would never have had without them. A biographer of Dorothy Canfield, a great author wrote, 'Dorothy is the product of her environment and of standing up to it.'"

### The Girl you Want to Be

"We suggest that instead of always having to think about rules to guide your life, it might be better to try to make yourself the kind of girl who keeps the rules almost unconsciously because that's the way she likes to live anyway.

"But what do you want to make of yourself? What qualities do you admire or value most? Some girls want beauty, some want charm, personality (being an interesting girl).

"But **character** is greater than any of these — for our character is really what we are. It sets our pattern of behaviour; it means our moral strength or weakness.

"If we had to judge character by one test I think that might well be how we feel about other people. We all want to be happy — especially when we're young. Is your pursuit of happiness co-operative or competitive? Do you get your thrills from helping people or getting ahead of them? A girl who cares about people will feel it her concern when one of her family is unhappy, when a classmate is lonely or left out of things — and you can certainly do something about these."