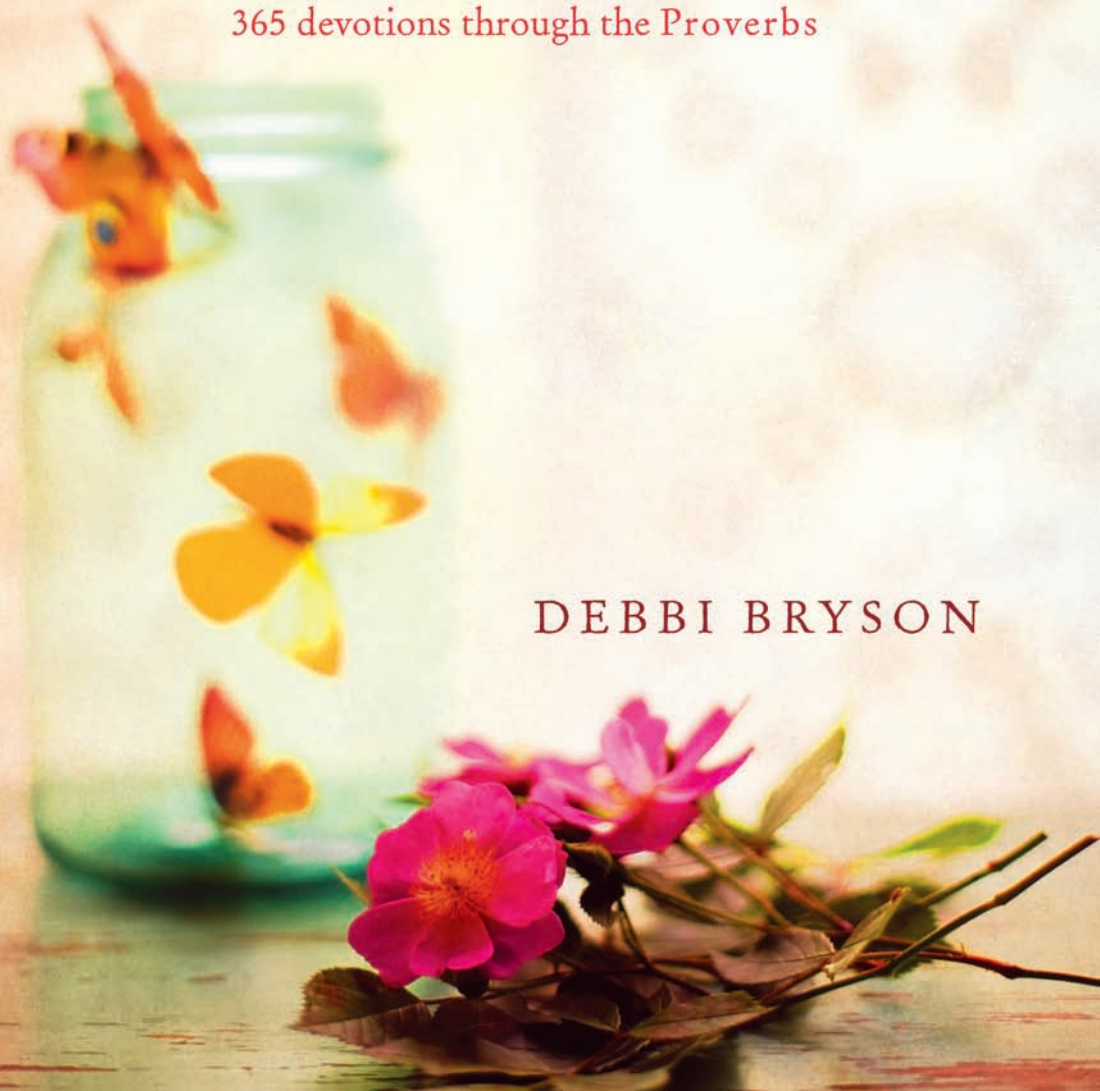


The
ONE
YEAR®

The One Year®
Wisdom
FOR **Women**
DEVOTIONAL

365 devotions through the Proverbs

DEBBI BRYSON



Solomon asked in Proverbs 31:10, “Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.” Throughout the Proverbs Solomon defines the virtuous woman. Debbi Bryson has carefully searched through the Proverbs to ferret out those definitions. I believe that this research by Debbi, which has been put into an easy-to-read daily format, will be a spiritually enriching addition to any lady’s devotional reading. I highly recommend it to any lady who is seeking to become the woman that God would have her to be. I believe that it will provide valuable understanding as to a Biblical definition of a virtuous woman.

PASTOR CHUCK SMITH

Founding Pastor of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa

We all have questions, and many times we look in all the wrong places for answers. Debbi beautifully and clearly shows that the Bible is sufficient to give us answers and that we need not look anywhere else. We get wisdom only when we get it from God!

GEORGIA PURDOM, PhD

Research scientist and speaker

This devotional, *Wisdom for Women*, will become a tool to guide you in listening to the voice of God as He speaks to you through His word.

FERN NICHOLS

Founder and President of Moms in Prayer International

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DEBBI BRYSON



Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
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The One Year® Wisdom for Women Devotional: 365 Devotions through the Proverbs

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Introduction

Life is a journey. Along the road, do you ever ponder the big questions: *What is the meaning of life? Where did I come from? What happens when I die?* Where do you find the answers? Do you wonder: *Are there no maps, no GPS systems, no road signs at the cross-roads? Are there no yellow warning lights or guardrails on sharp curves and narrow bridges?* If there is a God, would he be so cruel as to leave us to flounder and wander and lose our way? When we are overwhelmed, when troubles surround us, when we're sinking in the quicksand of life, is there no one who hears our desperate cries for help? Is there no one to send out a search-and-rescue party? These are questions that, if left unanswered, can and will leave us lonely and hopeless, fearful and confused.

The good news is, there is a God, and he has a message for you. His message is so big, clear, safe, and strong that it can radically and permanently change your entire life. God is not a distant God. He is near and kind and wise and good. Of course he cares about your personal journey, because he cares about you. No one has or ever will love you more.

We see reality from our narrow, limited position on planet Earth. We have tunnel vision. We can't see the forest for the trees. But God sits above the fray. He understands your past more than you do. He knew you before you were born (Psalm 139). He is so aware of every detail of your present, that the very hairs on your head are all numbered. And the mysterious, uncharted waters in your future are crystal clear and eternally important to the one who wants you to know him as "our Father who art in heaven."

What does all this have to do with wisdom? Absolutely everything. Wisdom is not a stale, rigid, boring set of rules engraved in stone long ago. Wisdom is alive and fresh. It's as dependable and unshakable as the sun that rises every day. The sun is far removed from the control and whims of man. You can't put it or the wind or a lightning bolt in a box. They are dynamic—meaning they are not static. They are full of power, energy, and activity. So is wisdom. What then is wisdom like? How can you recognize the real deal? James, the brother of Jesus, gives us this insight: "But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere" (James 3:17). Wow! This beautiful description piques our interest and stirs our hearts. How then can we acquire this amazing commodity? Surprisingly, wisdom is there for the asking; even a child can attain it.

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.

JAMES 1:5

[God's] word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

PSALM 119:105

The Bible—banned, burned, beloved. More widely read, more frequently attacked than any other book in history. Generations of intellectuals have attempted to discredit it; dictators of every age have outlawed it and executed those who read it. Yet soldiers carry it into battle believing it more powerful than their weapons. Fragments of it smuggled into solitary prison cells have transformed ruthless killers into gentle saints.

CHARLES COLSON

I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book. But for it, we could not know right from wrong.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The One Year Bible

I, like many, have always had a respect for the Bible. But even after becoming a Christian, I found it difficult to be consistent in reading it through, cover to cover. Then one day (over twenty years ago) I discovered *The One Year Bible* (by Tyndale House Publishers). As I thumbed through the pages, I knew God had given me a simple, doable way to read every day. Each morning I open it to the page with that day's date. There I find a reading from the Old Testament, New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs. What a joy! For the first time in my life I experienced deep growth and a sense that I was daily hearing God's voice and guidance for myself. Honestly, the first few years I missed reading some days. But I learned not to try to catch up. I skipped what I missed and began again with the current day's reading. Through the years, thousands have joined what we now call "The Bible Bus." Friends, families, couples, and ministry teams find reading the same portion of Scripture cultivates fellowship and like-mindedness. Instead of dull duty, reading daily is fresh and personal as you "journey to the heart of God." If you would like to join us, in the back of the book I've included a page of helpful instructions on how to develop a quiet time.

Wisdom for Women

Wisdom for Women was birthed on an ordinary day in Juneau, Alaska. That morning I went for a walk to the glacier with my friend Lisa. As we walked, she shared her sorrow that women are often confused, discouraged, and sidetracked. Hard situations or bad choices cause painful life consequences. Then she stopped and said, "Debbi, write something for us. We'll put it on the radio up here." Quite to my surprise, by the time we got back to the house, *Wisdom for Women* had a name and a plan. Before long it began airing on the radio. God truly does work in surprising ways. It then took several years to write and record 365 audio devotionals now heard on stations across the nation and as far away as Belize and Israel. "Let's sit down and talk" is the heart and tone. QR codes on the back cover and throughout this book allow you to scan and listen to the audio devotionals as you read each day.

Are you ready to travel through the profound and practical book of Proverbs? Will you look for God's sunbeam of wisdom to guide your path? Do you long to grow and become a Woman of Wisdom? A journey of a thousand miles begins with just one step.

Now as we begin, I wholeheartedly pray this prayer over your life: "This is Debbi Bryson, praying that the practical wisdom of God's Word will make you wise."



January



Scan this code for audio devotionals
or visit www.tyndal.es/wisdom.



January 1

Fresh Start

*For attaining wisdom and discipline;
for understanding words of insight
for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life,
doing what is right and just and fair;
for giving prudence to the simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young—
let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance.*

PROVERBS 1:2-5 (NIV)

January 1: the very first day of a brand-new year. Picture with me this year laying out before you like a blanket of clean white snow. As yet, there are no mistakes, no new regrets, no fresh wounds to mar your path. This is the perfect time to let the past go and start afresh. As we begin in Proverbs 1, above, Solomon explains the purpose and life-changing effect the Proverbs can have.

But if you look around you, the pressures and influences to go in the wrong direction are strong—very strong. People are making foolish choices. Morality and integrity are ridiculed. God is mocked, the Bible neglected. Hosea said, “They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind” (Hosea 8:7, NIV).

Therefore, we must choose. W. C. Fields once said, “Remember, a dead fish can float downstream, but it takes a live fish to go against the flow.” So choose wisdom! God has not left us to chart our course alone. He’s given us his Word. Let me invite you to pick up a One Year Bible. It lays out a very doable reading schedule. It is simple and yet life changing. So today will you open your Bible to the first chapter of the book of Proverbs and begin this year as a journey to becoming a Woman of Wisdom?

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

Will you take a moment right now to personally picture this new year as a field of fresh snow? Now picture a ray of light marking the path. God has a promise to help you start your year right. He says, “Ask me and I will tell you remarkable secrets you do not know about things to come” (Jeremiah 33:3). Will you pray right now? As you pray, be aware and excited that God hears and is waiting to help.



One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 1:1–2:25; Matthew 1:1–2:12; Psalm 1:1–6; Proverbs 1:1–6

Godly Reverence

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*

PROVERBS 1:7 (NIV)

“The fear of the Lord.” On our journey to becoming women of wisdom, it is vital that we truly understand what it is to fear the Lord. First of all we must know what it isn’t. To fear the Lord is not the same as being afraid of him like he is mean or selfish or harsh or cruel. Nothing could be further from the truth.

To fear God is to know that he is righteous and he hates wickedness. God is holy. God hates sin because it enslaves us and destroys our lives. Sin separates us from his love. Jesus said, “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17, NKJV).

So what is it to have a proper fear of God? It is to have a deep reverence for him. It is to be in awe of him because he is awe-some. It is to understand that he is the God of the universe, and we are not. He is the Creator, the King Eternal, the Only Wise God. When we respect him for who he is and live under both his authority and his love, there is no sweeter, safer, more peaceful way to live. This is truly wisdom.

A holy fear of a holy God—it does our souls good to have such an awe-inspiring reverence. Tonight, look up at the stars and know they all can fit in the palm of his hand. As the song proclaims, “Our God is an awesome God; he reigns from heaven above with wisdom, power, and love. Our God is an awesome God” (song lyrics by Rich Mullins).

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

There are two kinds of people in this world. There are Big God-ers and there are Little God-ers. David, Daniel, Moses, and Mary believed that God can move giants and mountains and men. Do you? Or do you live with a greater fear of men than you do of God almighty? Now the important question is, Will you choose to embrace him not just as *an* awesome God but as *your* awesome God?



One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 3:1–4:26; Matthew 2:13–3:6; Psalm 2:1–12; Proverbs 1:7–9

January 3

Peer Pressure

My [child], if sinners entice you,

Do not consent.

If they say, "Come with us," . . .

Keep your foot from their path.

PROVERBS 1:10-11, 15 (NKJV)

This is a warning. Be on guard. Don't be influenced or pressured into doing something you know is wrong. Sin has a powerful lure all by itself, but when others try to pull us in, it can become even more powerful. Does this happen? All the time. Sometimes sin comes in the back door through friends—the wrong kind of friends.

I'm going to list some of the ways that we sometimes yield when we have friends who influence us to do things that aren't the best. Do you have a friend who shops till she drops? When you're together you, too, shop too much. You spend too much money, and you buy things you don't need.

Complaining. Do you have a friend you complain with every time you are together? Both of you feel free to complain about your husbands, relatives, friends, people at church.

Do you have friends who compromise? Do they entice you to compromise by recommending R movies or trashy books? Do they invite you to join them for a drink at the bar? Or—warning!—do you have anyone in your life who is flirting with you, stirring you up to unhealthy desires?

Dear sisters, two things: (1) Pay attention to the red flags of danger. Do not have a friend who entices you to sin. And (2) be careful about the type of friend you are. A godly friend is a good friend

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

What's wrong with ungodly friends? Didn't Jesus intentionally spend time with sinners? Yes, he did. But his intentions were entirely different than just letting his hair down and fitting in. He brought light and truth into every atmosphere. He loved sinners and they knew it. He was grieved by the emptiness and pain he saw on their faces. Darkness did not drag him down; instead, he used light to lift them up.

Let's Pray

Lord, seal my heart against compromise so I can be a vessel of your light in a lost and dying world.



One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 5:1-7:24; Matthew 3:7-4:11; Psalm 3:1-8; Proverbs 1:10-19

Wisdom Calls!

As we read the proverb for today, picture wisdom as a woman—a woman like a mother standing on firm, solid, safe ground. She is calling out to those she cares deeply about. She knows, as every loving, wise, godly mother knows, that if they do not choose the higher ground of wisdom, they will be swept away by foolish, dangerous choices. So listen and picture the voice of God's wisdom calling out to you in today's Wisdom for Women.

*Wisdom calls aloud outside;
She raises her voice in the open squares. . . .
She speaks her words:
"How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity?
For scorners delight in their scorning,
And fools hate knowledge.
Turn at my rebuke;
Surely I will pour out my spirit on you;
I will make my words known to you."*

PROVERBS 1:20-23 (NKJV)

Did you hear both the warning and the promise? Right now I feel an urgency. This year may be indeed the most complicated and challenging year we have ever faced. There are dangerous changes brewing in our world. Do not let circumstances, or others, or the ungodly world around you pressure you into making wrong choices. Do not let the lines between right and wrong become fuzzy to you just because they are blurry to others. Choose wisdom!

If you do, God himself promises that he will pour out his Spirit upon you and make his words known to you. Choose wisdom!

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

What is the antidote for the toxic and demeaning role models that are broadcast to us as women everywhere we look? God's Word! God's Word teaches us that women have a place of honor. We can be amazing influences for good. When God's Word is in you, you realize that the false images and values shown in the media are just cheap substitutes.

Look at the One Year Bible Reading list on this page. It gives you a simple, easy-to-follow guide. Try it. God's Word is God's love letter, God's truth, and God's light for your life. God's wisdom is calling. Will you listen? Will you follow?

One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 8:1–10:32; Matthew 4:12-25; Psalm 4:1-8; Proverbs 1:20-23

January 5

A Sober Warning

*Since you rejected me [wisdom] when I called
and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand,
since you ignored all my advice
and would not accept my rebuke,
I in turn will laugh at your disaster;
I will mock when calamity overtakes you—
when calamity overtakes you like a storm,
when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind,
when distress and trouble overwhelm you.
Then they will call to me but I will not answer;
they will look for me but will not find me.*

PROVERBS 1:24-28 (NIV)

Today's proverb is very serious and, I hope, a sobering warning.

God's mercy, his love, his kindness to call us out of darkness is amazing. He will send conviction to our souls over and over with great compassion and patience, but if we repeatedly disobey, if we harden our hearts, he will refuse his grace. There will come a time when it is too late.

A few years ago I needed to catch a plane, but I was careless. I got a late start to the airport and hit traffic. It was my own fault. When I got to the gate, the door had closed. Too late. The plane took off without me. But I guarantee you the next time I was to fly, I got up early, and the plane arrived late. So if you are listening, if you have turned your back on wisdom in the past, it's time to learn from your mistakes. Don't repeat them. Don't be careless with your life and don't be careless with your soul.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

Some people don't like to hear or heed warnings. The captain of the Titanic was one of them. The morning before the disaster, the sky was blue and the sea calm. So he canceled the scheduled lifeboat drill. No need; the Titanic was unsinkable. He received—and ignored—seven iceberg warnings, until it was too late.

If God has sent a flashing light of warning or conviction in your heart, listen. Life has icebergs ahead. Slow down, change course, and allow him to navigate you back to safety.

One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 11:1–13:4; Matthew 5:1-26; Psalm 5:1-12; Proverbs 1:24-28



Truth or Consequences

*Because they hated knowledge
And did not choose the fear of the LORD,
They would have none of my [wisdom's] counsel
And despised my every rebuke.
Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way,
And be filled to the full with their own fancies.
For the turning away of the simple will slay them,
And the complacency of fools will destroy them.*

PROVERBS 1:29-32 (NKJV)

Today's Wisdom for Women talks about consequences. It's been said that sometimes the best way to convince someone he's wrong is to let him have his way. Or, as James MacDonald puts it, "Choose to sin, choose to suffer."

Galatians 6:7-8 explains it very clearly. Listen to what it says: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (NKJV).

Okay then, let's look at your life like a garden. Every farmer knows that at every stage he makes choices. In the spring he can choose to plant tomatoes. He knows that if he plants tomatoes he won't get potatoes. He can choose to pull the weeds when they are small. He can choose to water, and fertilize, and kill every pest that threatens his crop. But he also knows that his choices add up, and one day he will have tomatoes to eat and plenty to share with others.

All this to say: don't reject the Lord's wisdom in your life. That's foolish. Call out to the Lord for the wisdom you need today in all of your choices. They will bear fruit as a blessing today and a blessing tomorrow.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

Although this proverb applies to all of us, this is an important message that moms especially need to hear. Those little toddlers to teenagers under your care today will be the decision makers and parents of the next generation. Like a good gardener, will you be diligent to plant the good seeds of integrity, purity, humility, kindness, thankfulness, and godliness in your children's hearts and minds? Plant the seeds and pull the weeds!



One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 13:5–15:21; Matthew 5:27-48; Psalm 6:1-10; Proverbs 1:29-33

January 7

Insight and Understanding

*My [child], if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,
turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding—
indeed, if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.*

PROVERBS 2:1-5 (NIV)

As we begin, let me ask you a personal question. Please be honest in your answer. How important is the Bible to you—really? If you say it is important and yet you live day to day like it is less important than your hobbies or your favorite TV show, you're kidding yourself. Worse yet, you are missing out on the most wonderful, interesting, and life-changing experience there is: digging into the treasure chest of the living Word of God. So listen very carefully to today's Wisdom for Women.

If you would like to go deeper in learning and growing in God's Word, good. I love it when someone wants to know how. Let me invite you to my website. It's called BibleBusStop.com. There are lots of helps there to get you started.

And then when you do read, read prayerfully. As you read, read like you are searching to know God himself. Stop and pray often. Interact with God, using your reading time to discover more than just information. Truly, this is your Father God-child time. Picture it as a journey, a journey to the very heart of God.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

The gaining of insight is a key topic of our proverb today. So, what exactly is insight? Why do we need it? And how do we get it?

Insight is the ability to see and understand clearly the inner nature of things.

We need insight because things are not always as they appear. As moms, we need insight to read what is troubling our children. We need insight when something is amiss in our marriages. We need insight when a friendship is broken.

How do we get insight? Call out! We need to take God at his Word: "Ask and you will receive" (John 16:24, NIV).

One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 16:1-18:15; Matthew 6:1-24; Psalm 7:1-17; Proverbs 2:1-5



Shielded

*The LORD gives wisdom;
From His mouth come knowledge and understanding;
He stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
He is a shield to those who walk uprightly;
He guards the paths of justice,
And preserves the way of His saints.*

PROVERBS 2:6-8 (NKJV)

The Lord does have a special relationship with those who love him and seek him, who walk in his ways and desire what he desires. God never promises that we'll have trouble-free lives, but he does promise that we'll never face anything that comes our way alone. Sometimes we forget that all we have to do is ask God for wisdom when life gets complicated, when we're confused, or when we're making a hard decision. Jesus said, "Ask and you will receive" (John 16:24, NIV).

The Twenty-third Psalm is a great psalm of comfort and hope. "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1, NKJV). As you read the entire psalm, it's more than just sweet sentiments. It's a list, a strong list of promises that cover every need and every phase of life from being hungry to dying.

Think of the phrase "thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4, KJV). Both the rod and staff are tools to protect us, not just from predators but also from ourselves. We, like sheep, are prone to wander. A good shepherd needs to firmly strike a stubborn sheep, but for those sheep who love to stay near him, a little tap is all that's needed.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

Let's personally grab hold of the promise in today's proverb: "He is a shield to those who walk uprightly." The fiery darts of fear, discouragement, criticism, and temptations are aimed at us. But God is telling us that when we choose to stay close to him, he personally shields us. No, he does not put us in a "holy bubble." But he does stand with us and for us. We are not alone.

Let's Pray

Lord, sometimes I do feel overwhelmed and outnumbered. Sometimes evil does seem stronger than good and right. Help me to trust that you are near, holding your shield over my heart.

One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 18:16–19:38; Matthew 6:25–7:14; Psalm 8:1–9; Proverbs 2:6–15



Fireproof!

*Wisdom will save you from the immoral [man],
from the flattery of the adulterous [man].
[He] has abandoned [his wife]
and ignores the covenant [he] made before God.
Entering [his] house leads to death;
it is the road to hell.
The [woman] who visits [him] is doomed.
[She] will never reach the paths of life.*

PROVERBS 2:16-19

Today's Wisdom for Women is a sober and vivid heart-to-heart talk. It was written as from a father talking to a son, telling him that getting tangled up with an immoral woman will ruin his life. But I have taken the liberty of switching it as a warning to women about the dangers of yielding to an immoral man. The principles are exactly the same.

Ladies, right now I have a burdened heart regarding this. I could tell you hundreds of stories of broken families, wounded children, scars, and shame that women feel for the rest of their lives because they left the guard off their heart and played with the fire of sinful sex outside of marriage. Don't do that. If someone at the office, an old boyfriend, a stranger on the Internet, or someone else's husband starts flirting with you, that's a red flag. Some men think flattery will get them everywhere. Slam the door on that. It is far easier to stop something that never got started than to reel in lust turned loose.

So be wise, and you'll never regret being foolish. Amen? Amen!

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

How can you fireproof your heart from the pitfalls of sexual temptation?

Avoid trashy movies, magazines, and atmospheres. They ignite sparks of trashy thoughts, emotions, and images.

Loneliness and isolation make you emotionally vulnerable. Get connected and involved in serving. Serving will fill your emotional cup and brings you joy.

Pray! Ask the Lord to stir your heart to fall freshly in love with him. "Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart's desires" (Psalm 37:4).

One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 20:1–22:24; Matthew 7:15–29; Psalm 9:1–12; Proverbs 2:16–22



Trust

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.*

PROVERBS 3:5-6 (NKJV)

There is a great hymn with the words “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.”

A few years ago I was in New York City and decided to take a bus tour. As we passed the Brooklyn Bridge, the guide told us a fascinating story. When the bridge first opened, thousands came to cross over, but a few weeks later, a woman who was walking up the steps tripped and screamed. The scream triggered a panic that the bridge was ready to collapse. In the panic and crush, twelve people were killed. The fear of a collapse remained in people’s minds, and few trusted the bridge. It sat virtually unused. Then P. T. Barnum was asked to take twenty-one of his elephants across the bridge. Under that massive weight, the bridge held up, and confidence was restored.

So let me ask you, have you ever fully put your *full* trust, your *full* weight—heart, soul, and mind—into the promises of God? Let me tell you, there is no greater thrill, joy, and reward. This verse will never be truly yours until you do that. “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.” He will direct your paths . . . because he promised.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart.” Among the roadblocks to faith and trust are our emotions. Can we trust them? No! Emotions can spin us down into anxiety, fear, and depression.

Trust is a choice, an act of intentional obedience to God himself. Will you consciously and intentionally surrender a specific area of concern into his safekeeping right now?

Let’s Pray

Lord, I lift this burden up to you. Please forgive me for the many times I have worried and tried to work it out with my own understanding. Today I want to trust you completely and see you unfold your perfect plan.

One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 23:1–24:51; Matthew 8:1-17; Psalm 9:13-20; Proverbs 3:1-6

January 11

Be Teachable

*Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD and shun evil.
This will bring health to your body
and nourishment to your bones.*

PROVERBS 3:7-8 (NIV)

“Do not be wise in your own eyes.” Let me repeat this for us, ladies. “Do not be wise in your own eyes.” Pivotal phrase: “your own.” Okay, repeat that phrase with me. Shun evil like you would shun a bad snake. The results are given in verse 8.

Backing this up to the first part, don’t . . . Don’t be a wise guy. Don’t be so full of yourself that you get stuck in thinking that you are always right. This implies that everyone else is always wrong. That’s annoying to others, and it’s short-sighted and foolish on our part.

So don’t think you can’t learn and grow. Don’t think you don’t need to. Be teachable. Be receptive. Be hungry to learn—first of all, from God himself, but then also from others. Make all of life and every day your classroom.

Some of the most godly, mature people I know read God’s Word like an eager child, hanging on to every word. Their hearts are open. And they love to glean from others. They are always asking others, “What have you been learning from the Lord recently? Tell me. Let me learn too.”

My friends, don’t you love people like that? But most of all, don’t you want to be someone like that? You do? Me too!

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

What if someone asked you, “What good thing have you learned lately?” I hope your answer would go deeper than a new health tip or a new recipe for cupcakes.

Have you relied upon a promise of God lately? If not, do! You will learn he is faithful. And you will end up with an amazing “God story.”

Have you taken notes as you read a story in the Bible lately? Matthew 8:23-27 describes the day a storm hit while the disciples were out at sea. Their boat was sinking and they thought they would die. Why don’t you read it for yourself and see what you learn and how it applies to your storms?



One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 24:52–26:12; Matthew 8:18–34; Psalm 10:1–15; Proverbs 3:7–8

Honor the Lord

*Honor the LORD with your wealth,
with the firstfruits of all your crops;
then your barns will be filled to overflowing.*

PROVERBS 3:9-10 (NIV)

This is both a challenge and a wonderful invitation. The first part of this formula for blessing is “honor the Lord.” Let me tell you: every single thing that we do for the Lord needs to start there, or else it’s just meaningless performance of duty.

To honor the Lord is to always remember God is more than worthy of honor. He is the King of majesty. He is God almighty. He is the God of comfort and love. The Lord is honorable. It is our great privilege that he would allow us to bring him anything. After all, he is the giver of all things that we have to give. Never forget that.

And so when you write out a check to give, be joyful, because the Lord loves a cheerful giver. But more than your money or your things, may I ask you to give the Lord of glory the firstfruits of yourself. Give him your first hour in the morning, meeting with him, letting him lay out your priorities for the day. Honor him with the way you keep your commitments, with the way you treat people, with the way you serve, with the way you work at your job. If you’re a Sunday school teacher, pour your heart into those kids. If you’re a greeter at church, welcome people as if they truly are entering the house of God and you’re the doorkeeper.

So if you want a rich, overflowing life, live your entire life with this principle: “Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men” (Colossians 3:23, NKJV).

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

Is there an area of your life where you have failed to honor the Lord? Have you wondered why your life seems barren and fruitless? Will you take God at his word? Will you ask him today to show you a need you can fill? Give it a try! You will see that it is more blessed to give than to receive.



One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 26:17–27:46; Matthew 9:1–17; Psalm 10:16–18; Proverbs 3:9–10

January 13

The Lord Disciplines

*My child, don't ignore it when the LORD disciplines you,
and don't be discouraged when he corrects you.*

*For the LORD corrects those he loves,
just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.*

PROVERBS 3:11-12

J. Vernon McGee said, "God is going to chasten you as you go along through life if you are his child. . . . That is a good evidence that you belong to him. . . . Chastening is not punishing. . . . The criminal is to be punished; the child is to be corrected."

So let's consider the Lord's discipline in our lives. Here it is directly connected with God's love and even his sweet delight. Think about this. For a parent it is easy to be delighted in a child who is delightful, but have you ever seen a little girl who is a brat? She is spoiled. She is selfish. She throws tantrums when she does not get her way. Have you ever seen a big girl like that? It's not pretty, really.

That behavior is a direct result of a stubborn bent that did not have or did not yield to correction. Ladies, dear sisters, this is not our destiny. You do have a Father who loves you very much. He loves you enough to discipline you when you need it.

So if conviction comes, if the Holy Spirit has been speaking to your heart about a bad habit or bad attitude, yield. Because whom the Lord loves, he disciplines.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

Can you look back on your life and remember times that you have stubbornly chosen your own way, to your own harm? I can. My mother told me that one time I stood in the corner for hours just because I wouldn't say I was sorry. One time I sat at the table until bedtime because I wouldn't eat my peas. Childish stubbornness is childish. God wants us to grow up and out of these childish ways.

Let's Pray

Lord, show me when I have allowed my selfishness or pride to box me in. Soften my stubborn heart and help me to yield and listen to you.

One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 28:1–29:35; Matthew 9:18-38; Psalm 11:1-7; Proverbs 3:11-12



Better Than Gold

*Blessed are those who find wisdom,
those who gain understanding,
for [wisdom] is more profitable than silver
and yields better returns than gold.
She is more precious than rubies;
nothing you desire can compare with her.*

PROVERBS 3:13-15 (NIV)

Take a minute and stand back with me. Let's take a really good, long, hard look at the world. Let's look at the diminishing value of material things. This is a great time for a reality check. The stock market has fallen; housing values, fallen. If you buy a new car, it is worth less the minute you drive it off the lot. Last year's top fashions look hokey today. Reality check: even things like our health and the way we look deteriorate as we get older. Diminishing returns.

First John says this world is passing away, and so if you're a child of God, you—we all—need to stop living like this is all there is and like this is all that is important. Don't pretend that you don't do that. They say you can look at someone's checkbook and Day-Timer, and you will be able to tell what is really important to her. What do yours say?

Jesus has some really important things to say about this. If you are listening, let him give you his reality check: Matthew 6:19-21. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. . . . For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (NKJV).

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

God's wisdom, his love, and his peace are all things that the world isn't selling and money can't buy. God calls us back to the things that matter. He calls us back to him: "Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen to me, and you will eat what is good. You will enjoy the finest food. Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, and you will find life. I will make an everlasting covenant with you" (Isaiah 55:2-3).

One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 30:1–31:16; Matthew 10:1-23; Psalm 12:1-8; Proverbs 3:13-15



January 15

Pleasant Ways

*Long life is in [wisdom's] right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.
Her ways are pleasant ways,
and all her paths are peace.
She is a tree of life to those who embrace her;
those who lay hold of her will be blessed.*

PROVERBS 3:16-18 (NIV)

The central phrase that grabs my attention is this: “Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace.”

This is a good way to live. It is pleasant—pleasant for yourself and pleasant for others who are around you. This reminds me that it is not wise to be impatient; it is not wise to be rude or harsh or critical of others. It is wise to be a peacemaker; it is wise to be kind.

Being wise is more than just being smart or skillful at life.

James gives us an excellent and clear description of godly wisdom that shows that it is both practical and wonderful. “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17, NKJV).

And so, in conclusion, dear ladies, choose wisdom—because all her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths are peace.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

Some people view wisdom as a dusty old thing, antiquated, good only for old people with nothing much to do. No! Wisdom opens wonderful doors and takes you on journeys where few travel. Wisdom fills your heart with the pure, simple, exhilarating joy that comes when you just do the right thing. Wisdom from above is “full of mercy,” for instance. So, just for the joy of it, try this out: Is there someone in your world who does not deserve mercy? Someone who has been cranky or rude? Will you choose to show mercy?

Let's Pray

Lord, please give me a tender heart to forgive. Help me say one pleasant word or do one kind deed. I know you love the difficult people in my life; help me to love them too.

One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 31:17–32:12; Matthew 10:24–11:6; Psalm 13:1–6; Proverbs 3:16–18



Look Up!

*By wisdom the LORD founded the earth;
by understanding he created the heavens.
By his knowledge the deep fountains of the earth burst forth,
and the dew settles beneath the night sky.*

PROVERBS 3:19-20

I grew up in a nominal Christian home. We believed in God, but we lived like he was far away and unconcerned. When I was eighteen, one of the first college classes I took was Philosophy of World Religions. I was drawn to spiritual things but had a lot of questions. Some of the questions were *What is the meaning of life?* and *Where did we come from?* The first day of class, the professor held up a Bible and asked if anyone believed in that book. I weakly raised my hand, not because I had ever read it, but because somehow I felt it must be important. With a tone of authority he said, "It is my stated goal that at the end of this class no one will believe in the Bible, because life is all about you; you are the center of the universe." Well, as an eighteen-year-old, I already lived like life was all about me. He was singing my song. So at the end of the semester I dropped out of college, left home, and traveled to the tropics of Mexico to "find myself."

Two years and many travels later, I had found myself, but didn't like what I found. I was disillusioned, confused, and empty. Walking along the beach one evening, I was overwhelmed with the power and beauty of a tropical sunset. Falling to my knees I cried out to God, "God I know that you are real, and I do not know you." I didn't know that the Bible says, "The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship" (Psalm 19:1). But that night, surrounded by such majesty, I experienced both an awe and a hunger to know the one who created it all.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

Has it been a while since you cried out to God, not asking him to do something for you, but to know him? Has it been a while since you went outside and looked up at the beauty of a starry night? God heard my voice that glorious night, and he will indeed hear you.

One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 32:13-34:31; Matthew 11:7-30; Psalm 14:1-7; Proverbs 3:19-20



January 17

Have No Fear

*Have no fear of sudden disaster
or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked,
for the LORD will be your confidence
and will keep your foot from being snared.*

PROVERBS 3:25-26 (NIV)

Have no fear. Many right now are living in constant fear. We are—no doubt about it—living in unstable times. I wish I could say, “Don’t worry—be happy! There is nothing to worry about,” but that would be naive.

What I can tell you is this: don’t worry—trust God. In times like this, we do have a safe harbor for our souls. “The LORD [himself] will be your confidence.”

Let me suggest something. In the One Year Bible tomorrow we start reading the incredible story of Joseph (in Genesis 37). It is the perfect illustration of our proverb today. Why don’t you take the time to read it too?

Disaster—it did come into Joseph’s life through a series of unfair circumstances, but he was not ruined, for the Lord was his confidence.

Joseph’s foot was not snared by the jealousy of his brothers, not snared when he lost his home and was sent to slavery. His foot was not snared when he was tempted by Potiphar’s wife and thrown into prison. And the final wonderful test upon tests: by the grace of God, Joseph’s foot was not snared when his brothers became needy for food and he was in a position to send them away hungry. Truly, what man meant for evil, God used for great good. Good job, Joseph!

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

Do you feel you are barely hanging on? Sometimes I feel like a half-drowned cat washed up on the shore. You too? But then I remember: the tender mercies of the Lord, they fail not. “Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning” (Lamentations 3:23). Will you take a moment right now to still your heart? Picture the burdens that are weighting you down. Will you lift them up to our merciful and kind Father in heaven? Will you rest your heart with confidence in him? Peace is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of God.

One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 35:1–36:43; Matthew 12:1-21; Psalm 15:1-5; Proverbs 3:21-26



I Can Do Something

*Do not withhold good from those who deserve it,
when it is in your power to act.*

*Do not say to your neighbor,
“Come back later; I’ll give it tomorrow”—
when you now have it with you.*

PROVERBS 3:27-28 (NIV)

The New Testament companion to this proverb is found in James 2:15-16, which says, “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?” (NIV).

Good question: What good? I love that God cares about all of this. I think of some of the missed opportunities in the Bible. I think of the innkeeper who turned away Mary when she was about to give birth to the Son of God. I think about the people in Noah’s day who saw him build that huge boat with just his sons. They could have helped.

And so we are encouraged to not miss the many opportunities around us. Okay, let me just throw out some things to pray about. Do you have elderly neighbors? Why don’t you ask, next time you go to the store, if they need anything? Do you know a single mom? Why don’t you ask if her son or her daughter needs new tennis shoes? Do you know someone who is sick? What if you made some extra soup or an extra casserole this week and took it over to them? Do you know of a family whose dad has lost his job? What if you filled a grocery bag with cereal and milk and eggs and peanut butter? Jesus said, “Inasmuch as you did to one of the least of these My brethren, you did to Me” (Matthew 25:40, NKJV).

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something.
And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do.

—EDWARD EVERETT HALE

Let’s Pray

Lord, please show me one thing I can do today to meet a need or lift a burden.

One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 37:1–38:30; Matthew 12:22–45; Psalm 16:1–11; Proverbs 3:27–32



Grace to the Humble

*The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked,
but he blesses the home of the righteous.*

*He mocks proud mockers
but gives grace to the humble.*

*The wise inherit honor,
but fools he holds up to shame.*

PROVERBS 3:33-35 (NIV)

“Grace to the humble.” That’s our topic today. Many of us theoretically would like to be humble, but then we realize that to be humble might take the process of being humbled.

But let’s listen to what 1 Peter 5:5 tells us: “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’” (NIV).

Here we see humility is a choice, and the context is in relationships. Pride and stubbornness build walls, but humility can melt them.

Let’s apply this first to marriage. Has your husband disappointed you? Have you then in your frustration struck back with words or actions? Now you have a standoff. No one wants to budge. Ladies, when families fight, nobody wins. You be the first to say the kind word. You be the first to say, “I’m sorry.” Mark my words. No matter how your husband responds, God will bless you because he promised that he would give grace to the humble. It’s been said, “Humility isn’t thinking meanly of yourself. It’s merely not thinking of yourself at all.”

So let’s humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God because he guarantees that he, God himself, will lift us up.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

I’ll be perfectly honest: it’s hard for me to humble myself when I think I am right or the other person is wrong. But God has taught me little steps that help me every time. (1) Try to step in the other person’s shoes to see his side. How does he feel? (2) Ask yourself, *Have I been thoughtless or unkind?* It is humbling, because I always see how I could have or should have done things better. (3) Take it to God; then (4) God himself will give you the next step.

One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 39:1–41:16; Matthew 12:46–13:23; Psalm 17:1-15; Proverbs 3:33-35



Fatherly Advice

My children, listen to me. Listen to your father's instruction.

*Pay attention and grow wise,
for I am giving you good guidance.*

Don't turn away from my teaching. . . .

*My father told me,
"Take my words to heart.*

Follow my instructions and you will live.

Learn to be wise, and develop good judgment.

Don't forget or turn away from my words.

Don't turn your back on wisdom, for she will protect you.

Love her, and she will guard you."

PROVERBS 4:1-2, 4-6

Maybe as you listened, this actually made you a little sad because you never had a father who talked with you and taught you wise things. Maybe you're a single mom and you wish your children had a father who did that. Having a father is a very important thing. Listen to some tragic statistics: 90 percent of all homeless and runaway children and 71 percent of high school dropouts are from fatherless homes.

But although you may have lacked this kind of strong, wise input on a human level, God himself is able to make it up to you. He is willing and able to step into that role to father you and father your kids, giving them wise advice. He can stand beside you when you're weak. He can comfort you when you're lonely or afraid. He will be the Father you never had but always wanted.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

"Learn to be wise and develop good judgment" is your Father God's advice for you today. *Learn* and *develop* are the key verbs. Wisdom does not just come overnight. We learn what is right as we read the book of Proverbs. Then we have a responsibility to apply what we learn. Each time we do what we know is right, we forge paths of obedience in our characters. Does that make sense? Wise choices and good judgment become your "new groove." And that's a good thing!

Let's Pray

Lord, please teach me what is right and help me to apply what I learn.

One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 41:17-42:17; Matthew 13:24-46; Psalm 18:1-15; Proverbs 4:1-6



January 21

Crown of Beauty

Whoever thinks that the godly life of wisdom is a life of sparseness or drabness or poor-ness is absolutely dead wrong. God is the King of the entire universe. He alone made the diamonds from coal. He alone created gold and snowflakes, waterfalls and sunsets. God loves to make things that have beauty and nobility. And we, as daughters of God, are actually princesses. Romans tells us that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; so keep this in mind as we read this lovely description in today's Wisdom for Women.

*"Getting wisdom is the most important thing you can do!
And whatever else you do, get good judgment.
If you prize wisdom, she will exalt you.
Embrace her and she will honor you.
She will place a lovely wreath on your head;
she will present you with a beautiful crown."
My child, listen to me and do as I say,
and you will have a long, good life.*

PROVERBS 4:7-10

Crowns. Wisdom will present you with a beautiful crown. Crowns are both valuable and weighty. In the Kremlin in Moscow the actual crowns worn by past rulers are displayed. Some are large, heavily encrusted with jewels. The person wearing it would always be aware that they had it on and aware of all that it meant. With a crown came great responsibility. When Queen Esther put on her royal robes and crown it was not just to rule, it was to serve.

And so, dear sisters, may we wear God's wisdom as a crown, a crown of nobility and honor and beauty.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

We women wear many hats: daughter, friend, cook, shopper, organizer, sister, counselor, homemaker, teacher, wife, mother. The question is, do you do what you do with honor? Embrace wisdom! I know—you might be thinking, *I can't! I fail.* Okay, I agree; none of us can, in our own strength.

Let's Pray

Lord, here I am again, like an empty cup held up to you. Please fill me with your wisdom that I may live with honor and beauty.



One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 42:18–43:34; Matthew 13:47–14:12; Psalm 18:16–36; Proverbs 4:7–10

Guided

*I guide you in the way of wisdom
and lead you along straight paths.
When you walk, your steps will not be hampered;
when you run, you will not stumble.
Hold on to instruction, do not let it go;
guard it well, for it is your life.*

PROVERBS 4:11-13 (NIV)

This is the ever-recurring picture of life being like a journey.

Alice, in *Alice in Wonderland*, came to a fork in the road.

"Which road do I take?" she asked.

"Where do you want to go?" responded the Cheshire cat.

"I don't know," Alice answered.

"Then," said the cat, "it doesn't matter."

But, dear sisters, your life does matter; therefore, it is important that you head in the right direction. Each step that you take, each decision that you make takes you further along the path for better or worse.

If you have a GPS in your car, you program in the address of where you need to go, your destination. The GPS then plots the best and shortest path. It guides you along the way with arrows letting you know when and where to turn. One of the greatest things is the voice. If you make a wrong turn, it will say things like, "Make a U-turn," or, "Recalculating your course." The GPS never loses sight of the goal, even if you do. This is especially helpful when I have gotten turned around, lost my way, or accidentally driven into a rough area at night.

Good news! God has given us his personal, persistent, internal GPS system, the Holy Spirit himself. Follow his arrows and obey his voice.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

I really love the words "recalculating your course." These are words of hope and help. Maybe you feel you have lost your way. Does it seem you've hit a dead end? Take heart. The very fact that you are reading this right now is evidence that you desire to get back on track. Grab hold of God's promise for you today: "I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths."



One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 44:1–45:28; Matthew 14:13–36; Psalm 18:37–50; Proverbs 4:11–13

January 23

We Must Shine!

Before you read today's Wisdom for Women, close your eyes and imagine the word picture of the phrase "Like the first gleam of dawn."

*The way of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn,
which shines ever brighter until the full light of day.
But the way of the wicked is like complete darkness.
Those who follow it have no idea what they are stumbling over.*

PROVERBS 4:18-19

"The first gleam of dawn." Maybe it's been a long time since you've gotten up early enough to see a sunrise. It is totally worth it. There is something about it that makes you feel like you're witnessing a secret, almost holy moment. The darker the night, the more exciting and dramatic the first ray is. Once the light comes, nothing can stop it. It gets stronger and stronger until there is no darkness left.

Child of God, we are living in perilous times. Darkness is dark, really dark. We see people—people we love—falling, falling into darkness. We see young people making foolish, sinful choices, and then falling in a series of life-changing, life-damaging choices. They had no idea where those first steps would lead.

And so we must shine. We must shine like the lighthouse set high on the rock of God's Word, the rock of truth, the rock of safety. We must shine. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14, NKJV).

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

Okay, I am fired up about this. God is calling us! It is time for the people of God to stoke the fires of their love for God and their passion to make a difference in this world. There are people who have never heard the gospel that God loves them. There are people who have heard it but never seen it lived out. He can use our lives like "the first gleam of dawn." Come on! Let's fall on our knees and ask him to ignite us. If not us, who? If not now, when?



One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 46:1–47:31; Matthew 15:1-28; Psalm 19:1-14; Proverbs 4:14-19

Guard Your Heart

*My son, give attention to my words;
Incline your ear to my sayings.
Do not let them depart from your eyes;
Keep them in the midst of your heart;
For they are life to those who find them,
And health to all their flesh.
Keep your heart with all diligence;
For out of it spring the issues of life.*

PROVERBS 4:20-23 (NKJV)

The importance of the heart is the topic of today.

The New Living Translation Bible says, “Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do.” Ladies, this may be some of the most important advice we’ll ever receive. For us as women, our hearts are places of great vulnerability; on the other hand, they’re also places of tenderness, compassion, and love.

And so may I ask you, what is the state of your heart? Do you have a broken heart, or a wounded heart? Do you have a troubled heart, a weary heart, an empty heart? Worse yet, do you have a cold, hard, or bitter heart?

In our proverb today God himself, our Father God, our Great Physician, gives us his prescription, his healing balm, the Word of God.

God’s Word cleanses. It frees our hearts. It softens and restores. It’s surgically sharp and can actually completely and permanently heal our hearts. We must also know that God’s Word guards our hearts with truth. It’s the antidote for the lie. God’s Word is the Sword of the Spirit that defends and protects. It’s light that gives our hearts hope; therefore, keep your heart with all diligence, “for out of it spring the issues of life.”

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

There is lots of advice out there for emotional and spiritual brokenness. Take a pill, take a trip, read a book, or talk to a professional. Some women just give up and drown their sorrow. But let me give you the best prescription ever given to man (or woman). Read Psalm 23 three times a day for one week. “Keep them [the promises] in the midst of your heart” and you will see; he will restore your soul.


One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 48:1–49:33; Matthew 15:29–16:12; Psalm 20:1-9; Proverbs 4:20-27



January 25

Pandora's Box



*My son, pay attention to my wisdom,
listen well to my words of insight. . . .
For the lips of an adulteress drip honey,
and her speech is smoother than oil;
but in the end she is bitter as gall,
sharp as a double-edged sword.
Her feet go down to death;
her steps lead straight to the grave.
She gives no thought to the way of life;
her paths are crooked, but she knows it not.*

PROVERBS 5:1, 3-6 (NIV)

Today's proverb is a blunt, sober warning to men about the dangers of adultery, but if you were to watch almost any popular TV show today, the message is quite the opposite. They make casual sex look like a harmless game where the more you play, the more fun it is. Nothing could be further from the truth. It's a dangerous game, and no one wins. If you use emotions or people as toys, they break, leaving everyone broken.

Ladies, I don't care if you are fourteen or forty-four or seventy-four. Women have an ability to bring men down. The situation portrayed in this proverb is of a woman who flirts and flatters and causes a man to fall.

So if this has hit a chord, if you know that you have been flirting with danger, if you know you've opened a Pandora's box, first of all, may I beg you, repent. Call a godly friend and ask for prayer, ask for accountability, and draw near to the Lord himself, who is able to reel you back from this dangerous path of death.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

Let me talk to mothers for a moment. You are either planting good seeds or bad seeds in your sons' or daughters' minds regarding their attitude toward "casual sex." Do you enjoy the latest sitcom that winks at sex on the first date or at couples living together? Do you buy the magazines that update you on the sex life of the stars? If you do, you are endorsing that behavior, no matter what you say. All I can say is, it's time to clean your own house.



One Year Bible Reading

Genesis 50:1—Exodus 2:10; Matthew 16:13–17:9; Psalm 21:1-13;
Proverbs 5:1-6

Utter Ruin

*Now then, my sons, listen to me;
do not turn aside from what I say.
Keep to a path far from [an adulteress],
do not go near the door of her house. . . .
[Otherwise,] at the end of your life you will groan,
when your flesh and body are spent.
You will say, "How I hated discipline!
How my heart spurned correction!
I would not obey my teachers
or listen to my instructors.
I have come to the brink of utter ruin."*

PROVERBS 5:7-8, 11-14 (NIV)

Today's proverb is a warning to stay away from immoral sex. Although written for sons, it applies to our daughters as well. Even though this was written many years ago, it mentions the very same type of damage that occurs with immorality today.

It's been wisely said that "tomorrow is the best reason for doing the right thing today." Yes, there is pleasure in sin for a season, but beware: it takes a serious toll.

And so I feel it's important for us as women to be aware of the devastating consequences of sexual sin. STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) have become epidemic. We are learning more and more of the long-range damage this does to your body.

But more than that, immoral sex does not just mess with your body. It messes with your emotions, your thought life, and with your soul. Each time you have sex with someone, you bond in a deep place. When that relationship is torn, it tears a piece out of you. Sin is such a liar. Sin promises simple pleasure, but it delivers a powerful and complicated punch of pain and problems.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

Maybe you are thinking, *If only I had known then what I know now*. Because everyone was doing it, you caved in to pressure to sleep around. Now you can look back and see a long trail of disappointment and pain. So, what now? I am so happy to say that God is the God of the fresh start. Purity is first spiritual, then it becomes emotional and physical. Jesus came to redeem and restore. Will you ask him and will you let him restore you, "white as snow"?

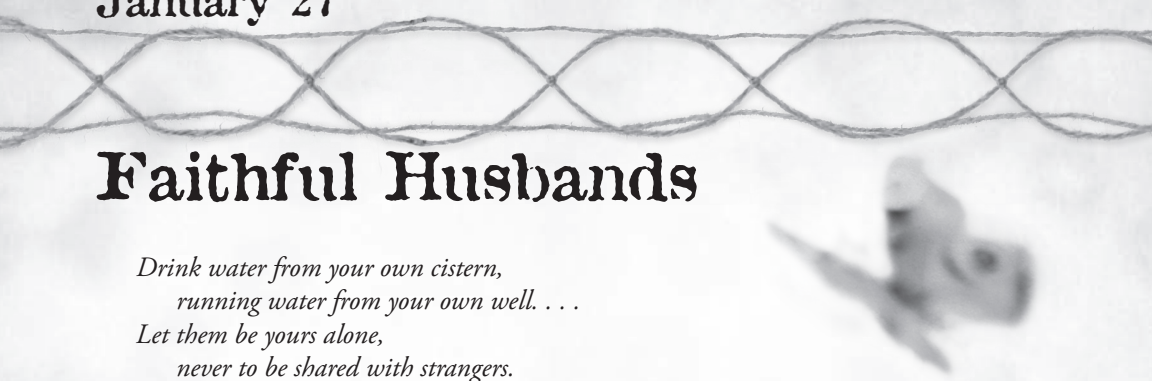


One Year Bible Reading

Exodus 2:11-3:22; Matthew 17:10-27; Psalm 22:1-18; Proverbs 5:7-14

January 27

Faithful Husbands



*Drink water from your own cistern,
running water from your own well. . . .
Let them be yours alone,
never to be shared with strangers.
May your fountain be blessed,
and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.
A loving doe, a graceful deer—
may her breasts satisfy you always,
may you ever be captivated by her love.
Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress?
Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?
For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD,
and he examines all his paths.*

PROVERBS 5:15, 17-21 (NIV)

Ladies, our proverb today is written to our husbands, telling them to be faithful to us. This is a wonderful thing.

I was with some of my friends recently who were telling me about their daughters who have taken oaths of purity. Not only are they committed to wait until marriage to have sex but they are committed to not even kiss. One of the young girls told her friends, "I don't want to kiss a man who might later be someone else's husband." Good job, girls!

But is this possible in this generation? Is it worth it to even try? It helps to break some of the fallacies about sex outside of marriage. Studies show that couples who live together are not more satisfied, because there is no commitment. Cohabiting men are four times more likely to cheat than married men, and cohabiting women eight times more likely than married women—showing again that the grass truly is greener on your side of the marriage fence.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

Although this proverb is addressed to husbands, let's now talk about our part. Make no mistake, there are many wives who make it hard for their husbands to be satisfied at home. When your husband comes home, are you still in your oldest, ugliest sweats? Is there no sign of dinner, and do the bills show you have been shopping too much? Your husband deserves more, and trust me, someone out there would like to give him more. Tonight, cook his favorite dinner and give him a reason to be captivated by your love.



One Year Bible Reading

Exodus 4:1–5:21; Matthew 18:1–20; Psalm 22:19–31; Proverbs 5:15–21

Slave of Sin

*An evil man is held captive by his own sins;
they are ropes that catch and hold him.
He will die for lack of self-control;
he will be lost because of his incredible folly.*

PROVERBS 5:22-23

The clear moral of this proverb is never to underestimate the power of sin to make you a slave. It can hold you hostage. Listen to this powerful description: “Sin will take you farther than you ever wanted to go. It will leave you longer than you ever wanted to stay, and it will cost you more than you ever wanted to pay.”

But lest we get a mental picture of someone else we know whose sin is obvious and we shake our heads and say, “Yep, that poor person is ruining her life,” we need to be conscious of our own sin. Sin is subtle. You may not be wasting your life at the bar, but maybe you are harboring pride and resentment. Don’t kid yourself. That kind of sin can tie us in knots too.

When evangelist Billy Sunday was preparing for a crusade in a large city, he wrote a letter asking the mayor of that city for the names of individuals who had spiritual problems and needed help and prayer. How surprised Billy was when the mayor sent him the entire city telephone directory.

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23, NKJV), but “if we confess our sin, he is faithful to forgive and to cleanse” (1 John 1:9, paraphrase). Now, that’s freedom.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

Can you visualize the grip sins can have? They are “ropes that catch and hold.” Let’s take a moment and be honest and specific. The sin of bitterness and resentment, for instance, can captivate your thought life. You find yourself reliving a hurt over and over and over. Do you see how driven and enslaved it has made you? Cut those ropes! By the power of God’s grace, cut those ropes! Today, every time those thoughts come to your mind, will you ask God to help you forgive and forget—and set you free? Ask, and *you shall receive*.



One Year Bible Reading

Exodus 5:22–7:25; Matthew 18:21–19:12; Psalm 23:1–6; Proverbs 5:22–23

January 29

Financial Foolishness

*My child, if you co-sign a loan for a friend
or guarantee the debt of someone you hardly know—
if you have trapped yourself by your agreement
and are caught by what you said—
quick, get out of it if you possibly can!
You have placed yourself at your friend's mercy.
Now swallow your pride;
go and beg to have your name erased.
Don't put it off. Do it now!
Don't rest until you do.*

PROVERBS 6:1-4

The topic of today's Wisdom for Women is the danger of getting entangled in other people's financial dealings. If we can learn any lessons from the financial crisis we are currently in, both publicly and personally, we can see that we have not been wise. It's risky business to back up someone else when they are involved in risky business and can't stand on their own. Oh, if Capitol Hill and Wall Street and those who live on our street would listen and heed God's wisdom as stated in today's proverb!

So, ladies, what can we learn? We need to be less dependent on credit for ourselves, our kids, and others. If we can't save up for something we want, we need to truly assess if we really need it.

When my husband and I bought our first home, we had no one who could give us a down payment or cosign for us. The first house we tried to buy fell through because we didn't qualify. In retrospect, it was a blessing. It was a house in an area that wasn't good for us, and it was a payment we really couldn't afford. So even though at the time it felt like a bad thing, it was a good thing. It taught us to be realistic. We spent the next year and a half saving. Then when we did buy, it was a victory and a blessing.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

Does God really care about our finances? Yes, actually he does. Foolishness and carelessness with money has been the ruin of many marriages. Loaning money to someone who isn't wise with money and doesn't pay you back has soured many friendships. Let's be wise savers and frugal spenders.



One Year Bible Reading

Exodus 8:1–9:35; Matthew 19:13-30; Psalm 24:1-10; Proverbs 6:1-5

Ants Aren't Lazy

*Take a lesson from the ants, you lazybones.
Learn from their ways and be wise!
Even though they have no prince,
governor, or ruler to make them work,
they labor hard all summer,
gathering food for the winter.
But you, lazybones, how long will you sleep?
When will you wake up?
I want you to learn this lesson:
A little extra sleep, a little more slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest—
and poverty will pounce on you like a bandit;
scarcity will attack you like an armed robber.*

PROVERBS 6:6-11

You might not realize that the proverb that we look at every day is taken from the daily proverb in the *One Year Bible*. I love this reading schedule. It takes us sequentially through the whole counsel of God. I love that the Proverbs address practical and important life issues.

Today's Wisdom for Women deals with the topic of personal diligence and uses the amazing little ant as an example. These tiny creatures put some of us to shame. What's the secret of their success? They just keep at it, even though no one is standing over them telling them to.

Child of God, consider the ant. One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control because it's a by-product of the Spirit's presence in our life. We need to start there. Diligence needs to start, first of all, in spiritual things, seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. Then asking him to fire you up. Ask God to give you the work ethic of our wise little friend, the ant.

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

I love the ant! She is the perfect illustration of the principle "Inch by inch, anything's a cinch!" Let's apply her example. For instance, why don't we clean out our closets? Because, once they start getting messy, messy takes over—right? Well, let's reverse the process. March into your closet and put five items in place. I'm going to. Now, savor the small victory and it will inch you on to others. Yay ants!

One Year Bible Reading

Exodus 10:1-12:13; Matthew 20:1-28; Psalm 25:1-15; Proverbs 6:6-11



January 31

Troublemakers

*Here is a description of worthless and wicked people:
They are constant liars,
signaling their true intentions to their friends
by making signs with their eyes and feet and fingers.
Their perverted hearts plot evil.
They stir up trouble constantly.
But they will be destroyed suddenly,
broken beyond all hope of healing.*

PROVERBS 6:12-15

A naughty person. Most of us remember some boy in elementary school who was always messing around—causing trouble and getting others in trouble. Well, some little boys and some little girls never grow up and out of that behavior.

What's the value of talking about them? Moms, talk to your children. Teach them not to make trouble or to look at bad behavior as cool or fun. "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character'" (1 Corinthians 15:33, NIV). But don't—please don't—hate those kids, either. Sometimes they are just acting out. Maybe they're craving attention. Maybe they have no one at home to reel them in. Did you ever think about who is assigned to pray for those children? Sit down and write down the names of those kids who are troublemakers and pray for them by name.

And while you are at it, do you have any troublemakers at work or among your relatives or in your church? Maybe they are acting out, craving attention, too. Don't hate them, either. Did you ever think about who is assigned to pray for them by name? Maybe, just maybe, you are!

Make It Personal . . . Live It Out!

I have a friend who has a jail ministry. She has truly found her niche. Every day when she goes in, she knows she will talk to someone who is considered a "lost cause." But she has also seen that for some, jail is a wake-up call. She is a light to show them the way out of the darkness. You don't have to go into the jail to find someone who needs that. Will you ask God to assign you just one person who needs a ray of hope? And then, will you shine it?



One Year Bible Reading

Exodus 12:14–13:16; Matthew 20:29–21:22; Psalm 25:16-22; Proverbs 6:12-15