

A WOMAN THAT FEARS THE LORD

A Study of Godly Womanhood

from Proverbs 31:10-31

Leader's Guide

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" . . . you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name."

Psalm 61:5

A WOMAN THAT FEARETH THE LORD

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For Further Study

LEADER'S PREPARATION

At least two weeks before the study begins, be sure all participants have a copy of *A Woman That Feels The Lord* by Emalyn Spencer. Ask them to read the first chapter and to answer the study questions at the end of the chapter. These questions may be answered directly from the text and from the Scriptures given. Some are reflection questions that allow the women to share their own thoughts and ideas.

If you have more than twelve women, it is suggested that you divide into groups of six to eight. Have a leader for each group. If you use the small groups, the following format is suggested. However, it is important to adjust methods and procedures to your group and to your teaching style.

SUGGESTED CLASS FORMAT WITH SMALL GROUPS:

PRELUDE: Have everyone together for this introduction to the lesson.

PROBING PROVERBS 31: Divide into groups to go over the study questions at the end of the chapter and the assigned questions on the handout.

PURSUING PROVERBS 31: Bring the groups together for this teaching segment.

PRACTICING PROVERBS 31: Discuss the applications questions together and then divide into small groups for prayer.

POSTLUDE: Bring the small groups together for a brief wrap-up.

1. Small group leaders do not need to do prior preparation other than to read the text and answer the study questions. It is suggested, however, that you give them a copy of the answer guide for the study questions (at the end of each chapter in this Leader's Guide). Encourage the small group leaders to answer the questions on their own and then to compare their answers with the answer guide.
2. You will need to determine whether you will have the same small groups throughout the study or whether you will change groups for each lesson.
3. The first week of the study, you may want to assign small groups by writing a Proverbs 31 characteristic on each name tag: Trustworthiness, Love, Humility, Wisdom, Peace, Diligence, Benevolence, etc. The number of characteristics you use will depend on how many small groups you want. All of the 'women with "Trustworthiness" on their name tags will form one group, etc. If your group is small, you may want to use this idea to assign prayer partners.
4. Meet with small group leaders before the study begins and share the goals for this study. Ask for ideas for accomplishing these goals in your group. Add other goals the leaders would like to see happen. Explain your format, time schedule and exactly what you want the small group leaders to do. You may want to share the ideas given below and decide which ones you will use. It is important for the small group leaders to feel a sense of ownership for the results of this study. Choose together a Scripture that you want to pray for the women who will participate in this study, such as Colossians 2:2-3. Spend time praying for the women who will attend the study. Use James 3 to pray for yourself and the small group leaders that your wisdom and understanding will be shown by deeds done in humility.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

You may want to use these activities to help the women get to know one another better. These could be done with the entire group or in the small groups.

1. Have the group make a list of adjectives describing the Proverbs 31 woman. Then have each woman introduce the woman on her left using one of these adjectives: This is "diligent" Monica.
2. Have each woman draw the name of another woman and then make an acrostic with her name using Proverbs 31 character traits and qualities.

For example: *Kate* Kind

Available

Trustworthy

Energetic

SUGGESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUP LEADERS

NOTE: These suggestions are based on the assumption that you will have the same small group throughout the study. If the groups change, you may adapt these ideas.

1. Emphasize the importance of preparing by reading the chapter and answering the study questions. These questions will be the basis for discussion during small group time. Some guidelines for Probing Proverbs 31 with your small group:
 - 1.1 Encourage women to give answers which have scriptural support.
 - 1.2 Discourage the use of terms such as "I think" or "someone told me." Remind the women that you are seeking to discover what God says in His Word.
 - 1.3 Plan your time carefully so that you can cover all questions in the allotted time. Avoid getting bogged down with one question.
 - 1.4 Encourage discussion by directing questions so that each woman participates. Avoid giving a lecture or allowing one person to dominate. Women are more inclined to prepare if they learn there will be opportunity for discussion and accountability.
 - 1.5 Be sensitive in dealing with erroneous ideas or answers. You may simply ask questions like: Where do you see that concept in Scripture? Did you see a different answer in the study book?
 - 1.6 Refer to the text as you facilitate the discussion.
2. These are some guidelines for Practicing Proverbs 31 with your small group:
 - 2.1 Emphasize the importance of confidentiality.
 - 2.2 Ask women to state their request without taking time to elaborate. Explain that the goal is to pray rather than spend time talking about prayer requests.
 - 2.3 Write the prayer request and the date in the journal. Ask the group to relate a Scripture which they can pray for the woman's request. For example, if a woman requests prayer for her marriage, the group may agree to pray from 1 Peter 3. Write the Scripture in the journal. Ask for a volunteer to pray for this request using the Scripture. If the group cannot identify Scripture on which to base prayer, agree to ask God during this week where His Word speaks to this specific request.

- 2.4 Each week ask if there are any reports about any of the requests. Again be careful that you pray rather than talk. Write the answers and dates in the prayer journal.
- 2.5 Help the women to avoid using this as a time to reveal the faults of others or to complain about circumstances. Regardless of the situation, encourage the women to focus on two questions: How can I learn more of God? How can I glorify Him? You may help a woman maintain this focus by asking her to share what she has learned about God during the past week.

GOALS FOR THIS STUDY

1. To make a careful analysis of the Proverbs 31 model for biblical womanhood.
2. To place our opinions about womanhood under the scrutiny and light of Scripture.
3. To make application for today's Christian woman.
4. To encourage each woman to submit her life to the pattern of Christ and the Proverbs 31 woman.
5. To encourage and build up one another as we seek to incorporate these principles into daily life.

SHE SHALL BE PRAISED

PROVERBS 31:30

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

LEADER'S PREPARATION:

1. Pray that each woman will grow in her understanding of what it means to fear the Lord.
2. Read Chapter 1 and do the study questions. Give the copy of the answer sheet to small group leaders.
3. Make copies of the handout for Lesson 1. Give answer guide for Lesson 2 to small group leaders.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

1. To know that fearing God is the key to following the Proverbs 31 model for womanhood.
2. To understand that to fear God means to submit to His Lordship.
3. To distinguish between fear of God and being afraid of Him, and to realize that Jesus is our Mediator who makes it possible for us to approach God.
4. To realize that we can learn to fear God and to examine ways that we can grow in our fear of Him.

SEGMENT 1, **Prelude:** 10 minutes

- 1.1 What is your response when you first read Proverbs 31, when you have heard a sermon regarding the wife of noble character, or when you receive an encouragement comparing you to this Scripture?** You may want to share your own responses when confronted with this example of Christian femininity. Most women will probably feel that this model is unapproachable.
- 1.2 God has given us this model, so He must intend for us to follow it. But what exactly does it mean and how are we supposed to live it out? That is what this study is all about**

Refer to the handout and read the goals for the study.

- 1.3 Refer to #2 on the handout and ask the group to quickly rate themselves. Assure them they will not have to reveal their answers. This is a personal analysis for their own use. After two or three minutes, continue.
- 1.4 Explain that each of our personal analyses is different. **The point of this exercise is to help us evaluate ourselves on specific areas of knowledge and character. It is easy to overlook areas where we have minimal understanding or success in obedience. This analysis gives us a way to examine ourselves by the Proverbs 31 model.**
- 1.5 Prayer: that God will use this study to empower women to live out the Proverbs 31 model.

Ask the women to keep the analysis with their study materials so they can refer to it as you progress through the study.

Bridge To Next Segment;

As we probe Proverbs 31 today, we are going to learn that the Proverbs 31 woman is first and foremost a woman that fears the Lord. The question we want to consider is: what does it mean to fear God?

SEGMENT 2, **Probing Proverbs 31:** 25-30 minutes

- 2.1 If you are using the small group format, divide into small groups. Ask the groups to discuss questions 4-7 on the handout using their study questions and the text as resources. If the entire group is together, follow

the same procedure. After the allotted time, have small groups reassemble.

Bridge To Next Segment:

We are considering what it means to fear God. But we must take a step back and ask who this God is that we are to fear.

SEGMENT 3, Pursuing Proverbs 31: 20 minutes

3.1 Refer the women to #3 on the handout. Ask the Catechism question, and let them respond with the answer.

It is impossible to define God. He cannot be contained in the confines of our finite definitions. The Westminster divines discovered this and chose to describe Him by listing His attributes. As the text says, the greatest words of the hymn "How Great Thou Art" are simply "Thou Art!" The God that we are to fear is the God who has revealed Himself to us in Scripture and through His Son, Jesus Christ.

3.2 Refer to question #4 on the handout. Ask each group to read their definition of what it means to fear God.

The definitions may include the following components: God's greatness, goodness, sovereignty, and self existence; man's response of humility, reverence, obedience, and holy dread; the recognition that we Hve "coram deo" (in His presence, or before His face, because He is omnipresent and omniscient). Emphasize that submission to His Lordship is the core of fearing Him. You may want to refer to Charles Bridges' definition in the text.

3.3 Refer to question #5: **How would you distinguish between having a fear of God and being afraid of Him?** (See James 2:19.)

Refer to the paragraph in the text that begins, "This fear of God we speak of is not synonymous with terror..." (Read the paragraph.)

Then refer to the next paragraph and ask why Job longed for an "arbiter." Have the women look up Job 9:33-34. Read this passage aloud. Other translations will give "words such as umpire. Some of the root meanings of the Hebrew word are: to adjudicate, to make a decision, to plead with. Other meanings are mediator and advocate. Have the women look up the following Scriptures and ask someone to read each aloud. Use this segment to give a clear presentation of the gospel, explaining that we should tremble with terror at the thought of approaching God in our own righteousness. It is only when we recognize our sinfulness, trust in the finished work of Christ alone for salvation, and are covered with His righteousness, that we can approach God.

1 Timothy 2:5: We have what Job longed for. Jesus is our Arbiter. He is the one who pleads our cause, who adjudicates our case.

Hebrews 10:19-22: If Jesus is our Arbiter, we can actually approach God with confidence and boldness. Fear of God does not mean that we are afraid of Him.

1 John 2:1: Just as Christ is our Arbiter for our justification, He continues to plead our case in the process of our sanctification.

3-4 Move to question #6: **Can fear of God be learned? If so, where is it learned?** (See Deuteronomy 31:12-13.)

The fear of God is learned as we hear and obey God's Word. There is something else in this passage that is interesting. The people were to assemble together to learn this fear of God. We also see this in Hebrews 10:25. There is something about gathering together as a covenant community that helps us to learn to fear God. We need each other. If I asked each of you to tell me the numbers you circled on the personal analysis we did at the beginning of this lesson, I am sure we would have a range of numbers. Because we are at different places in our understanding of biblical truth, and in our application of this

truth, we can help each other. And on this issue of biblical womanhood, we especially need to learn from each other. God gives us the design for teaching one another in Titus 2:5-5-

3.5 Move to question #7: What does fear of the Lord produce? What is a blessing?

Expand by explaining that the core of fearing God is submission to His Lordship—obedience. Then read Deuteronomy 5:29 and ask the women if this is a promise of health, wealth, and prosperity. Does obedience guarantee health and affluence? In light of the health and wealth gospel that is so prevalent today, it is essential that women have a clear understanding of the biblical concept of blessing. Point out that the last word of the verse is *forever*. This shows us that God's blessing is not just temporal; it is ultimately eternal. In the Old Testament, blessing and cursing have reference to life and death. The blessing of God is eternal life. Sometimes, temporal difficulties drive us to a greater realization of eternal realities (Romans 8:18, 28-29; James 1:2-4).

Bridge to Next Segment:

We have been confronted with what Scripture tells us about fearing the Lord. Now we must ask two penetrating questions:

Are we women who fear the Lord?

Do we want to learn to fear Him more?

Until these issues are settled, we will never be able to follow the Proverbs 31 model. This model will be oppressive and defeating apart from a relationship with Jesus Christ, a longing to follow after Him, and the empowering of the Holy Spirit to learn a greater fear of the Lord.

SEGMENT 4, Practicing **Proverbs 31**: 20 minutes

4.1 Refer the women to #8 on the handout. Ask them to write their responses. Then discuss questions #9 and #10 on the handout.

4.2 Question 9: **What are some ways women can exhibit their fear of the Lord?**

4.3 Question 10: **What are some ways women can grow in their fear of the Lord?**

4.4 Divide into small groups for prayer. After the allotted time, reassemble the group.

SEGMENT 5, Postlude: 10 minutes

5.1 Look at your personal analysis. Has your knowledge of the fear of God matured today? Perhaps you can change your assessment of your knowledge of-what it means to fear God. Learning to fear God is a process which is part of sanctification, which we will study more next week. The more we know Him, the more we will fear Him.

5.2 Summarize today's study by saying something such as:

We have only two choices. Either we will be God-fearing women or we will be women who fear man. To fear God forces us to look for an advocate and to be dependent on Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. The fear of the Lord causes us to tremble at His awe-someness and before His Word and to be consumed by a holy dread. The result of fearing God is obedience. We learn to obey God by the study of His Word. Quick obedience—heart obedience—an undivided heart that fears the Lord—is the heart of the Proverbs 31 woman. How is your heart?

5.3 Read Psalm 111:10-112:1. Ask the women to express their praise to the Lord.

5.4 Read Psalm 112:9 and close in prayer.

ANSWER GUIDE FOR LESSON 1

PRAYER: Ask God to take away your preconceived ideas and to teach you from His Word about "the fear of the Lord."

1. Read Proverbs 31:10-31- Memorize Proverbs 31:30
2. Write the first thoughts or feelings you have when you consider the phrase "fear of the Lord."
3. In your opinion, what reason is there for beginning a study of these Proverbs with verse 30?
4. Is the fear of God a commandment (Deuteronomy 6:13)?

The Israelites and children of God are commanded to fear Him.

5. Read Deuteronomy 10:12-22. Make a list: Who God is; what God does; and some of His names. Write any other thoughts and reflections you have about this passage.

God is sovereign over heavens and earth and all creation (v. 14).

God loves His people; chose His people; He is defender of the fatherless and widows; loves the alien and provides for the alien; He performed great and awesome wonders (vs. 15, 18, 19, 21). God's names—God of gods, Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, the Lord your God.

6. List the three reasons the text gives that we should fear To do so
pleases Him
Promises of blessings
Taught by Jesus

7. What does the fear of the Lord produce in our lives?
Obedience

Is the promise in Deuteronomy 5:29 that it might be "well with them" a promise of health, wealth, and prosperity?

No—it is a promise of eternal wellness. What is a blessing?

Grace, benediction, favor

8. If we do not fear God, whom do we fear (Proverbs 29:25)?
Man

Read Psalm 112 and list the similarities with Proverbs 31.

<u>Psalm 112</u>	<u>Proverbs 31</u>
v. 1	v. 30
2	31
6, 7	25
9	20
9	29

10. Write your personal definition of "the fear of the Lord."
11. What have you learned in this lesson that will produce a change in your life?

HANDOUT-LESSON 1

PROVERBS 31:30

Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain: but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

1. LESSON OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 To make a careful analysis of the Proverbs 31 model for biblical womanhood.
 - 1.2 To place our opinions about womanhood under the scrutiny and light of Scripture.
 - 1.3 To make application for today's Christian woman.
 - 1.4 To encourage each woman to submit her life to the pattern of Christ and the Proverbs 31 woman.
 - 1.5 To encourage and build up one another as we seek to incorporate these principles into daily life.
2. Use the following personal analysis to assess your present response to the Proverbs 31 model. Keep this for future reference during this study.

Scriptural knowledge of following: 0= minimal 10 = mature

Fear of God	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Holiness	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Wisdom	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sow-Reap Law	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Personal maturity in godly character: 0 = immature 10=mature

Trustworthiness	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Control of tongue	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Humility	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Wisdom	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Peace of mind	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Diligence	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Benevolence	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Health and appearance	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Excellence	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. Q. What is God?

- A. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth (Question 4, *Westminster Shorter Catechism*).
4. Compare your individual definitions of "the fear of God" and write a group definition (Study Question 10).
5. How would you distinguish between having a "fear of God" and being afraid of God?
6. Can fear of God be learned? If so, where is it learned? (See Deuteronomy 31:12-13.)
7. According to Psalm 111:10, what is the characteristic of the person who fears the Lord (Study Question 7)?
8. Do I fear the Lord?
Do I want to learn to fear Him more?
9. What are some ways women can exhibit their fear of the Lord?

10. What are some *ways* women can grow in their fear of the Lord?

GOOD AND NOT EVIL

PROVERBS 31:12

She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.

LEADER'S PREPARATION:

1. Pray that each woman will grow in her grasp of the Holiness of God.
2. Review Lesson 1 and the fear of the Lord.
3. Read Chapter 2 and do the study questions.
4. Make copies of the handout for this lesson. Give copies of answer guide for Lesson 3 to small group leaders.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

1. To know that holiness, which is commanded by God, is perfected by obedience growing out of the fear of the Lord.
2. To understand God's command for holiness, understand the ways in which God produces holiness, and pinpoint the deterrents to holiness.
3. To distinguish between the Doctrine of Sanctification and perfectionism or pride.
4. To realize the pursuit of holiness is an on-going battle between the flesh and the Spirit.

SEGMENT 1, Prelude: 30 minutes

- 1.1 Ask the group for a summary of the study last week and an application of fearing the Lord (use your review and definition for response and clarification). Have the group say their memory verse from Lesson 1: Proverbs 31:30.

You may want to be prepared or have someone be prepared to give a brief and current anecdote about learning to fear the Lord; Example: Living in His presence in the Wal-Mart line!

- 1.2 **This week we will focus not only on God's teaching us to fear Him but on His command for our holiness. As our text states, the Proverbs 31 woman can only be described by the phrase "she brings him good and not evil" because her life is based on "consistent holy living."**

Refer to the handout and read the goals for this week's study of Proverbs 31-

- 1.3 **What are some ways we hear the term *holy* or *holiness* used in our everyday lives? (Examples — holier than thou; slang terms such as "holy cow;" holiness churches).**

- 1.4 Refer to #2 on the handout and ask the women to quickly mark *true or false* regarding praying for someone or themselves to be holy.

- 1.5 **God has set forth in Proverbs 31 an example of holiness. He has commanded us to "be holy" as He is holy. The aim of our study this week is to analyze, meditate, and imitate God's holy character in response to His command.**

- 1.6 Refer to #3 on the handout and ask the women to list at least three little "sin spiders" as the text calls the webs of sin. Examples given by the text are conversation, thought life.

Each of us has different little sin spiders. We want to understand the deterrents to our own personal pursuit of holiness. The enemy of holiness will have us apply this lesson to our family, friends, and

others. Pray with me that God will make personal application of this lesson.

Prayer: that God will give each woman a desire for holiness.

1.7 One of the ways we can ask God to *crush* our little sin spiders is by using a list made by others. Most of us are reluctant to list the little sins with which we personally struggle. Let's make a class list. Have the group give you a list for the board.

Bridge to Next Segment:

As we probed Proverbs last week we learned that the Proverbs 31 woman knew God and lived in His presence. She was a "woman who feareth the Lord." Today we are going to learn that the Proverbs 31 woman brought her husband good not evil—and we will learn the source of the good.

SEGMENT 2, Probing Proverbs 31: 25-30 minutes:

2.1 If you are using the small group format, divide into small groups. Ask the groups to discuss questions 5,6,8,9 on the handout using their study questions and the text as resources. If the entire group is together, follow the same procedure. After the allotted time, have small groups reassemble.

Bridge to Next Segment: **We are considering what it means to pursue holiness. In order to understand God's command to "be holy" as He is holy, we must contemplate God's holiness.**

SEGMENT 3, Pursuing Proverbs 31: 20 minutes

3.1 Refer the women to #4 on the handout. Ask the women to read Leviticus 11:44-45 in unison. **"I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves about on the ground. I am the Lord who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy."**

Because of the depravity of man and the profanity of the world, God's holiness is difficult for us to comprehend.

3-2 Refer to # 5 on the handout. Ask each group to read their definition of holiness.

The definitions may include the following components: perfect; pure; white as snow; splendid; full of glory; separate; set apart. They may, also, include some of the opposites such as profane; defiled; common.

3.3 Refer to #6 on the handout: **How does a person fulfill God's command to be holy?**

Refer to the text which sets forth four conditions for holiness:

Psalm 42:1-2, hungering and thirsting after God, His righteousness and His Word 2 Corinthians 7:9-11, a repentant spirit Romans 12:9b, an abhorrence of evil Romans 12:9b, conscious, deliberate, purposeful clinging to that which is good.

Refer to the paragraph of the text which states that it takes "time to be holy." Not only the commitment of our time but the way God works in our life. This process is referred to as the Doctrine of Sanctification.

3.4 Refer to #7 on the handout. Ask the Catechism question and have the group respond with the answer. Refer the group to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* on the Doctrine of Sanctification for more study.

3.5 Refer to #8 on the handout. **How is holiness produced in the life of a believer? By the fear of the Lord (2 Corinthians 7:1). The Holy Spirit in producing holiness uses God's Word, the sacraments, prayer; discipline; fellowship.** Refer to text and ask, **What is the essential that God uses to bring His people to holiness? There is not instant holiness and there are no short cuts. Dying to oneself and living to Christ means, "Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord. Abide in Him always and feed on His Word. Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak...."** Those responses are credible when we fear the Lord.

3.6 Move to #9 on the handout. Refer to the text and the "hazards to holiness." **Two of these hazards are pride and perfectionism. Spiritual pride can only be discerned by the direction of the Holy Spirit since those growing in holiness are regularly accused of this sin. God reveals such pride, and our response is to be confession and repentance.**

The hazard of perfectionism is based on false doctrine. We are reminded by the Catechism that we will only be made perfect at death. Ask the Catechism question in #9 and have the group respond.

Bridge to Next Segment:

We have been called to serve God, Who is holy, by being holy. Scripture uses no other descriptive term with the same emphasis as HOLY; HOLY; HOLY. We do well to meditate upon and contemplate God's holiness. We must ask ourselves some questions:

What consistent habits in my life or attitudes of my heart are profane or unholy?

Are we willing to pray for God to perfect holiness in our lives?

Paul says in Romans 12, "I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." Following God's model of the Proverbs 31 woman means allowing God's perfecting of holiness in our lives— regardless of the sacrifice.

SEGMENT 4, Practicing **Proverbs 31**:20 minutes

4.1 Refer to # 10 on the handout and ask the women to write their responses.

4.2 Refer to #11. **What are some characteristics of women which you view as holy without being "holier than thou?"**

4.3 Divide into small groups for prayer. After the allotted time, reassemble the group.

SEGMENT 5, Postlude: 10 minutes

5.1 Believers in Christ have been commanded to "be holy." The Proverbs 31 woman understood this pursuit as we see by the fruit of her life. She brings her husband good and not evil all the days of her life. Today we have seen that being holy thrusts us into warfare with our sin nature, with the Enemy, and with the world. The fear of the Lord stimulates our diligence and desire to please God -with holiness.

Consider your prayer life; are you more willing to pray for holiness today? Look at the little sin spiders. These give you much material for prayer and asking God to search your heart. Sanctification is a life of dying to oneself and living to Christ.

5.2 Summarize today's study by saying something such as:

God has commanded us to be holy as He is holy. This command is about being, not doing. The pursuit of holiness goes against our sin nature and our experience. The Immortal, Invisible, only wise God is Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty. Asking Him to perfect us is perilous prayer. Are you willing?

5.3 Read Romans 11:33-36. Ask the group to express their praises for God's holiness.

5.4 Ask the group to sing the Doxology and close in prayer.

NOTE: In completing the study questions for Lesson 3 the group is asked to do a word search. Teach the group during this class period about using concordances and other references in searching out words in Scripture.

ANSWER GUIDE FOR LESSON 2

PRAYER: Ask God to teach you from His Word about His holiness and His requirement for your holiness.

1. Read Proverbs 31: 10-31. Memorize Proverbs 31:12 so that you can recite this verse with the group.
2. What qualities do you think must be present for the Proverbs 31 woman to bring good to her husband?
3. The fear of the Lord which we studied in Lesson One produces *obedience* (Exodus 20:20). God uses this to perfect *holiness* (2 Corinthians 7:1).
4. Where do we learn how to live holy lives (Psalm 37:23, 31)?
A heart changed by God's grace to follow His ways of righteousness.
5. According to the text, what four conditions must be present in our lives in order for us to have the quality of holiness?
 - a. hunger and thirst after God
 - b. repentant spirit
 - c. abhorrence of evil
 - d. clinging to good
6. What are God's commands regarding holiness? Be holy as I am holy. Live a holy life. Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God
7. What are some hindrances to holiness
sexual immorality, impurity, greed, obscenity, foolish talk, coarse joking, deceitful heart
8. What produces holiness (Matthew 5:6; 6:33; 2 Corinthians 7:9-11; Proverbs 8:13; Romans 12:9)?
Hungering and thirsting after God, His righteousness, through His Word, prayer, fellowship
Quick repentance Fleeing evil
9. Write a definition of holiness and support your definition with at least one scriptural reference.
The Lord God Almighty is holiness and all that He has set apart or made separate from profanity or common use is holy.
10. What are some life-style habits you have seen in your culture, even this week, which are the opposite of holy?
Examples may be television, conversation, recreation.
11. Examine your life. Are there any consistent practices that could be called unholy, that God would have you forsake in order to live a life more pleasing to Him? Use Psalm 139:23-34 as your prayer. Then ask God to "work in you to will and to do *His* good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).
12. Worship the Lord in the beauty of His holiness. Use a psalm, a song, or a poem. Make it your prayer and praise God for the splendor of His holiness.

HANDOUT-LESSON 2

PROVERBS 31:12

She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.

1. LESSON OBJECTIVES

1.1 To know that holiness which is commanded by God is perfected by obedience growing out of the fear of the Lord.

1.2 To understand God's command for holiness; understand the ways in which God produces holiness; and pinpoint the deterrents to holiness.

1.3 To distinguish between the Doctrine of Sanctification and perfectionism or pride.

1.4 To realize the pursuit of holiness as an on-going battle between the flesh and the Spirit.

2. True or False — I have prayed for God to produce holiness in me.

True or False — I have prayed for God to produce holiness in another person.

3. LITTLE SIN SPIDERS:

5. Compare your individual definitions of holiness and write a group definition (Study Question 9).

6. How does a person fulfill God's command to be holy (Study Question 6)?

7. Q. What is Sanctification?

A. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness (Question 35, *Westminster Shorter Catechism*).

8. How is holiness produced in a believer (2 Corinthians. 7:1) (Study Question 8)?

9. What are some of the hazards to holiness (Jeremiah 17:9) (Study Question 7)?

Q. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?

A. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection (Question 37, *Westminster Shorter Catechism*).

10. What consistent habits in my life or attitudes of my heart are profane or unholy? Am I willing to pray for God to perfect holiness in our lives?

11. What are some characteristics of women which you view as holy without being holier than thou? If these women or this woman has been a Titus 2 older woman in your life, show her your thanks during this next week.

OPTIONAL—PRACTICING PROVERBS 31:

WORSHIP GOD IN THE BEAUTY OF HIS HOLINESS: Either individually or with your small group plan and make a banner; write a "new song;" ask for opportunity to participate in worship and plan a segment for emphasizing God's holiness.

THE HEART OF HER HUSBAND

PROVERBS 31:11

The heart of her husband trust in her and he will have no lack of gain.

LEADER'S PREPARATION:

1. Pray that each woman will grow in honesty, discretion, contentment, and dependability. Pray, also, that each "woman" will guard her reputation and good name.
2. Review Lessons 1 and 2. The foundation of the character of the Proverbs 31 woman is her fear of the Lord and God's transforming her to holiness.
3. Read Chapter 3 and do the study questions.
4. Make copies of the handout of this lesson. Give copies of the answer guide for Lesson 4 to small group leaders.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

1. To review that fearing God and obeying His Word produces holiness in the Proverbs 31 woman.
2. To know that depending on God's absolute trustworthiness gives us confidence to obey.
3. To understand the characteristics of a prudent wife or woman.
4. To realize the significance of a good name or reputation.

SEGMENT 1, **Prelude:** 10 minutes

- 1.1 Review with the group by asking what is "the fear of the Lord?" **Can anyone give a scriptural reference to support our definition of the fear of the Lord** (have one ready yourself)? Remind the group of the holiness of God — that God's holiness requires our sanctification. **These are the foundational concepts of this study — each of us must first fear the Lord by total dependency on Jesus, our Arbiter; Advocate. God sovereignly works in our life by making us holy as He is holy and developing the other qualities which we are studying in this text.**

Have the women say in unison the memory verses: Proverbs 31:30 and 31:12.

1.2 What are some of the qualities that contribute to your trusting someone?

You may want to briefly describe a trustworthy person in your own life.

- 1.3 **The quality of trustworthiness described by Proverbs 31:11 is perhaps the most wonderful and inclusive of her characteristics. How many of us would love to be remembered by this statement: "Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value," or if the woman is not married: "Her family and friends have full confidence in her and lack nothing of value?"**

Refer to the handout and read the goals for this lesson.

- 1.4 Refer to the first paragraph of Lesson 3 in the text and read Martin Luther's statement.
- 1.5 Refer to #2 on the handout and ask the women to quickly rate themselves on the scale of 1 to 10. Assure them that they will not have to reveal their answers. After one minute, continue.
- 1.6 Explain that we each struggle with different areas of trustworthiness. This lesson is directed at sensitizing us as to how to grow in trustworthiness. No woman is a perfect 10!

Prayer: Pray that God will teach the women to trust Him and that each woman "will grow in trustworthiness.

Bridge to Next Segment:

As we probe Proverbs we are going to learn that God is trustworthy and that Proverbs 31 refers specifically to the marital relationship; however, it has implications for all

SEGMENT 2, Probing Proverbs 31:23-30 minutes 2.1

If you are using the small group format, divide into small groups. Ask groups to discuss questions 3-7 on the handouts using their study questions and the text. If the entire group is together, follow the same procedure. After the allotted time, have the group reassemble.

Bridge to Next Segment:

Refer to the text "God is Trustworthy." **In discussion of the individual Christian quality of trustworthiness, we must also consider the deeper truth of the utter trustworthiness of God.**

SEGMENT 3, Pursuing Proverbs 31: 20 minutes 3-1

Refer to question #3 on the handout. Refer to the text under "God is Trustworthy."

We trust God for our salvation through Jesus Christ, for our eternal security. Consider the petitions of the Lord's Prayer—trusting Him for His will to be done; our daily bread; forgiveness; deliverance from temptation.

3-2 Move to question #4 on the handout. **When is it more difficult to trust God?**

Trusting God requires grace from Him and exercising the muscle of our faith—trusting in His sovereignty. As the text says, "Lord, I don't know what you are doing, or why, but You do, and no matter what happens, I will trust in You. For I know that nothing, absolutely nothing can come into my life that doesn't first filter through Your will. Forgive me for doubting. I know that You love me more than I love myself, and I shall rest in the confidence that You are doing all things well."

3.3 Refer to question #5. **According to Proverbs 19:14, who can be trusted for a prudent wife?**

From your study what did you learn about the characteristics of a prudent woman?

(Refer to the text—A prudent woman is wise, judicious, honest, etc.)

3.4 Refer to question # 6. Ask group #1 to read their definition of honesty; 2 of discretion; etc. until you have heard the definitions of the four concepts. Ask the entire group to contribute to each definition after it has been read.

The sum of these qualities of honesty, discretion, contentment, and dependability is trustworthiness. Often we can be intimidated by a person's trust of us—trust given generates responsibility. However, we can bring under the light of God's Word: the honesty of our hearts; our ability to keep a confidence; desiring what we already have; and the discipline of dependability. As we grow by God's grace in these areas, we are "choosing a good name."

3.5 Refer to question #7. **How is a good name attained? A good reputation and name is earned by consistent trustworthy behavior.**

Read Proverbs 3:3-6- **To earn a good name from God and man means to commit ourselves to love and faithfulness. It is not coincidental I am sure that the next verses remind us to not trust ourselves for this love and faithfulness but to "acknowledge the Lord and He will make our paths straight."**

Read Proverbs 10:7. **The reward for the straight and narrow life bound to love and faithfulness — the memory of the righteous will be a blessing. The curse for wickedness—a name that rots.**

Bridge to Next Segment: **God's trustworthiness and sovereignty challenges our own response of trustworthiness and causes us to assess:**

Do we really trust God—even in the trials?

Consider the last 24 hours. Am I a person who can be counted on? What adjective describes my name—honest; dependable; discreet; content; etc.?

Is it possible for our husbands, families, friends, sisters in Christ, co-workers to elaborate on the proverb—"Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value?"

SEGMENT 4, Practicing Proverbs 31:20 minutes

4.1 Refer the women to #8 and ask them to quickly write some things for which a wife or woman can be trusted. After 3-4 minutes, have the group make a list of things for which women can be trusted. Refer to the text "A Trusting Husband" for some possible answers.

4.2 Refer to #9: **What are some of the hindrances women have to their personal trustworthiness?**

4.2 Refer to #10: **What are some ways in which women can encourage one another in trustworthiness?**

4.3 Divide into small groups for prayer. After the allotted time, reassemble the group.

SEGMENT 5, **Postlude:** 10 minutes

5.1 Look at your rating on your handout Do some of these qualities seem more approachable by asking God to give you growth in these areas? What have you learned are some of the areas where you have trusted yourself or others rather than God? God requires us to trust Him—He gives us trials not for the purpose of His learning how trustworthy we are (He already knows) but to teach us of His loving, never-changing trustworthiness.

5.2 Summarize today's study by saying something such as:

When it comes to trust, we are either trusting ourselves, others, a combination of self and others or we are trusting God. In Jeremiah 17, the Lord gives intense word pictures. Which describes your trust and trustworthiness?

Read Jeremiah 17:5-8. **Is your reputation that of a tumble weed in the desert or a fruitful tree?** Read Jeremiah 17:9. **The heart is deceitful so we must ask God for the answer.**

5.3 Read Psalm 139:23-24. Ask the women to pray this silently.

5.4 Read the paragraph in the text that begins "Lord, I don't know what You are doing (section 3-2). Use this as your closing prayer.

ANSWER GUIDE FOR LESSON 3

PRAYER: Ask God to teach you about resting in God's trustworthiness. Ask Him to convict you of gaps in your personal trustworthiness and prudence.

1. Read Proverbs 31:10-31. Memorize Proverbs 31:11.
2. What are some of the qualities that cause a person to have "full confidence" or trust in another?
3. Using a dictionary, look up *prudent* and write a definition of "a prudent wife or person."
A prudent wife is careful and discerning. She has the motivation of being discreet or wise.
4. Using only the Proverbs, do a word search on the following words to which the text refers (one way to do this is to write the reference and either the Proverb or the concept taught; make note of any conclusion you reach as you search):
Trust; trustworthiness; trustworthy: Proverbs 3:5, 11:13, 13:17, 21:22, 22:19, 25:13
Prudent: Proverbs 12:16, 12:23, 13:16, 14:8, 14:15, 14:18, 19:14, 22:3, 27:12
Honest; honesty: Proverbs 12:17, 16:11, 16:13, 24:26
Discreet or discretion: Proverbs 1:1-4, 2:11, 5:2, 8:12, 11:22
Content; contentment: Proverbs 13:25, 11:23
5. How does the Proverbs 31 woman attain these qualities (Proverbs 21:30-31; Proverbs 22:17-21; any other references you locate)?
Seeking wisdom from the Lord, applying wisdom, trusting the Lord, searching His Word.
6. How does the Proverbs 31 woman attain a good name (Proverbs 22:1)? Find at least one other scriptural reference to a good name or reputation. What do you learn from it?
A good name is attained by reputation in having the qualities of trustworthiness, honesty, etc.
Other Scriptures: Proverbs 3:3—4
7. GOD is TRUSTWORTHINESS. Read Luke 12:22-34 and the Lord's Prayer. For what can we trust God?
Provision of physical necessities
His kingdom to rule
Forgiveness
Protection from temptation
Deliverance
8. Read Job 13:15. Read the scriptural account of at least one other person who trusted God in a trial.
Daniel, Esther
9. Write your personal definition of a prudent wife or woman.
10. What have you learned from this lesson that will produce a change in your life?
11. Write God a letter, "How do I trust Thee."

HANDOUT-LESSON 3

PROVERBS 31:11

The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.

1. LESSON OBJECTIVES:

- 1.1. To review that fearing God and obeying His Word produces holiness in the Proverbs 31 woman.
- 1.2. To know that depending on God's absolute trustworthiness gives us confidence to obey.
- 1.3. To understand the characteristics of a prudent wife or woman.
- 1.4. To realize the significance of a good name or reputation.

- | | |
|---------------|------------------------|
| 2. Honesty | 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| Discretion | 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| Contentment | 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| Dependability | 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |

3. When and for what do we typically trust God (Matthew 6:9-13)?
4. When does trusting God become more difficult (Job 13:15) (Study Question 8)?
5. Who can be trusted for a prudent •wife (Proverbs 19:14)?
6. Write, as a group, definitions of (Study Question 4): Honesty
Discretion
Contentment
Dependability
7. Can we buy a good reputation (Proverbs 22:1) (Study Question 6)?
8. What are ways in which a wife or woman can be trusted?
9. What are some hindrances to trustworthiness in women?
10. What are some ways in which women can encourage one another in trustworthiness?

OPTIONAL—PRACTICING PROVERBS:

Write a letter to your husband or another person telling them how you trust them and giving thanks for trustworthiness.

THE LAW OF KINDNESS

PROVERBS 31:26

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

LEADER'S PREPARATION:

1. Pray that each woman will be encouraged toward the right use of her tongue.
2. Review Lesson 3 and the concept of trustworthiness.
- 3- Read Chapter 4 and do the study questions.
4. Make copies of the handout for Lesson 4. Copy the answer guide for Lesson 5 for small group leaders.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

1. To review the significance of trustworthiness to a woman's reputation or good name.
2. To understand the power of the tongue for good and evil.
3. To comprehend and apply the Royal Law to the use of the tongue.
4. To submit the tongue to the power of the Holy Spirit.

SEGMENT 1, **Prelude:** 10 minutes

REVIEW: Review today by giving the topics from the first three lessons.

A woman that fears the Lord: ask the group for one sentence or a word association. The holiness of God and His requirement for the holiness of His children: ask for group response.

Trustworthiness—God's trustworthiness and the trustworthiness of a godly woman: ask for group response.

Ask for a volunteer to say memory verses Proverbs 31:11, 12, 30. If none, ask group to say memory verses in unison.

1.1 Quickly look at #1 on your handout and write a couple of words which cue you to those words said to you in elementary school.

You may want to share one or two responses of your own or the group. Point out to the women the power of those words by considering a) how long it has been, b) if that person who said them is still a part of your life, c) "what the lasting influence of those words has been.

1.2 The Proverbs 31 model has been described as speaking with wisdom and faithful instruction. Mrs. Spencer draws the conclusion that her tongue is "ruled by kindness."

Refer to the handout and read the objectives for this lesson.

1.3 Refer to #3 'on the handout and ask the women to quickly rate themselves. Assure them that they will not have to reveal their answers. This is a personal rating for their own use. After one or two minutes, continue.

1.4 Explain that each of us have different areas of obedience and disobedience with our tongues. This rating is a good scale for seeing where we need to submit our tongues for speaking more good and less evil.

1.5 Prayer: that God will use this lesson to reform the tongues of the women in this class by His power

through the Holy Spirit and that each woman's tongue will be ruled by the law of kindness.

Bridge to Next Segment:

As we probe Proverbs 31 today in Lesson 4 we are going to learn some sins of the tongue, obedient uses of the tongue, and an understanding of the "Royal Law." What is the love of God and what does it mean to love one another?

SEGMENT 2, Probing Proverbs 31: 25-30 minutes

2.1 If you are using the small group format, divide into small groups. Ask the group to discuss questions 4-7 on the handout using the study questions and the text. If the entire group is together, follow the same procedure. After the allotted time, have small groups reassemble.

Bridge to Next Segment:

We have been considering the use of the tongue and what law rules our relationships and our communication. Even though God's love is in some ways incomprehensible, we must give some descriptions and defining terms for our study.

SEGMENT 3, Pursuing Proverbs 31: 20 minutes

3.1 Refer to the paragraph in the text "God's Love." Read this paragraph aloud.

As we contemplate the love of God, what stands out as the sacrifice of the Father in giving the Son; of the Son in giving His life; and of the Holy Spirit in His indwelling the life of His children? The text says "every manifestation of real love involves giving, or the giving up of something."

3.2 Refer to question #4 on the handout and ask each group for one good and one evil use of the tongue. **The text defines gossip as meaning "to discuss the affairs of others, concentrating on their faults and weaknesses and their consequences." One of the "rules" mentioned is that *-we* never discuss faults and weaknesses similar to our own (at least not those to which we admit). What are some synonyms for gossip?** Have the group respond. Examples—slander or the confessing of someone else's sin; idle talk; tattling; rumors.

3-3 Move to question #5- Ask the groups to give the "Royal Law" in their own words. **The Royal Law may be one of the most misquoted and misinterpreted commands of the Scripture. In today's "pop psychology" definitions we are often told "you must love yourself before you can love others." Jesus' definition was quite different: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." Even those who wallow in self-hatred still have the majority of their attention, thought life, and action focused on self. We give ourselves the benefit of the doubt and the benefit of our rationalizations. The Royal Law clearly focuses mind, soul, heart, and strength on Jesus and others.**

3.4 Move to question #6. **What are some of the "flimsy facsimiles" or masquerades for the Royal Law?**

3.5 Move to question #1, **Who are Christians commanded to love? Is there any category exempt?** These commands force us to reevaluate our definition of love. Refer to the list of four components of the definition toward the end of Chapter 4.

a. Recognize that love is not an emotion. It is an act of the will. What is it that we do "feel?" Affection, comfort, physical attraction, etc.

b. Recognize that love is not optional but Christ commands it. Christ never commands us to "feel" or have an emotion. He commands us to act.

c. Pray for family, friends, self, and enemies.

d. Act. Encourage, minister, express gratitude.

Bridge to Next Segment:

The Royal Law confronts us with the facts that Scripture defines love as sacrificial giving. Read 1 John 4:7-21.

We have been commanded to love our friends, our neighbors and our enemies. One of the foremost ways in which we love is with our tongues—by speaking edifying, life giving words and by restraint of destructive, death-causing words.

We cannot love with God's love by personal resolution, by cheap imitation, or by guilt motivation; only by the Holy Spirit of God who indwells every believer and produces the fruit of love. Believers can submit themselves in prayer and the study of the Word to the Lord Jesus so that the fruit of love is more and more evident in our lives.

SEGMENT 4, Practicing Proverbs 31: 20 minutes

4.1 Refer to #9 on handout and ask the group to prepare for prayer by listing their prayer requests. **Pray that the fruit of love will be produced in your life for:**

a, your family and friends

b. your neighbors

c. your enemies.

As we pray we will ask God to enable us to love as He loved—sacrificially giving of all we are and have.

4.2 Refer to Question #9. **Love Acts—What are some ways in which love acts?** As the women answer, help them to see that love prays; forgives; speaks with faithful instruction and kindness.

4.4 Divide into small groups for prayer; ask the women to particularly focus on praying for loving tongues, attitudes and actions toward the categories discussed today.

SEGMENT 5, Postlude: 10 minutes

5.1 **Recall our memories from the introduction and the recollection that as Scripture says: "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Prov. 18:21). Look back at your personal analysis, in what areas has the Holy Spirit convicted you of your need for growth?**

5.2 Summarize by saying something such as: **The Proverbs 31 woman speaks with "wisdom and faithful instruction," and her entire life gives testimony to God's sacrificial love being produced. Every day we have life and death choices—with our tongues and our other actions—to love toward life or to hate toward death. In our own strength we cannot; in the strength of Christ given us by the Holy Spirit we can. Ask yourself these test questions:**

Am I loving others as I should?

Am I loving myself as I should not?

When did I last give sacrificially of my time, my words, my energy, or my material resources?

5.3 Read Psalm 15 and close in prayer.

ANSWER GUIDE FOR LESSON 4

PRAYER: Ask God to show you "how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Ephesians 3:18) for you; to convict you in areas where the fruit of love is "shriveled;" and to produce in you, especially with your words, love that acts.

1. Read Proverbs 31:10-31- Memorize Proverbs 31:26.

2. Read James 3:5-8 and list what you learn about the tongue.

The tongue is small but causes great boasts; corrupts the whole person; no man can tame the tongue.

3. Using the text, your concordance and other references, list some Proverbs' references to the tongue and give the "gist" of the verse.

Proverbs 6:17, 24	12:18-19	17:4, 20, 28
10:19-20, 31	15:2, 4	18:21
11:12	16:1	21:6, 23
25:15, 23	26:28	28:23

4. Reading over the James' passage and the Proverbs' references, write a description about the tongue.

5. Read Proverbs 16:24 and 12:25. What are some of the benefits of speaking with wisdom and faithful instruction?

healing, cheering others

6. From the text and your own conclusions, why would James 2:8 be called the Royal Law?

7. GOD IS LOVE. Locate and list three scriptural references which describe God's love and list how His love is expressed.

John 3:16 — God gave His son.

1 John 4:7-12 — He loved us first, sent His son, and lives in us.

Revelation 3:19 — Those He loves He rebukes and disciplines.

8. List three categories of people Christians are commanded to love. John 15:12 Each other, brothers and sisters in Christ

Matthew 22:39 Neighbor Matthew

5:44 Enemies

9. In Titus 2:4 women are commanded to "train the younger women to love their husbands and children." From this lesson, •what are some ways we are to train women to love? By the use of their tongues for loving and building up Kindness in word and deed Discipline

HANDOUT-LESSON 4

PROVERBS 31:26

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

1. Recall two incidents from when you were in elementary school:

- a. Kind and encouraging words spoken to you.
- b. Unkind or disparaging words spoken to you.

2. GOALS FOR LESSON 4:

- 2.1. To review the significance of trustworthiness to a woman's reputation or good name.
- 2.2. To understand the power of the tongue for good and evil.
- 2.3. To comprehend and apply the Royal Law to the use of the tongue.
- 2.4. To submit the tongue to the power of the Holy Spirit.

3- EVALUATE:

WITH FAMILY AND CLOSE FRIENDS

	Never										Often											
GOSSIP	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
UNKIND WORDS	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
ENCOURAGING WORDS	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10											
LISTEN BEFORE SPEAKING	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
FLATTERY	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
PRAISE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

WITH OTHERS

	Never										Often											
GOSSIP	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
UNKIND WORDS	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
ENCOURAGING WORDS	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
LISTEN BEFORE SPEAKING	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
FLATTERY	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
PRAISE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4. As a group list at least five good uses of the tongue and five evil uses (Study Questions 2, 3):

GOOD

EVIL

5. Read James 2:8. Write the Royal Law as a group in your own words (Study Question 6).

6. List some of the world's "flimsy facsimiles" or masquerades for the Royal Law.

7. Who are the three "categories" of people Christians are commanded to love: John 15:12 Matthew 22:39 Matthew 5:44

8. Pray, generally and specifically, for love, God's love to pour through you to (list their names): a. Family b. Friends c. Neighbors d. Enemies

9. LOVE ACTS—what are some ways in which love acts?

HER OWN WORKS PRAISE HER

PROVERBS 31:31

Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.

LEADER'S PREPARATION:

1. Pray that each woman will be humble before the Lord.
2. Review the Royal Law from Lesson 4 and the memory verses.
Prepare your own testimony as suggested below or recruit a group member.
3. Read Chapter 5 and do the study questions.
4. Make copies of the handout for Lesson 5 and of the answer guide for Lesson 6 for the small group leaders.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

1. To continue to build on the model of the Proverbs 31 woman by reviewing her fear of the Lord; her grasp of God's requirement for holiness; her trustworthiness; and the Royal Law of kindness.
2. To understand the difference between "true humility" and "false humility."
3. To contrast humility and pride and be able to recognize the manifestations of pride.
4. To apply humility to repentance.

SEGMENT 1, **Prelude:** 10 minutes

REVIEW: Ask the women to give testimonies of the Royal Law and how speaking encouragement and kindness impacted lives this week. Be prepared yourself or call on the person you have recruited.

MEMORY VERSES: Have the group say memory verses for each lesson. You might "want to have an overhead with the verses printed and leaving out key words.

- 1.1 Ask the group to look at #1 on the handout and quickly write three to five descriptive words or phrases about a humble person.
Ask the entire group to compile words or phrases describing a humble person: (examples: other focused; proper or accurate view of self; honest).

SEGMENT 3, Probing Proverbs 31

3.1 Refer to #3 on the handout and quickly review the matching.

Answer guide for matching:

TRUE HUMILITY

PRIDE

FALSE HUMILITY

d, h, j, l

c, f, k

a, b, e, g, i

- a. Based in self-doubt
- b. Rejects strengths
- c. Unrealistic self-appraisal
- d. Open to positive and negative feedback
- e. Based in self-deprecation
- f. Denies weaknesses
- g. Closed to affirmation and positive feedback
- h. Based in Jesus' worth
- i. Unrealistic self-appraisal (attitude of inferiority)
- j. Accepts both strengths and weaknesses
- k. Closed to corrective and negative feedback
- l. Accurate self-appraisal

(John Bettler - CCEF)

Ask each group to read the group definition of humility. Write key phrases on the board.

Sometimes the posture of a Christian "acting" humble becomes just the opposite. As we saw in our last lesson regarding love of ourselves, even the focus of trying to "be humble" becomes self-absorbing and sinful.

The text defines humility as "a modest, appropriate sense of one's own significance." Read the paragraph beginning "The godly woman of Proverbs..."

3.2 Refer to question #4. **The opposite of humility is pride. What are some of the manifestations of pride? Get feedback from the group. The common denominator in these manifestations is self. The text warns us, especially, about spiritual pride. One of the paradoxical hazards of this subject is that we can become "proud of our humility." In running the race God has set before us how do we avoid these hazards?**

3.3 Refer to question #5. **Our example is Jesus Christ He calls us to learn of Him—for He is meek and lowly in heart. How did Jesus' life reflect humility? Read Philippians 2:5-11.**

We see Jesus' meekness shown by His attitude which was not gripping His status but gave up His position and embraced the will of His Father even to obedience to death. He served others with His life and His death.

The Up-Down Law applies as God elevates His servant and gives Him His reputation.

In our culture humility and meekness have become synonymous with wimpiness or insipid weakness. Even Jesus is portrayed in this way by the world. Women are bombarded with the wisdom of the world toward building self, pride, independence and self-reliance. The example of the Proverbs 31 woman is just the opposite. God calls us to be dependent and trusting as His children. A major part of

dependence is repentance before God.

3.4 Refer to question #6. **Repentance requires three of the most difficult words in our language: "I am wrong." Most of us find it much easier to say, "I am sorry," which may or may not indicate our attitude of repentance. Repentance is agreeing with God that I have transgressed His law or refused to submit to Him and turning to obey Him. "I am sorry" may be an expression of feeling rather than humbling myself—I can be sorry about the consequences of my actions but continue to believe I am right. I may only be sorry that I was "found out" in my sin.**

When we humble ourselves as God tells Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7:14, the actions are clear—we will pray; we will seek God's face; and we will turn from our wicked ways (or repent). These are clear behaviors associated with humility.

3.5 Refer to question #1. **How is it then that we are to follow God's requirement to "humble ourselves?" Scripture gives us a number of ways: considering others before ourselves; doing all things as to the Lord; admitting wrong-doing and asking forgiveness; reflecting on Who God is—His sovereign holiness and our response of fearing Him.**

Bridge to Next Segment:

One of our precious models of a woman's

humility is Mary, the mother of Jesus. Read Luke 1:46-53.

Are we women who are humble before the Lord?

Does meekness and submission characterize our lives?

Are we regularly repentant of self-centered-ness and prideful attitudes?

SEGMENT 4, Practicing **Proverbs 31:20** minutes

4.1 Refer the women to #8 on the handout and give them a few minutes to read and meditate on these Scriptures.

4.2 Refer the women to #9 and ask them to prayerfully consider those to whom they need to humble themselves.

4.3 Divide into small groups for prayer. Ask the groups to spend the entire prayer time in praise—using the Scriptures on the handout and other Scriptures.

SEGMENT 5, **Postlude:** 10 minutes

5.1 Recall to the women the qualities listed of the most humble person we know. **We are exhorted not only to be like that person; like Mary; or like the Proverbs 31 woman but to be like Jesus.**

5.2 Read Philippians 2:1-16.

5.3 Close in prayer.

ANSWER GUIDE FOR LESSON 5

PRAYER: Ask God to renew your mind and teach you the difference between true humility and false humility. Invite Him to convict you regarding prideful attitudes. Spend prayer time this week in praise and thanksgiving.

1. Read Proverbs 31:10-31- Memorize Proverbs 31:31.

2. Using your concordance read in the Proverbs about "pride;" make a list of what you learn and the references.

Proverbs 8:13, 11:2, 13:10, 16:18, 29:23

3. Read Philippians 2:1-16. Describe Jesus' attitude of humility. Locate at least one other scriptural reference to the humility of Jesus.

Jesus had the same love and was one in spirit and purpose with the Father; He did nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit; He considered others better than Himself and looked to their interests. He took the nature of a servant. Matthew 11:29

4. Read Romans 12 and list the qualities of humility Paul describes.

Offer self as living sacrifice;
Do not be conformed to the pattern of the world;
Think of self with sober judgment;
One body in which all members belong to others;
Sincere love—hating evil, clinging to good;
Devoted to one another;
Share, empathize, harmony, willing to associate with all.

5. Read Matthew 18:3-4 and John 13. How does Jesus define humility?

Doing the least of things for people, as in washing feet. Humble as a child is humble.

6. Read 2 Chronicles 7:14. What are the three responses to humbling ourselves?

Prayer, seeking God's face, repentance
What is God's response?
Hearing, forgiveness, healing

7. Read 1 Peter 5:6; Matthew 23:12; James 2:10. What do you learn about humbling yourself?

Humbling is under God's mighty hand
Declare dependency resulting in prayer
Fearing the Lord
Proper view of self in relationship to God and others

8. What are some of the subtle ways in which we bring attention to our position; possessions; achievements; etc.?

9. Write your own hymn of praise. Ask God to give you opportunities for praising Him *and* others. DO IT!

HANDOUT-LESSON 5

PROVERBS 31:31

Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise in the city gates.

1. Consider the character of the most humble person you know and list three or four qualities or characteristics.

2. LESSON OBJECTIVES:

2.1. To continue to build on the model of the Proverbs 31 woman by reviewing her fear of the Lord; her grasp of God's requirement for holiness; her trustworthiness; and the Royal Law of kindness.

2.2. To understand the difference between "true humility" and "false humility."

2.3. To contrast humility and pride and be able to recognize the manifestations of pride.

2.4. To apply humility to repentance.

3. Match the descriptions below with the proper heading:

TRUE HUMILITY

PRIDE

FALSE HUMILITY

- a. Based in self-doubt
- b. Rejects strengths
- c. Unrealistic self-appraisal (attitude of superiority)
- d. Open to positive and negative feedback
- e. Based in self-deprecation
- f. Denies weaknesses
- g. Closed to affirmation and positive feedback
- h. Based in Jesus' worth
- i. Unrealistic self-appraisal (attitude of inferiority)
- j. Accepts both strengths and weaknesses
- k. Closed to corrective and negative feedback
- I. Accurate self-appraisal

(John Bettler - CCEF)

4. a. List some of the manifestations of pride (Study Question 2).

b. How do we particularly exhibit spiritual pride (Study Question 8)?

5. Read Philippians 2: 5-11 (Study question 3).

A) List displays of Jesus' humility.

B) Describe the Up-Down Law.

6. a. What are the three words with which we repent?
 - b. Read 2 Chronicles 7:14 (Study Question 6). What are the actions which follow humbling ourselves?
7. Review the section of the text "Humble Yourselves" and list some of the ways we do this.
8. Meditate on these passages:

Luke 1:46-53; Psalm 138:6; 103:17; 98:1; 113:6
9. Make a note to yourself of anyone before whom you should humble yourself by confession and repentance.

SHE OPENETH HER MOUTH WITH WISDOM

PROVERBS 31:26

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

LEADER'S PREPARATION:

1. Pray that each "woman will place a greater priority on obtaining godly wisdom.
2. Review Chapter 5 and the quality of humility.
3. Read Chapter 6 and do the study questions.
4. Make copies of the handout for Lesson 6 and the answer guide for Lesson 7 for the small group leaders.
5. Prepare to read Proverbs 8:4-36 substituting the Name of Christ for the word wisdom.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

1. To review and confirm the quality of humility in the life of a godly woman.
2. To define knowledge, understanding and wisdom.
3. To determine ways of acquiring wisdom.
4. To increase our desire and cherishing of wisdom.

SEGMENT 1, **Prelude:** 10 minutes

REVIEW: What qualities have we established, thus far, that are part of the character of the Proverbs 31 woman? Say the verses listed below and ask the group for the quality.

She is a woman that fears the Lord (Proverbs 31:30).

She serves God in His holiness and pursues holiness (Proverbs 31:12).

She is trustworthy (Proverbs 31:11).

She observes the Royal Law (Proverbs 31:26).

She is humble (Proverbs 31:31).

Have individuals say the above memory verses.

1.1 One of our common pursuits as human beings is the pursuit of "answers." Consider for a moment the time we as women spend asking advice, praying for "direct, handwriting-on-the-wall answers," buying and reading self-help books, listening and watching media.

1.2 As we have seen in our previous study, the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, wisdom is defined and delineated in the Proverbs—a part of the wisdom literature.

Our traditional view of wisdom in the West is adopted from the Greek style and says that we are searching for wisdom, the right answers, truth. According to this philosophy, wisdom is applied once it is found.

A scriptural view and God's way regarding wisdom is not man-centered or based on our search. Wisdom is a gift rather than a search. Wisdom is given by revelation. The Proverbs are a major part of God's revelation regarding wisdom. The first six verses of Proverbs 1 give us an overview of the profound concepts and purpose of the Proverbs.

Read Proverbs 1:1-6 and as a group list the concepts regarding 'wisdom on #1 on the handout.

1.3 Refer to #2 on the handout and read the lesson objectives.

1.4 Prayer: that God will give us wisdom and understanding as we study.

Bridge to Next Segment: Probing Proverbs 31 today will require our putting aside the fashion of the world, our preconceived notions, and being transformed by the renewing of our minds to receive the gift of wisdom God has given. As you probe, ask yourself:

What "wisdom" do I seek and trust?

What evidences of wisdom are in my life?

Do I desire wisdom—is the appropriation of wisdom a passion in my life?

SEGMENT 2, Probing Proverbs 31: 25-30 minutes

2.1 If you are using the small group format, divide into small groups. Ask the groups to discuss questions 3-7 on the handout using the study questions and the text. If the entire group is together, follow the same procedure. After the allotted time, have small groups reassemble.

Bridge to Next Segment:

3.1 Refer to #3 on the handout and to the paragraph in the text on Proverbs 8. **What ways do we see the Proverbs 31 woman exhibiting wisdom?**

3.2 Move to #4 on the handout. Ask the groups for definitions of the three terms.

Knowledge—The possession of facts about God which we comprehend from God's Word; His creation; the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Understanding—The text defines understanding as "grasping the implications of the knowledge we have." Knowing the facts and understanding the significance that God is Holy; righteous; requires perfection; gracious and merciful.

Wisdom—The gift of God. Beginning with the fear of the Lord and made perfect in the person of Christ.

3-3 Wisdom is described as the gift of God and man is exhorted to desire wisdom. What part does God give us in acquiring wisdom? Move to #5 on the handout. We are to pursue wisdom by a fervent desire and search; by asking God for wisdom; by heeding admonishment; by trusting and obeying Christ; by yielding to the mind of Christ in us.

3.4 Move to #6 on the handout. **What are some differences in man's "wisdom" and God's wisdom? The wisdom of man is marked by sinful attitudes and intents. God's wisdom is characterized by the fruit of the spirit The wisdom of the world destroys and tears down while God's wisdom builds and edifies. Our own hearts and understanding are deceitful and cannot be trusted; God can be trusted in every detail.**

Bridge to Next Segment:

Countless times each day we make decisions that require wisdom — each time we choose either our own or the world's way or we seek God's way and wisdom. Read the last paragraph from Chapter 6 of the text.

SEGMENT 4, Practicing Proverbs 31: 20 minutes

- 4.1 Refer to Proverbs 8:4-46. Be prepared to read the passage using the name Christ where the word is wisdom. **From this we learn truths about Christ—His words are truth, He hates evil, He rules over all people and things, He is life—more than any possession, He was from the beginning and He is all and in all. He is the way. Blessed is the man who listens.**
- 4.2 Refer to #8 on the handout and ask individuals to assess the advice given for wisdom; what is God's wisdom for this inquirer? After a few minutes, ask for some feedback from the group.
- 4.3 Divide into small groups for prayer; ask the women to give prayer requests related to needs for wisdom.

SEGMENT 5, Postlude: 10 minutes

- 5.1 **Recall that the Proverbs were written for our wisdom, instruction, understanding, justice, judgment, equity, knowledge, discretion, learning, counsel. Remind the women from 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." God gives us the gift of Christ and wisdom through His Word, prayer, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and fellowship.**
- 5.2 Summarize this lesson by saying something such as, **In a culture and world where there are more questions than answers and in which pluralism reigns, we are blessed among women to have the gift of wisdom. In your daily life when all actions have potential for building or destroying; life or death; wisdom or foolishness, who are you trusting? The Proverbs 31 woman is described as speaking with wisdom and faithful instruction—is that the testimony of your life?**
- 5.3 Read Jeremiah 17:5-8. 5-4 Close in prayer.

ANSWER GUIDE FOR LESSON 6

PRAYER: Ask God to teach you by the renewal of your mind the meaning of wisdom, and to give you wisdom. Ask Him to give you a discerning heart and mind toward the "wisdom" of the age.

1. Read Proverbs 31:10-31. Memorize Proverbs 31:26.
2. Read chapters 1-4 of Proverbs and list some of the things you learn about wisdom.

Wisdom calls out. To reject wisdom is to be overtaken by death. To follow wisdom is to live without fear. We are to call out, cry aloud, look, search for wisdom. The Lord gives wisdom. Wisdom saves from evil. Avoid own or man's wisdom. Wisdom is a blessing. Wisdom protects and watches over.

3. Read Proverbs 8. Compare this chapter of Proverbs to the Proverbs 31 woman. Example: Proverbs 8:13 says "to fear the Lord is to hate evil."

Which descriptions in Proverbs 31 "match?"

Proverbs 8	Proverbs 31
7	26
13	12, 30
14	16
18	18

4. Using Scripture, dictionaries, the text, define:

Knowledge: Knowledge is the response to wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Understanding: Understanding is the life practice and application of wisdom and knowledge.

5. Contrast these concepts with wisdom. Wisdom is a gift and comes from the Lord as He gives Jesus.
6. Read Proverbs 2. What are some ways in which a Christian acquires wisdom?

2:1 — storing up God's Word

2:2 — listening and applying the heart

2:3 — praying

2:4 — looking and searching, seeking God

2:6 — from God's mouth, His Word

2:7 — from upright and blameless life

7. What are some evidences of wisdom or "having the mind of Christ?" Give a scriptural reference for your answers.

James 3:13-18

Absence of bitter envy, selfish ambition, disorder, evil practice

Presence of purity, peace-loving, consideration, submission, full of mercy, good fruit, impartiality, sincerity. Harvest of righteousness.

8. How can we test wisdom (James 3:17)? What is the harvest or fruit?
9. Consider a circumstance or decision about which you need wisdom. What kind of "advice" have you had? What is the "mind of Christ" or wisdom from Scripture regarding this circumstance? Pray and ask

God for wisdom.

4. Define and distinguish (Study Questions 2,4,5).

Knowledge:

Understanding:

Wisdom:

5. What is the part of the Christian in acquiring wisdom (Study Question 6)? Proverbs 21:1-7

Psalm 119:130

James 1:5

Proverbs 17:10

Proverbs 15:31

Matthew 7:24-27

Philippians 2:5 and 1 Corinthians 2:16

6. What are some evidences of wisdom (Study Question 7)?

Proverbs 17:27

Proverbs 10:19

Proverbs 29:11

Proverbs 29:20

James 1:19

Proverbs 15:2

Proverbs 11:30

7. What are some characteristics of man's "wisdom" contrasted with wisdom?

James 3: 14-16

Proverbs 14:1

Proverbs 24:3-4

Proverbs 3:5-6

8. Testing wisdom:

Excerpt from Ann Landers (3-25-94);

"Dear Ann: My grandmother is determined to move in with my parents. She has told her doctor that if she gets 'sick enough,' my mother will be forced to let her move in. So far, Mom has resisted. I thank God because I know that it would kill her. My grandmother says my mother 'owes' it to her. Her sons, apparently, have no such obligation.

As you can see, my grandmother is a manipulator from hell. Meanwhile, it breaks my heart to watch my wonderful mother suffer at the hands of this hypochondriac. What do you suggest?

— Bitter and Angry.

Dear B and A: I suggest that your mom get off the defensive and make it clear to her mother that she is not able to take care of her in her home and if she 'gets sick enough,' she "will have to live in a nursing facility.

Your mom should also insist that her brothers lend a hand and spend more time helping their mother....

If your mother refuses to extricate herself from this situation, you must accept the fact that she has resigned herself to the role of 'Victim' and there is nothing you can do to save her."

Contrast the advice given to wisdom that is:

Pure

Peaceable

Gentle

Full of mercy

Good fruit

Without partiality or hypocrisy

SHE IS NOT AFRAID

PROVERBS 31:21

She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet.

LEADER'S PREPARATION:

1. Pray that each woman will be able to identify the enemies of her peace of mind and will appropriate the peace God gives.
2. Read Chapter 7 of the study book and do the study questions.
3. Review Lesson 6 and the things learned about wisdom.
4. Make copies of handout for Lesson 7 and answer guide for Lesson 8 to small group leaders.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

1. To review the definition of wisdom and how it is attained.
2. To understand the peace given by God through the Lord Jesus Christ—peace with God and others.
- 3- To identify and understand the enemies of peace of mind.
4. To adopt disciplines of the mind needful for having peace of mind.

SEGMENT 1, Prelude: 10 minutes

REVIEW: Does anyone have a report of opportunity to speak with wisdom and faithful instruction this past week or an example of another woman's speaking with wisdom to you? You may "want to have an example prepared yourself. Recap significant points from last week's lesson. Ask women to say Proverbs 31:26 together. Ask for a volunteer to say the memory verses. Give the entire group permission to participate with cues.

- 1.1 The Proverbs 31 woman lives a lifestyle rooted in the fear of God who is HOLY, HOLY, HOLY. She is trustworthy and prudent; the law of kindness rules her tongue; humility is a chief quality of her character and her life increasingly manifests wisdom.**

A part of the fruit in the life of the Proverbs 31 woman is peace of mind. The study this week introduces us to three of the greatest enemies of peace of mind—guilt, fear and envy.

- 1.2 Refer to #1 on Handout 7 and read the lesson objectives.
- 1.3 Refer to # 2 on Handout 7- Read the Shorter Catechism Question #36 and ask the group to respond together "with the answer.

Q. 36 What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?

- A. The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.

- 1.4 The Catechism confirms the Scripture Romans 5:1-2: Therefore, since we have been justified**

through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

Refer to the second paragraph of the text: **If we have come into this relationship with God it is then possible for us to have peace with ourselves and with our fellow man. God has bestowed His perfect love upon us so that we might be free from the kind of fear that has torment**

Read John 1:27.

1.5 Prayer: that God will grant us His peace and give grace to discipline our minds.

Bridge to Next Segment:

Probing Proverbs 31 touches on very personal areas of our lives—especially our thought lives. As the Word of God probes your life, consider these questions:

What struggles do I have with guilt, fear, envy?

Where is repentance, obedience, and trust needed in my thought life?

What plan will I make today for discipline of my mind?

Who will assist me to be accountable to this plan?

SEGMENT 2: Probing Proverbs 31: 25-30 minutes 2.1 If you are using the small group format, divide into small groups. Ask the group to discuss questions 3-6 on the handout using the study questions and the text. If the entire group is together, follow the same procedure. After the allotted time, have small groups reassemble,

*Bridge to Next Segment-*The name of this lesson is a very bold statement: **SHE IS NOT AFRAID**. Statistics show that one of the most frequently prescribed medications is anti-anxiety. Many patients taking medication and using other substances to control their fears are women—women are anxious, stressed out, worried. We see it all around and in ourselves.

3.1 Refer to #3 on the handout and ask a different group to define guilt, fear, envy. The text states: (just prior to heading—repentance). Guilt is the result of unconfessed and unrepented sin; fear is the fruit of failure to trust God; and envy is caused by placing disproportionate importance on material possessions, position or prestige.

3.2 The text goes on to say: each of these conditions requires confession and repentance of the sin involved, a purposing to obey God and to put our complete trust in Him.

Refer to #4 on the handout and ask the group what they learned about repentance and obedience:

Godly sorrow, confession, and repentance are tested by the compliance and obedience to God's Word. Confessions of guilt and sorrowful feelings which do not result in obedience are often self-protective and self-centered versus God-centered.

3-3 Refer to #5 on the handout. What replaced David's fears?

David's fearfulness was replaced with seeking God and trusting God for his deliverance. Most of us can determine who we trust by considering our anxieties and fears.

Proverbs 3:5-7 warns us not to lean on our own understanding and not to be wise in our own eyes. We have read in Jeremiah 17 that the one who trusts in man is cursed and like a tumble weed. Our study of Proverbs has taught us that wisdom is the gift of God and that only as God gives us direction can we trust ourselves or others.

The text refers to sanctified algebra: $1+G = M$. Romans 8:31: "If God be for us, who can be against us." It

means that one plus God equals a majority.

3-4 Refer to #6 on the handout. The text gives us three practical steps toward peace of mind: 1) reordered priorities; 2) control of thought life; 3) proper planning.

Ask each group to briefly describe their application of these steps toward caring for Harriet.

Bridge to Next Segment-Peace of mind despite the circumstances of life may be one of the most telling evidences to the world of God's relationship with us. The text describes the Proverbs 31 woman as one who forgets those things that are behind. She is busy with the present and planning for the future. She is not afraid because she is a woman who fears the Lord.

SEGMENT 4, Practicing Proverbs 31: 20 minutes

4.1 Divide into small groups for prayer. Ask each group to read Psalm 37 aloud and then to pray for one another from #6 on the handout.

SEGMENT 5, Postlude: 10minutes

5.1 Psalm 37 reminds us to trust in the Lord, to do good or obey, to delight in the Lord, to commit your way to the Lord, to be still before the Lord, to wait patiently for Him, to not fret, to refrain from anger and wrath, to turn from evil David, the Psalmist, reminds us of God's sovereign rule and reign—He gives, He makes, He laughs at the wicked and judges them, He upholds the righteous.

5.2 Psalm 37 elaborates on peace of mind—dwell in the land, enjoy safe pasture, the Lord will give you the desires of your heart, He will make your righteousness shine, He will protect you forever.

5.3 Have the group close in prayer. We are going to close in praise by asking all who will to give praise to God for specific named blessings.

ANSWER GUIDE FOR LESSON 7

PRAYER: Ask God to make this very personal as you study enemies to the peace of mind which Jesus promises (John 14:27—"Peace I leave you; my peace I give you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid").

Read Proverbs 31: 10-31. Memorize Proverbs **31:21**.

1. People may experience different kinds of guilt. Describe the guilt pointed to or implied in the following Scriptures.

Genesis 3:10 — Adam's realization of his nakedness or sin provoked guilt and caused him to hide from God
James 2:10 — points to judicial guilt of law breakers
Hebrews 10 — guilt of sin

2. Describe the guilt the Proverbs 31 woman may have and what her response should be (1 John 1:9; 2 Corinthians 7:10).

Guilt of conviction resulting in confession, godly sorrow, repentance

What sin do we commit if we do not respond as God commands in these Scriptures (Hint: refer to the text)? Rebellion against God's conviction and cleansing

3. Searching by the use of your concordance or references, list Scriptures where we are told "do not be afraid." Of what and whom? When? (Look up the words *afraid* or *fear not*.)

Luke 1:13, 30

Daniel 10:12

Revelation 1:17

Matthew 14:27

Acts 18:9, 23:11

Matthew 17:7, 28:10

4. What sin do we commit when we are "fearful?"

Denying the Lordship and Sovereignty of Jesus. A lack of trust.

5. Read Psalm 34:4. What behavior replaced David's fears?

Seeking the Lord
What was the fruit?

God's deliverance

6. What commandment refers to "envy?"

The tenth commandment (Ex. 20:17)

7. Starting with Proverbs 14:30, trace at least three references to envy. What do you learn?

Proverbs 14:30 Proverbs.23:17 1 Corinthians 13:4

8. What sin do we commit when we are envious?

Self-centeredness, lack of contentment with God's provision

9. How are repentance and obedience interwoven (2 Corinthians 7:10-11; 1 John 1:9; Proverbs 13:13, other Scriptures you locate)?

Godly sorrow and repentance are the foundation of obedience. If sorrow does not provoke obedience, then it is self-protective guilt and sorrow versus response to God's conviction.

10. Emalyn Spencer writes: "Why pray when you can worry? Worrying is more fun and less "work." List some of the fears and worries you have.

11. Read Isaiah 26:3-4. Locate a hymn, psalm, or write a poem and use this as a well-laid plan to put off guilt, fear, envy and put on peace.

HANDOUT-LESSON 7

PROVERBS 31:21

She is not afraid of snow for her household: for all her household are clothed in scarlet.

1. LESSON OBJECTIVES:

- 1.1. To review the definition of wisdom and how it is attained.
- 1.2. To understand the peace given by God through the Lord Jesus Christ—peace with God and others.
- 1.3. To identify and understand the enemies of peace of mind.
- 1.4. To adopt disciplines of the mind needful for having peace of mind.

2. Shorter Catechism:

Q.36 What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?

A: The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.

3- What are three enemies of peace of mind (Study Questions 2-4)? Give definitions:

Real versus false guilt Fear —

Envy —

4. What is repentance (Study Question 5)?

How are repentance and obedience interwoven?

5. What replaced David's fear (Psalm 34:4)?

6. What are three steps toward peace of mind which are given in the text:

Apply these steps in the example of Harriet. How would you encourage Harriet?

Harriet is a 30-year-old single woman who is in your neighborhood and church. You bump into her in the kitchen during a meeting only to find Harriet fumbling with a small bottle of pills. Nervously, she explains her problem....

"The doctor gave these to me for my stress and nerves, but they don't seem to help much. I'm just a worrier by nature, I guess. Lately I've begun to have panic attacks on my way to work—one was so bad, that I thought I was having a heart attack. My fears can definitely get the best of me."

Harriet has always seemed like a peaceful woman to you, just kind of quiet. What would you suggest to her? How would you help?

7. Write one area of personal anxiety or fear in your own life which you will share with the group for prayer.

HER CANDLE GOETH NOT OUT

PROVERBS 3:18

She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out.

LEADER'S PREPARATION:

1. Pray for your personal diligence, particularly in preparation for leading this study.
2. Review Lesson 7 and the peace of mind given through Jesus Christ.
3. Read Lesson 8 and do the study questions.
4. Make copies of the handout for Lesson 8 and of answer guide for Lesson 9 for small group leaders.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

1. Continued review of the character of the Proverbs 31 woman and her example of godliness.
2. To understand diligence and its counterfeits.
3. To apply diligence to our hearts.
4. To establish a plan for conquering the sin of slothfulness.

SEGMENT 1, Prelude: 10 minutes

REVIEW: Review the qualities of the Proverbs 31 woman along with applicable memory verses: Proverbs 31 woman:

Fears the Lord (31:30)

Pursues holiness (31:12)

Is trustworthy (31:11)

Observes the Royal Law (31:26)

Is humble (31:31)

Pursues wisdom (31:26)

Has peace of mind (31:21)

How did God answer prayers regarding anxiety or fear this week?

1.1 When considering the Proverbs 31 woman and hearing about her one of the first qualities often mentioned is her "hard work." Although her industriousness is not exactly diligence we do see that she "was a diligent woman as evidenced by the action words describing her.

1.2 The dictionary defines diligence as constancy or perseverance. One can be industrious for spurts of time. The Proverbs 31 woman's industriousness was sustained over her lifetime and pervades her entire character.

1.3 In contrast to the diligent woman is the lazy or slothful woman. Read the description of a lazy 'woman given in the text.

1.4 Refer to #1 on the handout and read the lesson objectives.

1.5 Prayer: pray that God will show each woman areas of slothfulness and ways to be more diligent.

Bridge to Next Segment:

Diligence is not a contemporary cultural concern — in fact we tend to be more oriented to finding shortcuts. As you probe Proverbs 31 today consider the following questions:

Am I diligent—am I industrious about goals set years ago?

Am I teaching my children diligence?

How am I deceived by laziness or counterfeit diligence?

SEGMENT 2, Probing Proverbs 31: 25-30 minutes

2.1 If you are using the small group format, divide into small groups. Ask them to discuss questions on the handout using material from their study questions and the text. If the entire group is together, follow the same procedure. After the allotted time, have small groups reassemble.

SEGMENT 3, Pursuing Proverbs 31: 20 minutes

3.1 Refer to #2 on the handout. Ask each group to give one significant concept from the group definition of diligence. Write these on the board.

The text defines diligence as constant and earnest effort to accomplish what is undertaken; persistent exertion of body and mind.

3.2 Refer to #3 on the handout and ask the group to keep a list of all of the Proverbs given as each group gives two references.

Read Proverbs 24:30-34. The slothful man is referred to as a sluggard and as lacking judgment. The consequences to his slothfulness are severe—thorns, weeds, ruins, poverty and scarcity.

There is a stark contrast between the spiritual discipline of diligence and the spiritual laxity of slothfulness.

3.3 Refer to #4 on the handout. The parable of the talents teaches us much about diligence and slothfulness. Talents maybe not only observable gifts such as musical talents, but may include such things as intellect, Christian family background, material resources, and physical health.

Two of the servants were successful because they returned to the master investments proportionate to the talents given. God's requirements are based on the gifts He has given.

The third servant who hid his one talent used the "only one" excuse—how can I be of any use? Even when only one talent is given God requires investment.

The results for the faithful servants, who were focused on the master's glory, were that they were given more talents; therefore, more responsibility for investment. They were, also, given a share in the master's joy.

The slothful servant, who is self-protective (I was afraid), blame shifts (you are hard) and views God as an enemy (one from whom you hide), receives conviction of slothfulness and self-contradiction. He is sentenced by the loss of his talent and being thrown into outer darkness.

God is not the enemy of His children nor a hard taskmaster. He provides the talents and requires the investment of diligence.

3.4 Refer to #5 and #6 on the handout. What were some of the ways your groups discovered in which we are deceitful about laziness? What were some of the counterfeits for diligence?

3.5 Refer to #7 on the handout. The heart of the matter of diligence is guarding our hearts. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." A wellspring is a source of continual or abundant supply. Out of our hearts, the center of life, thought, feeling or emotion, proceed the consequences discussed in the parable of the talents. In Psalm 86:11 the psalmist prays, "Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name." God's promise in Ezekiel 11:19 is, "And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh...."

Bridge to Next Segment-Attorneys do what is called a "due diligent search" by exhausting all resources, leads, and documents. God has promised to search our hearts and give us understanding about our lives. What about our diligence as a group and as individuals?

SEGMENT 4, Practicing Proverbs 31: 20 minutes

- 4.1 Divide into small groups. Each group please refer to #8 on the handout and take ten minutes to design a ministry using the talents of women. After ten minutes direct the groups to prayer.
- 4.2 Small group prayer: pray for each individual group member to be diligent in guarding her heart and in investing her talents.

SEGMENT 5, Postlude: 10 minutes

- 5.1 What does the field of your life look like— are there thorns, weeds, broken down walls? Have areas of your life been overcome by poverty and scarcity?
- 5.2 Summarize the lesson by saying something such as, The Proverbs 31 woman was definitely diligent about physical activities as we read about her productivity and industriousness. She was also diligent about her heart as one who feared the Lord and followed the admonitions of Proverbs 4 in guarding her speech, fixing her eyes on her goals, and taking only firm ways. She was diligent about relationships in caring for her family as well as the poor.
- 5.3 As we close today, consider the example of the ant Read Proverbs 6:6-11.
- 5.4 Close in prayer.

ANSWER GUIDE FOR LESSON 8

PRAYER: Ask God to show you the mission fields of your life and how you can be more obedient in your diligence.

1. Read Proverbs 31:10-31. Memorize Proverbs 31:18.
2. Using a dictionary, define diligence.
3. Using your concordance or other references, locate as many references to diligence or diligent as you can find. What do you learn?
Ezra 5:8
Proverbs 10:4, 12:24, 12:27, 13:4, 21:5-6
Hebrews 6:11
1 Timothy 4:15
4. What are some opposites of diligence? Lazy, sluggard, haste, neglect
- 5- Locate five Proverbs which describe some of these opposites.
Proverbs 10:4, 12:24, 12:27, 13:4, 21:5
6. Read Matthew 25:14-30. What do you learn from this parable?
About the master — He entrusts His property with His servants, He settles accounts, He rewards and punishes, He harvests.
About the servants — Two were obedient and one was disobedient and self-protective. About the warning — There will be an accounting for the resources over which God has given stewardship.
7. What are some of the rewards of diligence (hint — Proverbs 10:4)?
Given more responsibility and rule
8. What are some -ways that we may be deceitful in our laziness or slothfulness?
Proverbs 20:4 — Look for harvest when we know we were not diligent
Proverbs 26:13 — Fears, excuses, rationalizations
Proverbs 24:27 — Wrong priorities
Proverbs 18:9 — Slack in work, no more effort than forced
Ephesians 2:10 (How does this verse "cut off" one of our excuses?) — They are not works we look for, but those God prepared in advance.
9. What are some counterfeits for diligence? Busyness
Perfection
10. Read Proverbs 4:23-27 and describe the heart of the matter. All of life and practice rooted in the heart
11. Make a plan for conquering the sin of slothfulness as God gives grace. What are some steps you can take?
12. When others look at the fields of your life (read Proverbs 24:30-34), what evidence do they see? Will you take the risk of asking a faithful friend what she sees or ask your spouse?
13. Commit yourself to one exercise of diligence this week.
Timeliness versus procrastination; first things first versus avoiding the difficult; diligence versus nervous energy or perfectionism; etc.

HANDOUT-LESSON 8

PROVERBS 31:18

She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out.

1. LESSON OBJECTIVES:

- 1.1. Continued review of the character of die Proverbs 31 woman and her example of godliness.
- 1.2. To understand diligence and its counterfeits.
- 1.3. To apply diligence to our hearts.
- 1.4. To establish a plan for conquering the sin of slothfulness.
2. Write a group definition of diligence (Study Question 2).
3. List five opposites of diligence and give the Proverbs references (Study Question 4).
4. Read Matthew 25:14-30 together (Study Question 5). List some of the talents observed among women in your church.
5. What are some of die ways in which we are deceitful about laziness (Study Question 8)?
6. What are some of the counterfeits for diligence (Study Question 9)?
7. What is the heart of the matter (Proverbs 4:23-27) (Study Question 10)?
8. Review the talents listed in #4 and design a ministry using those talents.

SHE REACHETH FORTH HER HANDS

PROVERBS 31:20

She opens her hands to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.

LEADER'S PREPARATION:

1. Pray for women to establish a pattern of good works as they serve God with the fear of the Lord.
2. Review Lesson 8 and the diligence of the Proverbs 31 woman.
3. Read Lesson 9 and do the study questions.
4. Make copies of the handout for Lesson 9 and of answer guide for Lesson 10 for small group leaders.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

1. Review of the exercise of diligence in the life of a godly woman.
2. To define and understand benevolence.
3. To grasp that "works are the result not the cause of salvation.
4. To increase sensitivity to opportunities for service.

SEGMENT 1, **Prelude:** 10 minutes

REVIEW: Diligence is the constant and earnest effort to accomplish what is undertaken; persistent exertion of body, mind, and soul. Will someone share with us what you saw about diligence this past week? (Ask someone ahead of time or be prepared yourself to share an example.) Please say together Proverbs 31:18—the verse regarding diligence.

- 1.1 Throughout the study of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 we have seen her other-centeredness. She is described in the text as a person with a true servant's heart, one who is no respecter of persons, but makes herself available wherever the need is. Consider for a moment the women considered contemporary models or heroines. Who of these women may be described like the Proverbs 31 woman?**
- 1.2 The word benevolent may be expanded by descriptions such as charitable, generous, magnanimous, merciful. In some churches the financial gifts given for certain ministries are called benevolences. In the church we sometimes speak of gifts of mercy or the gift of help or mercy ministries.**
- 1.3 These frequently used concepts may be misleading if we conclude that responsibility for benevolence ends with financial offerings or that it belongs to those with particular gifts. The Proverbs 31 woman is again given to us as an example of the way in which benevolence pervades her character and life.**
- 1.4 Refer to #1 on the handout and read the objectives.
- 1.5 Prayer: that God will teach us these objectives.

Bridge to Next Segment: The most significant segment of probing Proverbs 31 today is the grasp of salvation and works. Benevolence and charity are, as the text states, "the outworking in our lives of the

inworking of God in our hearts." Benevolence cannot be counterfeited before God even though it may be before others. As you probe the Scriptures, ask yourself:

What is my heart attitude? What if I only gave or served when my attitude of heart and mind is generous and willing?

Am I trying to win God's approval or acceptance or is my serving based on gratitude for God's faithful love for me?

SEGMENT 2, Probing Proverbs 31: 25-30 minutes

2.1 If you are using the snaii group format, divide into small groups. Ask them to complete questions 2-6 on the handout using their study questions and the text. If the entire group is together, follow the same procedure. After the allotted time, have small groups reassemble.

Bridge to Next Segment:

During our probe and pursuit of Proverbs 31 we want to determine if benevolence is something we give or is it what we are? Another way to consider benevolence is whether it is an event or a lifestyle.

SEGMENT 3, Pursuing Proverbs 31: 20 minutes

3.1 Ask each group to list evidences of the benevolence of the Proverbs 31 woman making a list on the board. Go to each group until the list is complete.

3.2 We know that the benevolence of the

Proverbs 31 woman gives evidence of God's grace of salvation in her life. Have three groups give a scriptural reference from #3 on handout.

Summarize using points from each small group and the *Westminster Confession of Faith* section on Good Works. Summary should include:

1. Good "works are commanded and given by God not by man's good intentions.
2. Good works are signs or testimony of faith which show gratitude to God for His grace.
3. Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit no person can do good works and the believer must work.
4. The greatest servant continues to fall short.
5. The most righteous of works cannot earn pardon or eternal life because the best works of believers are mixed with imperfection.
6. Good works are accepted in Christ as sincere and perfect.
7. Good works done by the unregenerate are sinful, i.e. she is such a good person and does so much good but she has no trust in Christ— all of her works are sinful before God.

3.3 Read from the text: Works are the result not the cause of salvation. We must get the horse before the cart, remembering that salvation *by* works is impossible, but salvation *without* works is shameful.

3.4 Refer to *4 on the handout and make a class list on the board of the Proverbs which addresses serving and giving.

3.5 Refer to #5 on the handout. Ask groups for input. **Proverbs 31:20 seems to refer to the gift of self as well as the gift of resources.**

3.6 Refer to #6 on the handout. **What heart and mind altitude toward giving does God desire?**

Bridge to Next Segment:

Most of us are besieged with opportunities for giving and serving—to the point that charities discuss "compassion fatigue." For the servants of God there is no such thing as compassion fatigue because His mercy wells up in us to be merciful. Hebrews 10:24 says in a call to perseverance: And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. During our practice of Proverbs 31 let's make a plan for spurring one another on.

SEGMENT 4, Practicing Proverbs 31: 20 minutes

- 4.1 Refer to #7 on handout and have each small group discuss these categories. After five minutes direct the small groups to prayer.
- 4.2 Prayer in small groups. Ask each woman to invite die group to spur her on through prayer in the good works which God has specifically prepared for her.

SEGMENT 5, Postlude: 10minutes

- 5.1 Read Matthew 25:31^6.
- 5.2 Close in prayer.

ANSWER GUIDE FOR LESSON 9

PRAYER: Pray that God will reveal your personal pattern of benevolence and that He will give you a servant's heart.

1. Read Proverbs 31: 10-31. Memorize Proverbs 31:20.

One of the characteristics of the Proverbs 31 woman is benevolence. Ask yourself the question, "Is benevolence something we give or is it what we are?"

2. Read the Proverbs 31 passage again and list evidences of the benevolent character of this woman.
Proverbs 31:12, 19, 20
- 3- What are some synonyms for benevolence? Take two of them and list three scriptural references.
Provide — 1 Timothy 5:8
1 Timothy 6:17-18
Gives — Proverbs 11:24-25
Generous, refresh
4. During this entire study of the Proverbs 31 woman we have risked being perceived as "getting the cart before the horse"—i.e. the erroneous view that the Proverbs 31 woman "earned" a place in heaven. In your own words, using scriptural references, discuss salvation and works. Ephesians 2:8-10
God by grace given saved me.
Not works—no boasting or self-sufficiency.
I am God's workmanship created along with all works which are created by Him.
5. List as many Proverbs as you can locate which address seiving and giving (hint — riches).
Proverbs 11:23-25, 13:22, 14:31, 18:16, 22:9, 22:16, 22:22, 25:21-22
6. How much and what does Scripture say that the Proverbs 31 woman should give? Back up your answers with scriptural reference.
Luke 6:38 — With measure to be used for you.
Luke 21:1-4 — Give all. God judges attitude not amount.
7. What two types of giving does Proverbs 31:20 suggest? Open arms — giving of self Extended hands — giving of resources
8. Read the following scriptural references and describe the qualities of giving God desires.
Exodus 35 — willing, skillful, heartfelt, freely
Deuteronomy 15:7-11 — openhanded, generous, freely without thought of payback
Matthew 6:1-4 — Give in secret
2 Corinthians 9:7 — Cheerful, decisively
Matthew 5:23-24 — Based on reconciled relationships

HANDOUT-LESSONS 9

Proverbs 31:20

She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.

1. LESSON OBJECTIVES:

- 1.1. Review of the exercise of diligence in the life of a godly woman.
 - 1.2. To define and understand benevolence.
 - 1.3- To grasp that works are the result not the cause of salvation.
 - 1.4. To increase sensitivity to opportunities for service.
2. List evidences of the benevolence of the Proverbs 31 woman (Study Question 2).
 - 3- Give a Scripture reference regarding salvation and works (Study Question 4).

Have group read this *Westminster Confession of Faith* segment on Good Works and list in summary form what the group learns.

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH — CHAPTER XVI — OF GOOD WORKS

I. Good works are only such as God hath commanded in His holy Word, and not such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretense of good intention.

II. These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life.

III. Their ability to do good works is not all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ. And that they may be enabled thereunto, beside the graces they have already received, there is required an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit, to work in them to will, and to do, of His good pleasure: yet are they not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty unless upon a special motion of the Spirit; but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.

IV. They who, in their obedience, attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, are so far from being able to supererogate, and to do more than God requires, as that they fall short of much which in duty they are bound to do.

V. We cannot by our best works merit pardon of sin, or eternal life at the hand of God, by reason of the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come; and the infinite distance that is between us and God, whom, by them, we can neither profit nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins, but when we have done all we can, we have done but our duty, and are unprofitable servants: and because, as they are good, they proceed from His Spirit; and as they are wrought by us, they are defiled, and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.

VI. Notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in Him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblamable and unreproveable in God's sight; but that He, looking upon them in His Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.

VII. Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands; and of good use both to themselves and others: yet, because they proceed not from an heart

purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the word; nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God: and yet, their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God,

Group summary of Confession:

4. List ways of serving and giving to which the Proverbs referred (Study Question 5).
- 5- What types of giving does Proverbs 31:20 suggest (Study Question 7)?
6. What heart and mind attitude toward giving does God desire (Study Question 8)?
7. Opportunities to serve given by the text include the following categories. Expand each category with specific good works.

Ministry in home:

Neighbors:

Hospitality:

SILK AND PURPLE

PROVERBS 31:22

She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.

LEADER'S PREPARATION:

1. Pray that God will give women wisdom and balance regarding the physical testimony of their lives.
2. Review Lesson 9 and the concept of benevolence.
3. Read Chapter 10 of the text and do the study questions.
4. Make copies of the handout for Lesson 10 and answer guide for Lesson 11 for small group leaders.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

1. To review the benevolence which is exhibited by a godly woman.
2. To understand God's Word regarding physical appearance, health, and home.
3. To consider the significance of our physical testimony.
4. To apply God's Word to a personal and balanced approach to our physical life.

SEGMENT 1, **Prelude:** 10 minutes

REVIEW: Ask several of the group to share ways in which they were served by others during the past week. **You will recall that our salvation and God's grace are worked out in our lives by our other-centered service and benevolence toward the world in which God has placed us.** Ask for volunteers to repeat memory verses.

1. **1 There are three references in the Proverbs 31 passage to physical concerns: health (v.17); appearance (v. 22b) and home (vs. 22a and 27). These references indicate the direction God's Word gives us regarding our physical testimony. We may have sought the wisdom of the world much more frequently than God's wisdom regarding our physical obedience. There are books, tapes, fitness centers, diets, medical facilities, instant home furnishing plans, wardrobe consultants—on and on the list goes—provided for our beauty and comfort.**
- 1.2 Refer to #2 on the handout and ask the women to rate themselves in each of the three areas; reassure the group that their rating is personal and will not have to be shared.
- 1.3 Refer to #1 on the handout and read the objectives for Lesson 10.
- 1.4 Prayer: open with prayer that God will give wisdom and balance regarding our physical testimony.

Bridge to Next Segment:

Through probing Proverbs 31 today we should be establishing a personal plan of discipline which will enhance how we glorify God through these three areas of our life.

SEGMENT 2, Probing Proverbs 31: 25-30 minutes 2.1 If you are using the small group format, divide into small groups. Ask the groups to discuss questions 3-5 on the handout using the study questions and the text. If the entire group is together, follow the same procedure. After the allotted time, have small groups reassemble.

SEGMENT 3, Pursuing Proverbs 31: 20 minutes 3.1 Refer to #3 on the handout. Have each group give you a truth from Psalm 139 regarding our physical beings. You should gather truths such as:

God knows all of our thoughts and actions. He is present to everything including our activities. He is creator and knows me inside out—He is to be praised for His design. He knows the exact number of my days.

The implications of this Psalm are many.

Since God created us, who is it that we are really accusing when we complain about a particular physical characteristic? In the light of Psalm 139 those complaints are as ludicrous as the pot saying to the potter, why did you make me this way? A more helpful question may be, "What is it you want me to learn from the way in which you created me, Lord and how is it you want to use me?"

3.2 Refer to #4 on the handout. **The passages we have studied indicate that physical illness may be the direct result of individual sin. These are powerful admonitions regarding the effects of sin in our physical health. One caution regards attempts on our part to discern or confront another's sin or to attribute all physical illness to an individual's sin. Our spiritual and physical and emotional health are woven in such complexity that the Holy Spirit must enlighten the inter-relationships.**

3.3 Refer to #5 on the handout. **These Proverbs refer to strength, dignity, laughter at the future, and the fear of the Lord. Often Scripture uses the clothing metaphor to communicate the need for spiritual clothing. The text reminds us that the godly woman is faithful in the spiritual realm as well as in the physical. The Proverbs 31 passage gives the balanced example of a woman who has wisdom, humility, fears the Lord and knows that these are the source of praise. She has a physical testimony of God's glory in her health, appearance and home but she is not dependent on charm or beauty. She recognizes that these qualities are deceptive and fleeting. That balanced testimony can only come as we are spiritually clothed by the Holy Spirit through the Word, prayer, worship, the sacraments, fellowship, and other spiritual disciplines.**

Bridge to Next Segment:

What is your physical testimony saying about your spiritual health? It seems many of us would like to have a scale or recipe which says how much time, money, and energy we should spend on health, appearance, and home. How important is it?

As we look at the practice of Proverbs 31 today we will find that the answers are found in the spiritual discipline we have discussed, and that each of us, as Psalm 139 says, is uniquely designed for the tasks assigned to us by the Lord Almighty.

SEGMENT 4, Practicing Proverbs 31: 20 minutes

4.1 Refer the small groups to #6 on the handout. After approximately 10 minutes ask a couple of groups to share an outline.

4.2 Small group prayer time. Ask the small group leaders to have three to five minutes of quiet unspoken prayer. Ask each woman to pray for herself relating to her physical testimony.

SEGMENT 5, Postlude: 10 minutes

5.1 Read Psalm 139.

5.2 Close by singing as a group "Jesus Loves Me" and with prayer.

ANSWER GUIDE FOR LESSON 10

PRAYER: Ask God to apply this study to your own life in the areas of health, appearance and home.

1. Read Proverbs 31:10-31. Memorize Proverbs 31:22.
2. Read Psalm 139. List the truths you learn about yourself.
3. Searching through the Proverbs make a list of wisdom regarding eating, drinking, self-control.
Proverbs 10:3, 13:25, 15:16, 17:1, 20:1
4. Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-30; Psalm 38:3-10; and Psalm 107: 17-18. How are sin and disease related?
Affliction, pain, and disease are in general the result of sin. These results cannot in man's view be tied to a particular sin in some instances.
5. Read Isaiah 3:18-23 and 1 Timothy 2:9. Locate any other Scriptures which relate to personal appearance.
What do you learn? 1 Peter 3:3-6
No adornments are helpful in judgment, only the heart Dress and adornments should not draw attention to person.
6. List the Proverbs 31 verses which address the woman's care for her home. Locate other Scriptures that give commentary to these. Proverbs 31:22, 27 Proverbs 14:1, 24:3
7. Read Proverbs 31:25 and Proverbs 31:30. What clothing is referred to in these verses?
Strength and dignity and the fear of the Lord, resulting in praise and laughing at the future.

HANDOUT-LESSON 10

PROVERBS 31:22

She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.

1. LESSON OBJECTIVES:

- 1.1. To review the benevolence which is exhibited by a godly woman.
- 1.2. To understand God's Word regarding physical appearance, health, and home.
- 1.3. To consider the significance of our physical testimony.
- 1.4. To apply God's Word to a personal and balanced approach to our physical life.

2. Personal Assessment	O=	Poor	10=	Excellent							
Health	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Appearance	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Home-making	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

- 3. Summarize the truths of Psalm 139 regarding our physical being (Study Question 2).
- 4. How are sin and disease related (Study Question 4)?
- 5. What clothing is referred to in Proverbs 31:25 and 30 (Study Question 7)?
- 6. You are teachers of a Junior High girls' group. Design an outline for a Bible study regarding health, appearance, and home-making.

THOU EXCELLEST
PROVERBS 31:28, 29

Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her...

LEADER'S PREPARATION:

1. Pray that God will give the excellence of the virtuous woman as an example of biblical womanhood.
2. Review Lesson 10 and the physical testimony of a godly woman.
3. Read Chapter 11 and do study questions.
4. Make copies of the handout for Lesson 11 and the answer guide for Lesson 12 for small group leaders.
5. Recruit three group members to read 1 Corinthians 13 from the KJV, NIV, and Living Bible (see Postlude).

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

1. To review the virtues related to our physical testimony.
2. To understand godly excellence in womanhood.
3. To identify the barriers to excellence.
4. To consider and appropriate the more excellent way of glorifying God.

SEGMENT 1, **Prelude:** 10 minutes

REVIEW: Last week we discussed the significance of our physical testimony to biblical womanhood. Ask for a volunteer to say the memory verses—Proverbs 31:22.

Have the group say the memory verses for this week—Proverbs 31:28-29-

- 1.1 We have identified the virtues of goodness, love, diligence, trustworthiness, humility, wisdom and honor in the God-fearing Proverbs 31 woman. As we have grown in our knowledge of this woman and who she is, we can give a heartfelt endorsement to the praise of her husband and children.**
- 1.2 What is the excellent way or as our text calls it "quality of life" that results in the praise of husband and children? Excellent may be defined as admirable or distinguished. Contrast excellent with the perfectionism we discussed when looking at the quality of humility. The differences are in the goal—perfectionism has the goal of drawing attention to the perfectionist while excellence brings glory to God. Perfectionism has at its root self-sufficiency and self-determination. Excellence is rooted in humility and obedience.**
- 1.3 Refer to #1 on your handout and answer the question with your first response. **What is it about this woman's life that causes her husband and children to praise her?**
- 1.4 Refer to #2 on the handout and read the lesson objectives.
- 1.5 Prayer: that God will show us the more excellent way.

Bridge to Next Segment:

Probing Proverbs 31 should answer several important questions:

Is excellence my goal?

What motivates me to strive for excellence?

What are some of the barriers to personal excellence?

SEGMENT 2, Probing Proverbs 31: 25-30 minutes

2.1 If you are using the small group format, divide into small groups. Ask the groups to discuss questions 3-6 on their handout using their study questions and scriptural references. If the entire group is together, use the same format. After the allotted time, reassemble the group.

Bridge to Next Segment:

What have we learned about excellence? What is it and how does the Proverbs 31 woman hear the praise of her husband and children?

3-1 Refer to #3 on the handout. Have each group give you an area and the verse reference. Time: Proverbs 31:27

Strength: Proverbs 31:17

Abilities: Proverbs 31:19, 21, 24

Intellect: Proverbs 31:26

3.2 Paul tells the Philippians that he is praying for them in Philippians 1:9-11 "...so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ...." The excellent way is the best and often that has to do with our motivation. Is our goal to please man or to please God? What is the motivation that pleases God?

Ask groups to respond from #4 on handout and to give scriptural reference.

3-3 Refer to #5 on the handout and ask groups to list some of the barriers to excellence and to give spiritual references.

Some barriers: 1) concern for reputation— Philippians 2 tells us that Jesus gave up His reputation and God exalted Him; 2) perfectionism which we previously discussed; 3) pride which makes horizontal comparisons •with other people rather than desires to please God; 4) competition between the parts of the body.

3.4 Refer to #6 on the handout. Have the groups list the benefits of excellence from the Proverbs.

Proverbs 22:1 — a good name

Proverbs 22:29 — respect

Proverbs 18:22 — the adjective good

Proverbs 12:4 — a crown to her husband

Bridge to Next Segment: **From the text read: "As God-fearing women, believing that we best honor God when there is evident in our lives a quality of excellence, are we willing to put heart and head and hand to finding and applying that best way in all we do? This requires a re-education, discarding the philosophy of duty and adopting an attitude of gratefulness for our resources and abilities and for the privilege of using them for God's glory and the good of those around us. God has given us hours and days and years on earth. He has provided marvelous minds and bodies, health and strength. He has equipped each of us with particular gifts and talents. We have materials and tools and knowledge. With all this at our disposal, is any honor given to Him if we don't at least strive for excellence in the use of these advantages? Not to do so is a shameful waste of all He has provided."**

SEGMENT 4, Practicing Proverbs 31: 20 minutes

4.1 In the small groups ask the women to look back at the name of the woman in #1 on the handout and to share with their groups the one outstanding quality which radiates excellence in that woman's life. After 10 minutes direct the groups to prayer.

4.2 Prayer in small groups.

SEGMENT 5, Postlude: 10 minutes

5.1 Have those recruited read the KJV and NIV translations and the Living Bible paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 13.

5-2 Close with prayer.

ANSWER GUIDE FOR LESSON 11

PRAYER: Ask God to allow you to see your character through the eyes of your husband and children.

1. Read Proverbs 31:10-31. Memorize Proverbs 31:28-29.
2. Read the following verses and identify the area in which the Proverbs 31 woman is showing a standard of excellence in stewardship:
 - Proverbs 31:27 — Diligence
 - Proverbs 31:17 — Physical strength
 - Proverbs 31:19; 21; 22; 24 — Household and family
 - Proverbs 31:26 — Speech
3. Locate at least two Scriptures that describe proper motivation for the Proverbs 31 woman to strive for excellence.
 - Matthew 5; 13-16, Revelation 3:15-16
4. Describe, using two scriptural references, the interplay of God's work and human responsibility (Hint: Philippians 2:12-13; Col. 1:29),
 - God gives grace and mercy; His children respond with diligence and responsible living.
5. What are some hindrances to excellence? "What does Scripture say about the particular hindrances you identify (Hint: Proverbs 19:15 — laziness)? Galatians 6:4 — pride
6. What are some other blessings to the Proverbs 31 woman?
 - Proverbs 22:1 — a good name
 - Proverbs 22:29 — service before kings rather than obscurity
 - Proverbs 18:22 — being a good wife and offered as gift of favor
 - Proverbs 12:4 — husband's crown
7. Read 1 Corinthians 13 and list the qualities of the "more excellent way."
8. Read 1 Corinthians 13 in several different translations and make notes.
9. Pick a relationship and prayerfully consider the more "more excellent way." What do you need, in the strength of Christ, to do differently? PRAY!

HANDOUT-LESSON 11

PROVERBS 31:28, 29

Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her...

1. Write the name of the woman about whom you can say, "*Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her...*

2. LESSON OBJECTIVES:
 - 2.1. To review the virtues related to our physical testimony.
 - 2.2. To understand godly excellence in womanhood.
 - 2.3. To identify the barriers to excellence.
 - 2.4. To consider and appropriate the more excellent way of glorifying God.
3. In what areas of her life does the Proverbs 31 woman exhibit excellence (Study Question 2)?
4. What is the proper motivation for excellence (give scriptural references) (Study Question 3)?
5. What are some barriers to excellence (Study Question 5)?
6. What additional benefits are described in the Proverbs for the virtuous woman? Give the reference (Study Question 6).

SHE SHALL REJOICE

PROVERBS 31:25

Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.

LEADER'S PREPARATION:

1. Pray that each woman will evaluate before the Lord what her life is sowing.
2. Briefly review the entire course and the qualities of the Proverbs 31 woman. Ask several women to give a one sentence review of each of the 11 lessons studied and to lead the group in the applicable Proverbs 31 verse.
3. Read Chapter 12 and do the study questions.
4. Make copies of the handout for Lesson 12.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

1. To review the qualities and character of the Proverbs 31 example for biblical womanhood.
2. To study and understand what Scripture teaches about the Sow-Reap Law.
3. To understand the applications of the Sow-Reap Law for accountability, evangelism, parenting, and prayer.
4. To anticipate the joy to be reaped by those who fear the Lord.

SEGMENT 1, **Prelude:** 10 minutes

REVIEW: Ask each of the 11 women to give a brief review of the study with the entire group saying each Proverb as applicable.

Ask if there is a volunteer to say the entire Proverbs 31:10-31 passage from memory. If not, say it as a group. Read the passage again and ask the group to identify each quality studied.

- 1.1 Refer to #1 on the handout and have the group quickly write a response to the question. Ask the group to share their responses.

1.2 From Galatians 6:7—10 we read, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked, A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

- 1.3 **As we have studied the character and life of the Proverbs 31 woman have you at times felt overwhelmed as though her example is unapproachable? The Reap-Sow Law makes her life approachable.**

- 1.4 Refer to #2 on the handout and read the lesson objectives.

- 1.5 Prayer: that God will give us His eyes to see what we are sowing and His strength to sow in righteousness and to please the Spirit.

Bridge to Next Segment:

Probing Proverbs 31 and other Scripture today will verify the text which says, "Throughout the Bible, from beginning to end, we see figurative applications of this unbreakable Sow-Reap Law....Good or bad deeds produce a harvest after their kind."

SEGMENT 2, Probing Proverbs 31:25-30 minutes

2.1 If you are using the small group format, divide into small groups. Ask them to discuss questions 3-7 on the handout using their study questions, the text and the Scripture. If the entire group is together, follow the same procedure. After the allotted time, have small groups reassemble.

Bridge to Next Segment:

Read from the text the paragraph beginning "The truth of the Sow-Reap Law...." **We want to look at applications of this law.**

SEGMENT 3, Pursuing Proverbs 31: 20 minutes

3-1 Refer to #3 on the handout and write on the board the applications given by small groups from Proverbs 27:23-27:

Responsibility and sensitivity for needs of others;

Obedience resulting in provision.

3-2 Refer to #4 on the handout. List some ways the groups give of sowing the Word into the lives of others.

We learn from the Parable of the Sower that we are responsible for the sowing and planting or as Jesus says in Matthew 28 to go, tell, and teach. God gives the harvest.

3.3 Refer to #5 and #6 on the handout. Have the group give feedback regarding what we are to sow into the lives of children and younger women.

3.4 Refer to #7 on the handout. **In the opportunity to pray for our world and nation we have opportunity to sow and reap that which will make a difference. The text reminds us to pray as those who are yielded to God's will and to pray for mercy as well as judgment for the wicked.**

SEGMENT 4, **Practicing Proverbs 31**:20 minutes

4.1 In small groups ask the women to discuss a particular application of the Sow-Reap Law from Proverbs 10 (see study questions) which has meaning in individual lives.

4.2 Prayer in small groups: have groups review prayer journals for answers and spend time praising God for the harvest.

SEGMENT 5, **Postlude**: 10 minutes

5.1 **2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that all Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. The Proverbs 31 woman has been described for our good as we are transformed into the**

likeness of Christ and for God's glory whom we magnify and praise by our virtuous life.

5.2 Read Proverbs 31:10-31

5.3 Close in prayer.

ANSWER GUIDE FOR LESSON 12

PRAYER: Ask God to show you the extent of the sow-reap principle in your life and how He wants to change what you are sowing.

1. Read Proverbs 31:10-31- Memorize Proverbs 31: 25.
2. Read Galatians 6:7. Now locate at least ten references in Proverbs which describe the "Sow-Reap Law" (Hint: Proverbs 11:31).

Proverbs 11:29, 12:14, 12:24, 12:27, 14:18, 14:23, 21:5, 21:25, 22:29, 24:27

3. Read Proverbs 27:23-27. What application of the Sow-Reap Law is described?
Attention and diligence result in being prepared and reaping provision.
4. Read Matthew 13:3-23.

What do you learn about:

The sower: The sower scatters the seed

The seed: Falls in various places

The soil: Is either prepared or unprepared for the seed

The crop: Based on the soil condition and preparation

5. Read Proverbs 22:6. Locate at least three other Proverbs describing the Sow-Reap Law in parenting.
Proverbs 13:24, 19:18, 29:17
6. Read Proverbs 23:22. Locate at least two other Scriptures describing the Sow-Reap Law for children.
Proverbs 30:17, 19:26, 20:20, 23:25
7. Read Titus 2:3-5. What is the Sow-Reap Law described by Paul?

Older women are the sowers into the lives of younger women. When women follow the Titus 2 mandate, the harvest is younger women who love God and follow Him in their families and communities.

8. Read the following Scriptures and consider how prayer is based on the Sow-Reap Law.

Proverbs 15:8;29 and 28:9 — God's hearing of our prayers is based on the life practice we have sown and our right relationship with Him.

Psalms 94 — God knows all thoughts, attitudes, and practice. He has placed the judgment on Christ. He is the fortress and refuge of His children. He is the judge of the wicked.

Psalms 126:5-6 — Evangelism and intercession is in mourning. Galatians 5:19-26 — The sinful nature and the Holy Spirit yield opposite fruit. Praying in step with the Spirit yields the fruit of the Spirit.

Romans 8:28-29 — Prayer is based on the knowledge of God's work through circumstances to reap glorification.

- 9- List examples from Proverbs 10 of the Sow-Reap Law.

v. 1 — wise son brings joy, foolish son brings grief

v. 2 — righteousness delivers from death

v. 3 — laziness makes poor; diligence gives wealth

Etc.

HANDOUT-LESSON 12

PROVERBS 31:25

Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.

1. Write the Sow-Reap Law the way your mother or grandmother taught it. (Ex: What goes around comes around.)

2. LESSON OBJECTIVES:
 - 2.1. To review the qualities and character of the Proverbs 31 example for biblical womanhood.
 - 2.2. To study and understand what Scripture teaches about the Sow-Reap Law.
 - 2.3- To understand the applications of the Sow-Reap Law for accountability, evangelism, parenting and prayer. 2.4.
To anticipate the joy to be reaped by those who fear the Lord.

3. What applications of the Sow-Reap Law are seen in Proverbs 27:23-27 (Study Question 3)?
4. What are ways we may sow the Word into the lives of others?
5. What are biblical ways we are to sow into the lives of children (Study Question 5)?
6. What are biblical ways we are to sow into the lives of younger women (Study Question 7)?
7. Choose one Scripture from #8 on the study questions for lesson 12, read the passage as a group, and discuss what prayer may be based on this Scripture.

For Further Study

Bridges, Charles, Proverbs; Crossway Classic Commentary Series, edited and updated by J.I. Packer and Alister McGrath. Crossway, 2001.

Kidner, Derek. Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary; Tyndale Old Testament Series. IVP, 2009.

Longman, Tremper. Proverbs. Baker, 2006.

Schwab, George M. The Book of Proverbs; Cornerstone Biblical Commentary Series. Tyndale, 2009.

All of these works are available through the CEP Bookstore: www.pcacep.org/bookstore.