

be that as well. I mean it in the sense that people will be so comfortable with me that they see me as “just Kim.” In this article, when I use the term “just woman,” I am referring to “just” in that sense of the word.

When I think about the friends in my life who are “just women,” they make me feel comfortable, accepted, and relaxed. I often misspeak. I tend to ramble. I am overweight. I sometimes laugh at the wrong times. I make mistakes. I sometimes interrupt. Yet I am thankful for those in my life who love me anyway. They will continue to be my friend in spite of my many failures and mistakes. They do not put the burden of perfection on me. I want to be this kind of friend to others. My heart’s desire is that my friends and family see me as “just Kim.”

A “just woman” does not have a critical spirit. She is not nitpicky. If something isn’t just right, she can accept it and move on with life. She does not seek to find fault with others.

If God is not critical of something, we should not be critical of it either. And even if it is something that God would be critical of (sin), we should still not have a critical spirit but a spirit of “What can I do to help you overcome this sin?”

A “just woman” assumes the best about people or she assumes nothing at all. But she does not assume the worst.

A “just woman” is not easily offended. You don’t have to walk on tip toes around her. You don’t have to weigh every word you say. She understands that people misspeak sometimes. If you do say or do something that is truly hurtful, she either lets love cover it or she lovingly talks to you about it.

A “just woman” does not make everything all about her. She does not feel like she has it worse off than anyone else. She does not feel that she is better than everyone. In reality, she really doesn’t think much about herself at all.

A “just woman” has a depth of character. She has a deep love for the Lord and others. Her deepest desire is to be like Christ. She is patient and kind. She is understanding of the imperfections in others.

A “just woman” has a sense of humor. She does not take life, or herself, too seriously. If someone stops by and catches her in her pajamas and robe at 10:00 a.m., she sees the humor in the situation and is not unduly horrified.

A “just woman” is gracious. She is courteous. She has a friendly, kind spirit. She is not prickly or moody.

A “just woman” sees her own faults and imperfections. She realizes that there are sins in her own life that she has not overcome. She is not self-righteous enough to feel that she is more spiritual or godly than others.

I want my children to be “just” people, too. The best way to instill this quality in them is to model it. Our children should see in us a kind, patient, uncritical attitude toward others. However,

we should also actively and purposefully teach these traits to our children. Some children tend to be critical of others. From a very young age, we should discourage a critical spirit. If our child says something negative about someone, we should help them think through how to give that person the benefit of the doubt. If it is blatant sin, we need to help our child to see the other person’s sin with sorrow, not with self-righteousness.

When others think of our family, I want them to think, “Oh, it’s just the Stilwells.” It would break my heart if someone thought we would think less of them or be critical of them because of their imperfections or because they might do some things differently than our family.

I should add a couple of disclaimers. While we should strive to be “just women,” that doesn’t mean that we embrace or accept sin. I don’t want anyone to say, “Oh, it is just Kim, so I can bash my husband and tell her every single thing I don’t like about him.” I also don’t want anyone to say, “It is just Kim, so I can shoplift in front of her and she won’t care.” I want my character to be such that my friends and family would not even consider doing these things around me.

Another exception to always being a “just woman” is our children. I want my kids to see me as a “just woman,” and I want them to have that attitude toward others as well. I want them to know that I will love them in spite of their sins and imperfections, but I don’t want them to think I condone their sins. My children are all young adults and older teens now, but when they were younger, I would not have wanted them to think, “It is just Mom, so it doesn’t matter if I do my chores,” or, “It is just Mom, so I can skip my schoolwork today. She won’t care.” We should extend grace to our children. They are children. They will act like children. We should not expect the same maturity from them that we do from adults. However, we do want to teach them responsibility, and we need to give consequences when sin is involved.

Being a “just woman” can be summed up in two passages of Scripture: “Be ye kind one to another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32) and “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). My children and I repeated the first verse every night before bed for years. It wasn’t a magic formula to stop childish squabbles, but it was a good daily reminder to them, and to me, to treat each other with respect and love.

I am so thankful for all the “just women” in my life. They have had such an impact and have led me to desire to be more Christ-like. May God bless each of you as you desire to be “just.”



*Kim Stilwell moved to Iowa when she married her high school sweetheart and best friend in 1987. Jeff and Kim have five children and a daughter-in-law. The days were indeed long, yet the years far too short, and their children are now all older teens and young adults.*

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