



Be A Woman!

October 9 - October 31, 2010



Be a Woman!

Thinking Potential and Possibilities – October 9/10



Text: Proverbs 31:10-31; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 10:5

Gather: As you come together after time apart, be intentional with your time. Ask people about answers to prayer since the last meeting and about how they have seen God work since then.

Pray: If you are in a mixed group, before the group ask one of the men if he would open the group in prayer. Suggest that he thank God for the women in the group and that he ask God to build up the women during the **Be a Woman** series. Ask him to thank God for the answers to prayer the group has seen since your last meeting.

Icebreaker: Think of a character quality that starts with the same letter as your name (first or last) that describes you (or that you seek after).

Focus: Potential and Possibilities!

Study: Proverbs 31:10-31. The “woman of noble character” is a person who exists, but who is rare as a “ruby.” Verse 1 associates this chapter with King Lemuel. “Lemuel” is an affectionate pet-name given to Hebrew boys by their mothers, and it is commonly thought that Proverbs 31 was written by King Solomon; the mother, therefore, is Solomon’s mother, Bathsheba. Here, Solomon paints a picture of the woman who kept him secure as he grew up in a royal palace and what he saw in his mother in those years. Verses 10-31 are an acrostic – this means that each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, creating a poetic explanation of Solomon’s vision of a woman who is enjoying her God-given potential.

1. What causes the husband of the Proverbs 31 woman to have “full confidence in her” (v. 11)? Why does he praise her (v. 28)? Why do her children rise up and call her “blessed” (v. 28)?
2. Women: We will be looking at this passage for the next four weeks. Right now, what is your emotional reaction to it? For example, you might find it overwhelming, or on the other hand, encouraging. Why?
Men: If the significant women in your life—your wife, co-workers, daughters, and mothers—actually fit this description, how would you respond? Over the next four weeks, think about how you can come alongside the women in your life to equip them to live as a twenty-first century Proverbs 31 women.

1 Timothy 2: 8-15 - Timothy has been assigned the task in Ephesus of leading a church in a setting where men were literally (physically) emasculated and seen as necessary only for procreation. The city was founded and ruled by women, and natives to the region submitted to the rule of aggressive female civic leaders. Paul gives instructions to Timothy that will bring balance and allow him to lead the church of Christ to health. Paul instructs the men to pray—to put away the anger of being repressed and the bickering that arose in their newfound freedom and to open up to God. He asks Timothy to teach women to focus on inner beauty instead of the ornamentation practiced by the priestesses of the pagan temples.

Small Group Discussion Guide

Paul does not say that women are to be silent: the word translated “quietness” (11) is the same word that is translated hysteria. Ephesian women were boisterous and very forward; if they needed to, they created hysteria and called on the men to fight on their behalf, using the men as pawns in order to gain control. Paul tells Timothy there is no place for this hysteria, anger, and infighting in the church. Paul could be seen as “over” balancing in his instruction. Let’s not lose his message in his method: women are given an incredible ability to nurture and bring security and they should use it to build unity, not to create loyal “armies” and battle for supremacy.

3. What “good deeds” are appropriate for a Jesus-following woman? How do these deeds become “adornments” to her character?
4. How does our culture tempt women to build loyal “armies?” How do you think the instructions in this passage about “quietness” and continuing in “faith, love and holiness” can help women build unity today?

Romans 12: 1-2 - Paul calls Jesus-followers to make self-sacrifice and serving the norm, knowing that God’s mercy will always provide and motivate. We can choose to have our thoughts changed by continually thinking as Jesus did, instead of allowing our thoughts to be formed by our circumstances. When we serve like Jesus and think like Jesus, we will know God’s purpose for us, just as Jesus knew God’s purpose for Him.

2 Corinthians 10:5 - Thinking like Jesus is not something we attempt passively. We must consider our thoughts continually, paying attention to the origin and consequences of those thoughts. We compare them to the Word of God: when our thoughts do not sound like the thoughts Jesus had, we destroy them, instead thinking as Jesus did. We actively “change our minds” to reflect Jesus.

5. Review **Romans 12: 1-2**. Women often seek to sacrifice themselves for the significant people in their lives. What in today’s culture—in the pattern of this world—makes it difficult for women to live sacrificially in a way that reflects God’s will and shows the renewing of our minds?

Call to Action: This series these applications are highly individual. Give the group time to read this section before moving into sharing and prayer.

1. **THINK:** Read **Proverbs 31: 10-31** everyday and ask God to assist you in making these truths happen in your life. (Men: Ask God to give you insight to empower the women around you to live out these truths.)
2. **LOVE:** Though women are designed to bring security and nurture to all of creation, sometimes a woman’s first thoughts can be judgmental and critical. **2 Corinthians 10:5** tells us how to overcome this negative tendency by taking “captive every thought.” This week monitor your first thoughts when you see a person or hear their name. If your thoughts are not nurturing or compassionate, ask God to change your first reaction to people.
3. **SERVE:** Do one thing to bring stability to someone’s life – to move them toward their potential and to see the possibilities of success.
4. **LIVE:** At the end of each day this week, take inventory of your thoughts and note where you saw limitations and faults instead of possibilities and potential. Ask God to alert you to these areas so that you can have your thinking changed by the Spirit.

Small Group Discussion Guide



Sharing and Prayer: Share prayer requests, both from this discussion and from other areas of life.

1.

2.

3.

Group Prayer: Ask God to help each person follow through on the applications. Share other requests and leave ample time for praying as a group.

Be A Woman!

The Provision and Promise of Love – October 16/17



Text: Proverbs 31:10-31; Ephesians 5:24; John 13:34-35; John 15:13

Gather: Enjoy this time together as a group. Use this informal time to follow-up on prayer requests and last week's Call to Action questions.

Pray: Review the prayer list from the previous meeting and start by thanking God for answers. Pray specifically for the men in the group, asking God to use them to create safety for the women in their lives so that the women can feel free to create a nurturing and secure environment in which everyone can thrive and grow.

Icebreaker: What is the one chore that "must" be done for you to feel like life is in order?

Focus: A Love that Brings Provision and Promise

Study: We will again turn to **Proverbs 31:10-31**. Nowhere in the Bible do we have such a concise description of a man's role. A woman's unique and vital role is delineated here. God saw it as essential to cause His Spirit to lead Solomon to write about Bathsheba so that we could see His view of the special nature of a woman's role. Verses 10 through 31 list actions: the actions of a woman creating a secure environment in which her family can find solace and comfort. This woman takes great care to cause the ethos of her home to be one of promise and contentment. Her actions affect every aspect of the day to day life of her family, bringing security to them in these everyday activities.

1. Working in groups of 2 or 3, rewrite **Proverbs 31:10-31** in modern language with modern application. For example, verse 14 might be written "she is like a minivan bringing her food from Sam's Club." Over the next couple weeks, we will look at several verses closely, so do not get bogged down here. Have fun with it!
2. How do we live out verse 20? When we do, what do those around us learn?
3. What may verse 25 mean in today's world and how do we live it out?
4. **Proverbs 31:30** sets out a focus for each woman. What is that focus and what actions will cause that outcome? What will not bring this outcome?
5. Women: What do you need to do to become a Proverbs 31 woman? What do you need to stop doing? Make two lists and pray over them until we meet again. Men: What do you need to do to make it possible for the women in your life to become Proverbs 31 women? What do you need to stop doing? Make two lists and pray over them.

Call to Action: In **John 13: 34-35** Jesus gives his followers a very clear goal and reveals the outcome. He calls us to a new level of love – a new command that reveals our devotion to Him not through pious acts but through practical care and sacrificial love every day and everywhere. This love is the unmistakable mark of one who loves like Jesus – a Christian. In **John 15:13** Jesus offers a clear definition of the greatest love. When one loves like Jesus, giving all we have – including our life – is natural and normal.

1. **THINK:** Read **Proverbs 31: 10-31** daily and pray for God to cause it to be revealed in your life.
2. **LOVE:** Sit down with the people in your home and in your circle of influence with whom you spend the most time and tell them that you seek to provide security for them. Ask them what you can do that will demonstrate clearly to them the validity of this promise.
3. **SERVE:** Act on the above conversations, focusing on one or two suggestions from each person.
4. **LIVE:** As you love people around you and act on that love, take note of your thoughts and emotions. Take joy in knowing that only you can give what you are giving and that God gifted you to do something no one else can.

Sharing and Prayer: Share prayer requests, both from this discussion and from other areas of life.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Group Prayer: Ask the group to pray for one another and to open our hearts to others. Ask God to give each person a sense of security, knowing He will keep His promises and provide all we need to do all He has asked us to do.

Be A Woman!

Opportunistic and Communal Service -- October 23/24



Text: Proverbs 31: 10-31; Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10

Gather: Have everyone share the results of their new “to do” and “not to do” lists from last week and the results from their conversations with those in their sphere of influence.

Pray: Ask God to open your hearts to change and growth. Thank God for the group’s willingness to have open conversations and to turn new information into action.

Icebreaker: Setting aside “realistic” issues such as education, salary, etc., if you were free to have any job you wanted, what would you do?

Focus: Opportunistic and Communal Service

Study: In **Genesis 2**, the evil one takes advantage of the serving instinct of Eve. When he tempts her, he does so by appealing to her desire to always serve in the best, most opportunistic and complete manner. He tells her that she can bring security to her surroundings by being just like God. She wants to serve and misguidedly sees an opportunity to do so with great efficiency. Unfortunately, the evil one preyed on the “down side” of her unique giftedness – to serve when it is needed and to do so with others and by empowering others. In **Proverbs 31: 10-31**, Solomon provides Bathsheba as a woman who found opportunities and made the most of them: she bought and sold fields and planted vineyards with her profits. She empowered her husband to be a leader. In all this, she was not idle, waiting for the issues and opportunities to come to her. Instead, she was proactive. (See the last two weeks’ notes on these verses.)

Galatians 5:13 tells us that we are free, free from having to earn forgiveness and eternal life and forgiven for all eternity, even for sins we have not yet committed. There is nothing we can do to cause Jesus to “unsave” us. How will we use that freedom? To be selfish and self-serving? We have an unbelievable opportunity to serve and love one another without insecurity or fear. We serve from fullness—from a well fed by the stream of living water coming from Jesus. We serve just by sharing what we are given: unconditional love. This love results in our ability to meet the needs of those around us.

1 Peter 4:10 reminds us that we do not own our abilities. All our talents were placed in us when we created, even before time began. God knew what unique role each one of us would play in the day to day redemption of all creation. Use your unique role, gift, ability, past experiences and present understanding of God’s love to serve. You and I do not own our selves or our abilities. They are gifts to be given. Give all that you are away and serve so that others might know Jesus.

Small Group Discussion Guide



1. How does **Proverbs 31:15** apply to life today? What does it look like in a home where the woman works full time? Remembering that women are wired to serve communally, what does delegation look like?
2. How may we apply verse 16 to life today? Does it apply only to “fields and property” or are there other opportunities to be sought out?
3. Do you think the woman in **Proverbs 31** did all this herself? How do you think she used the skills of her family to accomplish this? What do you think Solomon’s tasks were while he was growing up?
4. Read **Galatians 5:13**. What do you need to be freed up from so that you can serve others? How can you get free?
5. Go around the room and have the person define the giftedness of the person sitting to their right. What unique ability do they bring to the Body of Christ? What opportunities do you see for them to serve? (**1 Peter 4:10**)

Call To Action:

1. **THINK:** Read **Galatians 5:13** and **1 Peter 4:10** every day and ask God to cause these verses to happen in your life.
2. **LOVE:** When God causes you to see a need, take the opportunity to serve and ask others to join you in that service.
3. **SERVE:** Do one “random act of kindness” each day to bring security into someone’s life.
4. **LIVE:** When you are in a group of people this week, initiate a conversation about how all of you can serve someone and seize the opportunity to bring stability to a life and family. Talk about stealth serving -- finding a way to serve without being found out. Enjoy the adventure.

Sharing and Prayer: Share prayer requests, both from this discussion and from other areas of life.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Group Prayer: Share requests and struggles and pray for one another. Encourage everyone to pray.

Be a Woman!

Give Away Respect and Esteem – October 30/31



Text: Proverbs 31:10-31; Titus 2:1-6; John 10:10; 1 John 2:6

Gather: Again, be intentional as you enjoy this time. Discuss the random acts of kindness everyone did.

Pray: Arrange ahead of time to have a man pray for the women in the group, asking God to bring them security so that they can extend security to others. Also arrange for a woman to pray for the men in the group, asking God to bring them a sense of safety so that they can bring safety into their sphere of influence.

Icebreaker: What Halloween costume do you best remember from your childhood?

Focus: Give Away Respect and Esteem

Study: In **Titus 2:1-6** the Apostle Paul instructs Titus, a pastor in Ephesus, on what to teach men and women. The point of these instructions is found in verse 5: men and women are to act this way so that the Word of God can be held in high esteem, transcending human knowledge, and thus proved to be a guideline for life. In this study we will focus on the instructions for women. First Paul addresses older women (those 25 and up). He calls on them to mentor younger women and to be a model. Integrity and sobriety are called for. Older women are then called to teach the younger women to follow their example and commitment to their tasks and family.

Without further insight, one might be troubled by verse 5's phrase "subject to their husbands." Ephesus was a place where women were not called to be committed to one man and where children were born and not nurtured. Paul is calling for the establishment of a family unit in a culture where the family unit has been destroyed. The emphasis is on the aspect of a women being committed to one man –her own husband. He calls women from promiscuity and to their homes.

He asks Titus to create a culture in which women exercise their unique gift of being able to build others' self-esteem and self-respect and teach the younger women to do the same. He calls on women to use this giftedness to build secure homes. This verse is not written to men; it does not give them permission to make women subjects. Men, your role is to keep women safe so that they never feel subjected. This verse does not call women to be silent and personless. It is calling women to express their leadership in the home and empowering them to raise children who are secure and being raised by parents who have a lifelong, monogamous, safe and secure marriage.

Small Group Discussion Guide

1. What does it mean to be reverent in the way we live (**Titus 2:3**)?
2. “Good” is such a nebulous word –what does it mean to teach what is good and how do we determine what is good and what is not (**Titus 2:3**)?
3. Why are younger women “urged” to love their husband and children and not commanded to (**Titus 2:4**)? (Remember, if our greatest strength is to bring security, our greatest fear is the loss of it.) What does this look like in day-to-day life . . . or feel like?
4. How do you react to the instruction to women to be subject to their husbands (**Titus 2:5**)? What does that mean today? If God calls men to keep women safe, what can he mean by this instruction to women?
5. How has your response to **Proverbs 31** changed over the past several weeks? Why? Women, what steps are you taking to implement your new understanding? Men, what steps are you taking to come alongside the women in your life as they seek to live out these verses?

Call to Action:

In **John 10:10** Jesus presents the result of His life here on earth, His death, His burial and His resurrection. That result is life, and he contrasts it with the result of following the evil one and his selfish agenda. Selfishness will steal our joy and life, leading us to destruction. A life of selflessness—made possible by being complete in Jesus—brings full, fuller, fullest life! Jesus wants to lead us to our potential. **1 John 2:6** is a simple verse of instruction, giving us an unmistakable template for full life. We must live life as Jesus did.

1. **THINK:** Read **John 10:10** and **1 John 2:6** every day and ask God to make them happen in your life.
2. **LOVE:** Ask your spouse and kids or those people closest to you what tells them you love them (their “love language”). In other words, what actions and/or words communicate to them that you would do anything for them? Act on that new information.
3. **SERVE:** Do one thing every day that tells someone that you appreciate them.
4. **LIVE:** Look around you daily and take note of the people whose lives you contribute to. Thank God for the blessing of building into others, so that they in turn can build into more people.

Sharing and Prayer: Share prayer requests, both from this discussion and from other areas of life.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Group Prayer: Share and pray together. As you complete this study, ask God to continue the good work that He has begun in you.