

Becoming the Woman God Wants Me to Be – Lesson 1 –Faith Foundations

Notes by Beth Beutler for First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC. Beth also is the founder of www.hopeunlimitedforyou.com.

COMPONENTS (what you'll need/do)

- Scissors
- Glue
- Colorful index cards
- Attractive basket
- Embellishments (scrapbooking items like ribbon, stickers, markers)
- Title of the book written on a board or flip chart, etc.
- Ziplock baggies

NOTE: at the end of this lesson is a suggestion for creating a Proverbs 31 gift or incentive basket. You may choose to use this at the beginning to encourage women in their Bible memory, or at the end as a “goodbye gift.” The list is provided in both lessons.

Activity: provide colorful index or cut out cards and various embellishments (can ask people to each bring an embellishment to contribute); provide scissors and glue. Allow participants to cut memory verses out of back of book and decorate them. This should be saved to the end of class—allow ladies to stay as long as they wish.

Weekly activity: have ladies fill out colorful index card with name, email, mailing address, phone, and optionally, a prayer request related to this study. Put them in the basket and have ladies draw out the name of someone to pray for or encourage until the next meeting.

CONCEPTS (what you'll teach/discuss)

Begin by analyzing the title of the book:

- Becoming...it's a journey
- Woman...femininity
- God...His choice and guidelines
- Wants...He desires this for us
- Me...personal and unique...I'm me

Question: *Why do we need a good foundation of faith? (It affects every aspect of our life)*

There are several concepts that you will read about this week, that begin to describe the Proverbs 31 woman. Let's take an overall look at them now:

1: A Woman of PURPOSE

What does it mean to live life with purpose?

How many of you have a purpose statement?

Did Jesus have a purpose statement? (Yes, John 10:10 is one example.)

A purpose statement does not have to be an elaborate, complicated thing. When you write one, be cautious that it does not become “about you.” We are part of God’s story. Sometimes talk about purpose can become selfish, as if finding purpose is mainly for our own fulfillment or happiness. Our truest happiness comes in serving God and others.

Scripture about purpose: a popular verse regarding our purpose and life plan is Jeremiah 29:11 *For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

While this verse is certainly encouraging in and of itself, we would be wise to remember its context. The Israelites were in exile at the time and the promise came in the midst of God’s message that they would remain in bondage for quite some time. They were suffering the consequences of their sin but God’s *ultimate* plan for them was not to harm them. Be careful not to apply this verse to every situation in your own life as a promise that you will never go through hard times. Often, He accomplishes His purpose through hard times.

2: A woman who enjoys QUIET

Have participants sit for at least one minute, totally silent.

How did it feel to simply sit quietly? (Good, awkward)

Why did it possibly feel awkward to sit quietly?

How often in your day do you take time to be quiet? Quietness is very much missing in our world. What benefits can occur when we make it a practice to be quiet every day?

Donna will challenge you to create a prayer oasis and encourage you to have a quiet time daily, often most effectively first thing in the morning. (You do not have to be legalistic about when, but often, morning works best before other distractions get in the way. Jesus prayed throughout the day, but also made a point of morning prayer, too. Mark 1:35)

Scripture about quietness: Psalm 23:2 *He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, Isn't the word "makes" interesting? Has God ever "made" you lie down?* I believe there are times that He allows sickness so that we do stop and rest.

Comment on this statement: If you want to be an inspiration to everyone you meet, meet with God first.

3: A woman who FEARS God

The P31 chapter ends with a description of a “woman who fears the Lord.” Fearing God is to have an awe, and deep respect of Him—an undivided devotion.

Quietness creates an environment for fearing God because it allows us to spend time with Him and reflect on His Word (sometimes called “meditation.”)

We should not be afraid of meditation, as if it is only a “new age” thing. One definition of meditate is “to engage in thought or contemplation; reflect.” To meditate on God’s word is to read it, think on it, reflect on it—basically to digest it slowly. When the Psalmist says (Scripture) *I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. Psalm 119:15* He is taking time to think through God’s precepts.

When you read Scripture, do you meditate on it? One danger of programs such as “read through the Bible in a year” is that we end up cruising through God’s Word and trying to complete portions as tasks rather than digesting a message in it. In 2009, I encourage you to pass up the reading programs and instead really mediate on a book or passage for quite some time. Use the Scriptures in your prayers, as well. You might find it wise to journal your thoughts and prayers as you repeatedly reflect on a passage.

4: A woman who holds CONFIDENCE in God and inspires CONFIDENCE from others.

Women are often encouraged to be “confident” in themselves and project an image that results in respect. How much better for a woman to build confidence through dependence—on God, her Husband! (Isaiah 54:5) Psalm 71:5 *For you have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth.*

We can inspire confidence in God by how we live our lives. As Donna shares, “Although I’ll never attain perfection this side of heaven, I don’t want to use this as an excuse for sloppy living. Instead, I want to be a valuable asset to Your (God’s) cause on earth.”

The Proverbs 31 woman’s family was confident in her, because her confidence was in God. She had no lack of anything she needed because of her Father!

5: A woman who has a POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Think about your most recent challenging situation and apply this quote to it: “*There is good in every circumstance, even if that good is merely the opportunity to be a more patient, more compassionate, or wiser person.*” Allow sharing if time.

Read Philippians 4:4-9 together: Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! **5**Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **6**Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7**And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. **9**Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

This passage gives a clear direction—command even—as to our mindset. It is easy to feel that one should be realistic and therefore somewhat pessimistic in order to be honest. However, as Christians, the honest truth is that we have so much to rejoice in and if we are commanded to rejoice, we don’t have an excuse to be pessimistic!

Conclusion

The bottom line—foundation—of the Proverbs 31 had a lot to do with attitude. Her view of God, her view of herself, her view of her family, all connected to allow her to be godly, influential and productive. Every aspect of your life is important to God and we will be looking at many practical areas in which you can be inspired to build your confidence in Him and inspire others toward that confidence as well

Allow time for embellishing verse cards.

COMMUNICATION (what you'll announce/remind)

- Remind about prayer cards and sending a message to their partner
- Encourage “on-time” attendance (as the leader, start on time each week!)
- Allow ladies to take home extra embellishments in Ziploc baggies

COMPLEMENTS (how you can enhance/go deeper)

Email Questions

Icebreaker/getting to know you: Share your name, city and state and what stage of life would you describe yourself to be in currently (i.e. empty nester, nearing retirement, newly married, career oriented, etc.)

Questions related to this week's chapter (perhaps have them pick 3 of the 5 to answer.)

1. Donna challenged you to develop a purpose statement. After doing the exercise, write what you came up with.

2. Do you have a prayer oasis? If so, share a bit about it with us.

3. Comment on this statement: “If you want to be an inspiration to everyone you meet, meet with God first.” Is it possible to commit adultery that is not physical? Share your thoughts about this concept, including the idea of God being jealous for our love.

4. In what area of your life are you most tempted to take a pessimistic view? Make a choice this week to be positive in that one area and let us know how that helped you.

Ideas for creating a Proverbs 31 gift basket. Many thanks to Linda Coco of Montana for creating this idea. An alternative suggestion is to use the basket throughout the course to provide incentives for memorization.

She sees that her trading is profitable: pair of dollar store reading glasses, \$1 pocket calculator from Walmart.

Her lamp does not go out at night: set of tea light votives, mini hanging lantern with a tea light votive, from dollar bin at Target.

She speaks with wisdom and faithful instruction is on her tongue: a purple gauze bag filled with lip balm, chewing gum and breath mints.

She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard: lavender seed packet, gardening gloves with grape or ivy motif, small hand-held gardening tools. I've seen some feminine, pink-handled ones at department stores.

She sets about her work vigorously: latex cleaning gloves bought at Target dollar bin.

Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting: wrinkle or firming facial cream, a charm bracelet with dangling religious charms that read "believe, love, faith, grace, etc."

She is worth far more than rubies: a necklace with ruby-colored beads, clearance red brooches from Walmart, a keychain with a dangling "ruby" bauble.

She provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls: mini Pillsbury Breakfast & Brunch cook booklet from the Target dollar bin (or other recipes.)

She can laugh at the days to come: desktop 365-day flip calendar with witticisms by Anita Renfroe, that hilarious Christian comedian.

She is clothed in fine linen and purple: I hand-knitted a purple scarf, purple bandana.

Her arms are strong for her tasks: a pair of 1 or 2 pound dumbbells.

When it snows, she has no fear for her household, for all of them are clothed in scarlet: red scarf/glove set; red picture frame; created photo of a red barn in a snowstorm with the verse underneath using computer clipart.

She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness: Pillsbury mini bread cook booklet from Target dollar bin; a strip of yeast packets, a set of mini loaf pans; bread mix.

She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands: a skein of purple yarn, a packet of flax seed, a crochet hook or pair of knitting needles.

The underlining theme to the gift collection is purple with some red mixed in. I've displayed the gifts in a wicker basket that is decorated with ivy leaves and purple bows.

Becoming the Woman God Wants Me to Be – Lesson 2 –Godly Habits

Notes by Beth Beutler for First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC. Beth also is the founder of www.hopeunlimitedforyou.com.

COMPONENTS (what you'll need/do)

- Colorful index cards/basket
- Instrumental praise music
- Candles, matches
- Alarm clock set to go off in the middle of your lesson
- Plant for door prize
- Rubber bands for each participant

Activity: Teach this lesson by candlelight, playing soothing instrumental praise as the ladies arrive. (This will create an environment of peace, which is discussed this week.) Set an alarm clock to go off in the middle of the lesson to show the abruptness of waking up daily that way. Have a door prize of a plant to represent staying planted in the Word of God.)

CONCEPTS (what you'll teach/discuss)

1: A woman who is CONSCIOUSLY SELECTIVE

The P31 woman “selects” wool and flax, indicating that she is intentional about what she is doing and using. *Do you ever feel overwhelmed by too many choices? Give an example of where this feeling could occur. (i.e. Walmart, outlets, buffets)*

In what areas do you make a conscious decision everyday? (Clothing, food to eat) Where do you catch yourself just being haphazard?

- clothing choices
- entertainment
- food/meal choices
- exercise/activity
- money management
- home management/upkeep
- time alone with God

Illustration: on the day I worked on this lesson, I had brought a lunch, but got hungry mid-morning. I had not consciously prepared with enough snacks of my own so had two cookies (holiday desserts still being around.) The sugar was probably not good for me, especially since I was still recovering from a bad cold/sinus infection. I could have planned by bringing carrot sticks, multigrain crackers, V8 juice, etc.

2: A woman who is PLANTED and WATCHFUL

Last week we talked about meditation. Let's review. What does it mean to meditate on God's Word? (Ponder, reflect, consider, and spend time)

Mention Bible Study Worksheet at the back of the book as an aid to this.

When an area of the country experiences drought, what are some of the negative consequences? When we repeatedly put off soaking in God's Word, our Christian life can get dry. However, daily saturation in God's Word and prayer throughout the day can revitalize it! This is what it means to be planted in God's word! (This may be a good time to give out the door prize of a healthy plant.)

What are some practical ways to be refreshed by God's Word and prayer, even when busy? (Daily TAG, Scripture on CD, prayer cards in our purse to use when in rest room, before bed, healthy conversations with other Christians, etc.)

Now, let's think about the same thing when it comes to prayer. Why do we make it so difficult? Think of it this way. *How many of you have a cell phone and/or do texting or email?* How many of you use Facebook or Twitter and either read or write statuses? Most of us are comfortable with being in touch throughout the day. All those tools simply help us to be connected with others (sometimes many others) throughout the day. We don't over-analyze and stop everything for 30 minutes of uninterrupted emailing (okay, maybe we do, but generally we respond throughout the day in short spurts.) Prayer can be like that. While there is no substitute for uninterrupted, deep prayer time, prayer is also like breathing or writing a status report on Facebook. It's simply keeping in touch with God and listening to Him. (Can you imagine if God had a Facebook page?!?) It's not always about making requests, either, just like not every status you read is asking for something.

Let's take a look at James 5:15-17 (have them look it up and read.) The term used here by James is not the medical term for healing, but rather a word meaning "made whole and forgiven." Spiritual wholeness should be the goal—God always offers healing and forgiveness.

The P31 woman brings people good and not harm. Matthew 12:34 tells us that "out of the heart the mouth speaks." The P31 woman would spill out what is in her heart. Her fear of the Lord would influence how she would bring good to others.

You can also bring good to others through your prayers for them!

3: A Woman who SLEEPS WELL!

(Note: ideally discreetly set the alarm on the clock so the buzzer goes off while teaching this lesson. You may want to have a helper do this for you.)

What is one of the most popular Christmas carols? (Silent Night) The phrase "sleep in heavenly peace" came to mind as I was writing this. Do you sleep in heavenly peace? (Take a poll of the group as to the average number of hours they sleep each night.)

What interrupts our sleep?

Donna will give you a challenge this week...to eliminate the snooze button. You each have a unique amount of sleep your own body needs each night. Ideally, you get to the point where you awaken without depending on it. Next week I will ask you if anyone took the challenge!

The P31 women could not work with "eager" hands if she was exhausted! She worked late when necessary, but her ongoing diligence reflected proper refueling.

4: A woman who is DILIGENT

Have you ever watched ants work? (Discuss) What characterizes their work pattern? (Persistence, teamwork, optimism—remember the song “Hi Hopes!”)

Discuss Newton’s First Law of Motion: A body at rest tends to stay at rest; a body in motion tends to stay in motion. Give an example of that in your own life.

Donna has suggested that you have an evening routine and a morning routine. This is also advocated by *flylady.net*, an extensive site to help people overcome clutter in their homes and lives. It starts with basic disciplines. Do you approach these routines with “eager” hands? You can be enthusiastic, knowing they will have a positive affect on you and your family.

If time, discuss what items may be part of participants evening and morning routines.

Conclusion

Last week we began to build (or revisit) our foundation of faith. Now we are adding practical, godly habits to that. What you believe will come out in your speech and actions. As your heart becomes soft to the Holy Spirit in your life, your desire for change will grow, and the practical, new habits will be a natural fruit from that heart change. Pray this week about your attitudes and true desires as you take this journey. Ask God to “give you the desires of your heart,” desires HE wants you to have and actions He wants you to take as a result.

COMMUNICATION (what you’ll announce/remind)

- Tell the ladies to take home a rubber band and be sure to watch Donna’s video for Day 10 so they discover what it is for.
- Ask them to plan on bringing in a healthy snack or beverage for next week’s class on Healthy Eating.
- If they have not already passed around the basket and drawn a prayer partner name, do so now.
- Plan to send a reminder email and encouragement during the week

COMPLEMENTS (how to enhance/go deeper)

Email questions

Icebreaker/getting to know you: Share the name of the city/state where you were born, and estimate how many hours of sleep you tend to get per night (average.)

Questions related to this week’s chapter (perhaps have them pick 3 of the 5 to answer.)

1. *In which of the following areas of your life do you tend to be consciously selective? In which do you tend to be haphazard (i.e. no real plan)*
 - *clothing choices*
 - *entertainment*
 - *food/meal choices*
 - *exercise/activity*
 - *money management*
 - *home management/upkeep*
 - *time alone with God*

2. *Challenge yourself to avoid using the snooze button at least three days this week. Instead, set your alarm for the time you must be up. But pray that God will awaken you when you've had enough sleep so that you awaken before it goes off. Comment on the experience.*
3. *Rate your prayer life on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being "practically non-existent" and 5 being "praying regularly and with power." Comment on why you rated it the way you did. Would you like to see something change? Why and how?*
4. *Newton's First Law of Motion says, "A body at rest tends to stay at rest; a body in motion tends to stay in motion." Give an example from your life that supports that principle.*
5. *You should be thinking about an evening and a morning routine. Share 1-3 items on either one of those lists and comment on how maintaining this disciplined approach can help your spiritual, physical and emotional life.*
6. *Comment on James 5:15-17 and then write a prayer for this group, sending it with your response. Be aware that the word used for healing in this passage is not the medical term, but one meaning "made whole and forgiven."*

Becoming the Woman God Wants Me to Be – Lesson 3 – Healthy Eating

Notes by Beth Beutler for First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC. Beth also is the founder of www.hopeunlimitedforyou.com.

COMPONENTS: (what you'll need/do)

- Healthy Snacks brought in by the participants
- 2 plastic cups
- Container of vegetable oil
- Bag of sugar
- Teaspoon
- Handi-Vac and baggies (in Ziplock section of grocery/department stores) to be used as a door prize
- Colored index cards/basket
- Drawing tickets—give to those who watched at least two of Donna's videos

Activity: Serve a vegetable tray and fresh, clean water as refreshments for your group today. Serve it on lovely, bright plates or china to elevate the value of healthy food. Consider giving away a gift certificate to a healthy food store or a Handi-Vac Vacuum Sealer as a door prize. Once everyone has served themselves, use the Handi-Vac to prepare vacuum-sealed “to go” bags for them to take home, demonstrating how to make planning for healthy food easy.

CONCEPTS: (what you'll teach/discuss)

1: The value of PRUNING.

Discuss John 15:2-6 and why Jesus mentions pruning. Can this apply to our eating?

2: Portion DISTORTION

Practical thought: when going out to eat with someone, choose to share one meal. In most restaurants, you are given far more than one person can eat, anyway, and this will also save your pocketbook. Invite people to “go share a plate” together. Alternatively, immediately ask for a to-go box and put half of the meal into it right away, saving it for another time. Also, consider using smaller plates at home or not taking seconds.

Why do you think gluttony is often overlooked as a sin?

Discuss why food is a magnet for fellowship, and if used correctly, a great “glue” for connecting people (i.e. thought of enjoying something together, ability to be doing something else besides just talking, which is helpful for shy folks, etc.)

Often, good things taken to an extreme can result in sin. Feasting and food is one of these. While food is a magnet for fellowship, and God Himself is preparing a great feast for us, overindulging turns into feeding our appetites and food becomes an idol.

Let's look at three verses in Proverbs that discuss this sin. (Have each table read one of the passages.)

Proverbs 23: 2 – Put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony.

Proverbs 23:20-21 - Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.

Proverbs 28:7 – He who keeps the law is a discerning son, but a companion of gluttons disgraces his father.

Galatians 5:22 tells us “self-control” is one of the fruits of the Spirit. (It is interesting that a godly characteristic is described as a fruit!)

Thoughts from these Scriptures:

- To cut one's own throat is committing suicide. Gluttony is a form of killing our bodies. Strong language, but truth! It's as if the author is saying, “You might as well kill yourself if you are given to gluttony!”
- Gluttony leads to drowsiness. Drowsiness throughout the day keeps us unproductive and can lead to feeling emotionally drained and even depressed. It's harder to rejoice in the Lord when you feel sluggish.
- Note the reference to companions. Food consumption is very often a social thing. (How many parties have you gone to that didn't serve some type of refreshments?) Our friends can be very influential in terms of our eating habits.
 - Choose healthy friends as your closest companions...ones that will support and even join you in healthier habits. Make social times active—play tennis, walk, etc. not always around food.
 - Be a healthy friend. Don't throw food stumbling blocks in front of friends who are trying to eat better. Host a healthy foods party and bring healthy items to potlucks. At holidays, come up with healthy and creative gifts instead of sugary foods.

3: Watch SUGAR and fat intake.

Do a demonstration of how many teaspoons of sugar/fat are allowable in a healthy diet. Then demonstrate how many the typical American eats. **USE A VOLUNTEER**

Maximum amount of fat recommended for an average woman is 66 grams per day, or 13 teaspoons. Average American eats about 85 per day (another 4 teaspoons) Put that many teaspoons of oil into a container.

Maximum amount of sugar recommended for an average woman is 40 grams, or 10 teaspoons, but the average American eats double that! (20 teaspoons) (USDA recommendations) Put that many teaspoons into a bag or container.

Do some research about average sugar/fat contents (i.e. at <http://www.cspinet.org/reports/sugar/popsugar.html>)

- Pepsi: 12 oz, about 10 tsp
- Low fat, fruit yogurt: 8 oz, 7 tsp
- Wheaties: 3-4 tsp
- Raisins: 4 tsp (note, could possibly be considered natural sugar.)

Fat content:

- Two tablespoons Ranch Dressing: 1 tsp fat
- 4 chicken nuggets: 2.5 tsp fat
- Large French fries, 6.5 tsp fat

4: Healthy Eating Takes PLANNING

Note how the P31 woman prepares, plans and portions food. She is “consciously selective” in bringing food in that is not convenient, but likely of higher quality. She distributes it wisely, not laying out a huge “all you can eat” buffet. She is up early preparing.

Practical help for preparing:

-Pick one day a week to do some food planning and preparation. You will find it easier to eat healthier if you have meals prepared and a selection of healthy snacks. A little time on the weekend can reduce stress during the week!

- Prepare ahead and use your freezer! (Many meals can be made at one time and portioned into freezer containers or dishes for baking or slow cooking on a particular day.)
- Pre-portioned – vegetables can be divided into baggies on the weekend. Vacuum bags work well for some veggies like carrots, broccoli, spinach leaves (not for watery veggies like cucumbers or tomatoes, though.) An inexpensive but effective version of vacuum sealer is available in the baggie area of the grocery store. **NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO DO THE DRAWING FOR THE HANDI-VAC**
- Power shakes of healthy ingredients/supplement powders that you may use can be pre-mixed and refrigerated or frozen.
- Some sandwiches can be frozen (i.e. peanut butter/jelly, some cheeses)
- If you work outside the home (or even in a home office) always keep a basket or drawer of healthy, appealing non-perishable snacks on hand for the mid-morning or mid-afternoon munchies.
- Keep a healthy, non-perishable snack in your purse.
- Keep healthy juices like small cans of low-sodium V8 juice on hand for an easy and extra vegetable serving
- Challenge yourself to have at least one fruit and one vegetable at every meal, effectively giving you six per day? Veggies at breakfast? Tomato juice counts!

5: Consider FASTING occasionally.

Talk about the “Daniel Fast/Diet/Days” here. Encourage people who may not feel ready to do ten days to pick a period of time to try it and we will discuss next week.

Conclusion

Mention that moderation rather than deprivation may be the healthier way to go. A consistent, healthier eating plan long-term is better than a drastic change that only lasts a few days.

Undergird with a change of heart! *Colossians 10:31 (CEV) When you eat or drink or do anything else, always do it to honor God.*

COMMUNICATION (what you’ll announce/remind)

Announce that next week, the women should come in comfortable clothing and walking shoes.

Remind them to pray for/contact their partner

Follow up with email communication during the week.

COMPLEMENTS (how you can enhance/go deeper)

Email questions:

Icebreaker/getting to know you: If you could eat any food you liked without consequence, what would it be?

Content Questions (pick at least 2 of the first 4 and also do number 5 for a total of 3 answers. Feel free to answer them ALL if you like.)

- 1. What food do you tend to eat as comfort food (i.e. when tired, stressed, or emotionally drained)? Think of a healthy substitute and put it in the pantry next to this comfort food. What healthy food did you choose/could you use?*
- 2. Years ago, gluttony was considered a serious sin. However, rarely are we taught about it now. How does it strike you to think of gluttony as a sin? Why has it become an “acceptable sin” in Christian environments?*
- 3. Daniel Days: Try one day or more of only vegetables, water and perhaps healthy protein such as a bit of peanut butter or some nuts. Report to us how you felt that day (or for the period you chose.) Alternatively, choose to give up or greatly reduce partaking of a habitual item that you love. How was your relationship with God affected by this choice?*
- 4. “Cleaning your plate” has always seemed to be the appropriate thing. However, a mindset change to “never clear your plate” can change you! Take the challenge of never fully clearing your plate for one or more days this week and tell us about the experience.*
- 5. Required: Meditate on Proverbs 23:1-3 for at least two days before responding. Comment on what this passage means to you personally, in this modern age.*

Optional: choose one video for this week from www.donnapartow.com/blog1 and comment on it. Agree? Disagree? Etc. Be sure to tell us what day you picked.

Becoming the Woman God Wants Me to Be – Lesson 4 –Strengthening Your Body

Notes by Beth Beutler for First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC. Beth also is the founder of www.hopeunlimitedforyou.com.

COMPONENTS (what you'll need/do)

- A route through the building, church, neighborhood that you can lead a walk through.
- Consider stopping to pray at a particular location in the church or neighborhood.
- A hidden collection of lemons for the women to find on the walk (have enough for one each)
- One or two “special” prizes like bath salts to be found
- Cold water with wedges of lemon to serve upon return

Activity: after greeting and reviewing last week, take the ladies on a short, healthy walk. Stop in an area where some fun prizes (inexpensive) are hidden and allow them to find and keep them. Then go back to class to continue.

CONCEPTS (what you'll teach/discuss)

1: Much of what is around us encourages us to seek COMFORT and CONVENIENCE.

Is this a biblical way to live?

Luke 9:23 – Then he said to them all: If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.

Romans 12:1-2: Therefore, 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.

2: A healthy practice in more ways than one: a prayer WALK.

Prayer walks are sometimes described as a prayer for the area that you are walking around. However, it can be a simple conversation with God while walking. Women love to multi-task anyway. Why not pray while walking?

3: Cleansing WATER.

What are your favorite non-alcoholic drinks?

If drinking water by itself is boring to you, what are some things you can do to revive the experience?

4: Food HANGOVER

What do you think a “food hangover” is? (discuss)

Often, we wake up in the morning less than enthusiastic about the new day ahead. Sometimes, this is a result of what we have done the night before: staying up too late, eating shortly before going to bed. Donna will encourage you to stop eating at least three hours before going to bed, giving your body a full twelve hours of time to digest.

CONCLUSION

Essential elements of life: food, water, exercise. This chapter deals with these essential elements. Isn't it interesting that Jesus is mentioned as:

John 6:35 The bread of life

John 4:10, John 7:38 The living water

John 8:12, John 12:35 Our Christian life is often described as “walking with God.” John 8:12

COMMUNICATION (what you'll announce/remind)

Ask the ladies to bring in one thing next week that we no longer need but is in decent shape. Ladies will be free to take something they like to keep or give it away.

Remind them to pray for/contact their partner.

Follow up with email communication during the week.

COMPLEMENTS (how you can enhance/go deeper)

Icebreaker/getting to know you: Describe what mood/state you are in most mornings when you wake up.

Questions related to this week's chapter (perhaps have them pick 3 of the 5 to answer.)

In what ways does our world stress the importance of comfort and convenience? What types of things tend to trap you into this mindset?

In Jesus' day, people got around primarily by walking. Today we are less inclined to do that. Decide to walk somewhere this week that you would have normally chosen to drive. Be sure to be aware of safety.

Alternatively, park farther out on purpose for some of your errands. Tell us about the experience.

Have you started an exercise program this year? How is it going?

Meditate on 2 Corinthians 7:1 and then share something specific that you have been allowing to "contaminate your body." What will you do to make a change?

Take time for a cleansing bath this week and then report that you did it!

Becoming the Woman God Wants Me to Be – Lesson 5 –Management Tools

Notes by Beth Beutler for First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC. Beth also is the founder of www.hopeunlimitedforyou.com.

COMPONENTS (what you'll need/do)

- A table set up for display of “gently used” items that the ladies bring in
- Prayer cards/prayer basket
- Copies of the Daily Page for each woman www.donnapartow.com/forms
- Animal crackers

Activity: at the end of class, you will allow the ladies to select one or more items they feel they can use or give away. Give the leftovers to charity. This will reinforce the idea of giving a lot away.

CONCEPTS (what you'll teach/discuss)

1: Writing your to-do list based on your MISSION STATEMENT can change your perspective.

Discussion:

How many items on your normal to-do list are not related to your mission statement, or are from the expectations of others?

2: Use the 80/20 rule. Spend 80% of your time on the most important 20% of your list.

Discussion:

Since we've determined that healthy eating and exercise are worshipful acts, it is valuable to raise those on the priority list. Bonus: you'll probably have more energy to accomplish the others as well!

What two rooms do you spend the most time in? Keep those the cleanest.

Of your closest friends, write down which one or two are relationships most mutually beneficial. Make those a priority.

In your work life, what one or two roles/tasks are most vital? Work on trimming, delegating, rethinking the others.

Of hobbies you enjoy, which two are the most joyful and valuable? Can you do some re-prioritizing to allow more time for them? How?

3: Daily PLANNING page.

Distribute copies of the Daily Plan page and have them write out a day for a fictional woman. You may want to have ladies work in groups then discuss with the entire group.

4. Inspire yourself to GIVE much away. STORE the rest effectively

Discuss Luke 3:11, 6:38. What value is there in giving away a lot of items?

5. TACKLE projects one piece at a time.

Distribute animal crackers and ask, “What’s the best way to eat an elephant?” (One bite at a time.)

Discuss the value of breaking big projects into small pieces.

CONCLUSION

The Proverbs 31 woman applied wisdom to what she spent her time on. Her trading was “profitable.” The time she spent and the decisions she made resulted in better productivity and success.

Allow time for the “free tag sale.” Be prepared to box up and donate the remaining items or share with another group.

COMMUNICATION (what you'll announce/remind)

Next week, we will be talking about money. We'll be doing an "on-time" door prize drawing for a resource that can help you manage your money better but you must be on time! (Note to teacher: you could give away a book such as the *Total Money Makeover* by Dave Ramsey, an envelope system, something from Crown Financial, etc.)

We'll be taking a small offering next week, which is optional. However, it would be very helpful if you could consider giving \$1 or more to it for a special reason which will be explained next week. Also, please come prepared to write down any questions you have about financial management/challenges. (You could also ask them to reply by email. Keep this confidential. You will deal with the questions without naming the person asking.)

Remind them to pray for/contact their partner.

Follow up with email communication during the week.

COMPLEMENTS (how you can enhance/go deeper)

Icebreaker/getting to know you: What project have you tackled recently that felt good to get done?

Questions related to this week's chapter. Please do question 1 and at least three of the remaining 5 questions.

1. *Pick one of the following verses/passages to meditate on for at least two days. Comment on them and share a personal application:*

James 4:13-14

Luke 3:11, 6:38

Proverbs 17:24

Psalms 23:1-3

2. *Of the following questions, pick one or two to answer:*

What two rooms do you spend the most time in? Keep those the cleanest.

Of your closest friends, write down which one or two are relationships most mutually beneficial. Make those a priority.

In your work life, what one or two roles/tasks are most vital? Work on trimming, delegating, rethinking the others.

Of hobbies you enjoy, which two are the most joyful and valuable? Can you do some re-prioritizing to allow more time for them? How?

3. *Remind us of your mission statement (from week 1.) How will that impact how you write your to-do list and/or schedule your time?*
4. *Pick one or more items to give away this week. What items did you pick? Who did you give them to and why?*
5. *Share about a project that is looming at your home or at work. What can you do to break this project into pieces that won't feel so overwhelming?*
6. *How do you typically keep track of your calendar/to do list? Consider experimenting with the Daily Plan page provided or something similar. Share with the group about how that helps you.*

Becoming the Woman God Wants Me to Be – Lesson 6 – Financial Planning

Notes by Beth Beutler for First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC. Beth also is the founder of www.hopeunlimitedforyou.com.

COMPONENTS (what you'll need/do)

- Confidential cards with people listing the thing that challenges them the most about money
- Prayer cards/prayer basket
- Money management door prize (suggestion, *The Total Money Makeover* by Dave Ramsey)
- Offering basket

Activity: have the ladies write down the thing that challenges them the most about money and be prepared to address these (without giving their names.) Alternatively, you can gather the info via email a few days before. Have this discussion after going over the main concepts since you may address some questions within the lesson itself.

CONCEPTS (what you'll teach/discuss)

Do on-time door prize drawing before starting.

Main components of a God-honoring financial plan

1: GIVING

Discuss Malachi 3:8-10. Do you think this applies to us today? What does it mean to bring tithes “into the storehouse?” (A good practice is to give your first offerings to your church and then to other organizations that you benefit from and have a heart for.)

2: SAVING

What are some ways you can “pay yourself first” (okay, technically, pay yourself second? Why is this important?

3. SPENDING

Discuss the value of a spending plan and the help a budget can be. It is wise to keep it simple! Use cash whenever possible.

Is it possible to live without using credit? (This may be a volatile question—it IS possible. Many people don't think so. Keep the discussion civil and let people wrestle through the concept.)

Reduce debt quickly! Even better, avoid it. While the Bible doesn't appear to condemn debt outright, it does tell us the borrower is slave to the lender. It does not promote the use of debt to advance the kingdom of God.

4. PLANNING

- *know where you are starting from (calculating assets and liabilities)*
- *plan for the future without worrying about the future*
- *financial plan should not replace trust in God*

Now, spend some time answering the questions submitted. If you don't feel you can answer, do some checking during the week and address the questions via an email to the entire group. In fact, it may be a good idea to provide the questions/answers via email regardless so that everyone can see them again.

CONCLUSION

It is GOD's money—we are managing it!

I am going to pass around a basket and let you give an anonymous offering. Then we are going to do something special with it. Those who are willing to participate in a special drawing should put their names in a hat, understanding they will have an assignment if their name gets drawn. Depending on how much the offering is, draw two or more names and divide up the money. These people are to steward, or manage, this money and somehow invest it into the kingdom of God. Pray about what to do with the money, and then do it. You may decide to buy flowers for someone, or a gift card for coffee. You may give it to a needy person. Just get the feeling of handling “someone else's” money and what it means to manage it for someone else. You need to report back to us next week about what you did with the money.

COMMUNICATION (what you'll announce/remind)

Next week, we will be talking about our personal appearance. Please wear/bring an outfit that you have found to be very comfortable or functional for you (i.e. an example of mixing and matching.) Be prepared to share what you think your core color is. We will have a fashion show!

Remind them to pray for/contact their partner.

Follow up with email communication during the week.

COMPLEMENTS (how you can enhance/go deeper)

Icebreaker/getting to know you: If you could have any job, what would it be?

Questions related to this week's chapter.

- 1. Comment on 1 Timothy 6:10. Share how you can be tempted to “love” money.*
- 2. Different personalities consider money in different ways. Some want money for the sense of power, others for the sense of security, freedom, or ability to show love. Based on your personality, tell us how you are most tempted to view money, and then contrast that with how you can view God in a more real way within that framework.*
- 3. Do you live on a monthly budget? If so, what freedom does it give you? If not, what are the challenges?*
- 4. Why do you think God wants us to give regularly and cheerfully? II Corinthians 9:7*
- 5. What component of your financial plan needs the most attention and what small step could you take to improve on that this week?*
- 6. As a Christian, how do you feel about using credit when Proverbs 22:7 tells us “the rich rule over the poor and the borrower is slave to the lender?”*

Becoming the Woman God Wants Me to Be – Lesson 7 – Personal Appearance

Notes by Beth Beutler for First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC. Beth also is the founder of www.hopeunlimitedforyou.com.

COMPONENTS (what you'll need/do)

- Fashion show (ladies showing versatile outfits or one they got for a decent price)
- Make sure you bring in some clothing, accessories to demonstrate with in case participants forget
- Prayer cards/prayer basket

Activity: have a “fashion show.” Last week you reminded the ladies to wear/bring in some of their most versatile pieces, or items they receive compliments on. Go around the room and have them share about how that outfit works for them or where they have found the best deals.

CONCEPTS (what you'll teach/discuss)

Major components of an effective wardrobe

1: Choose a CORE COLOR.

Why is it wise to have a core color?

Basic suggestions (from page 160)

- Dark hair and eyes : black
- Dark hair, blue or hazel eyes, go by skin tone: dark, black; light, navy
- Blonde hair and blue or hazel eyes: navy
- Red hair: brown
- Sandy hair, brown eyes: camel

Observation: pay attention to what outfits tend to get the most compliments and begin to build your wardrobe accordingly (i.e. similar colors, styles.) This can be very interesting! (For example, I bought a striped turtleneck with interesting colors for \$1 at Goodwill, and paired it with a necklace that pulled out some of the colors. I got compliments on the sweater, which I found delightful since I only spent \$1! It showed me that maybe I'm developing an eye for what looks good on me.)

Friends can be helpful if you feel a little weak in the area of fashion. I had a friend take me shopping one afternoon (after my husband and I determined an amount I could spend.) She helped me see what styles looked good on me and what was dated. We bought some core pieces that I can mix and match with. To this day I feel this was a true ministry to me.

2. Determine ideal WEIGHT.

Discuss ways to determine ideal weight (BMI, fat monitor, etc.) Encourage ladies to rely less on the scale and more on a healthy, sustainable lifestyle, letting their body adjust as their habits become healthier.

3. Be smart with ACCESSORIES.

Donna encourages women to keep makeup, jewelry and other accessories simple. *Discuss how to streamline (i.e. using a “color pot” that can be applied to lips, cheeks, eyelids.*

Discuss the thought: “perfection is often the enemy of peace.”

Suggest getting jewelry pieces that can match several outfits; coming up with a signature item (i.e. pins, scarves) that make outfits interesting.

4. Make MODESTY a priority.

Discuss the effect women, even Christian women, have on men visually. This is the more serious part of the evening. Encourage the women to take responsibility for how they dress.

5. Your FACE is your best accessory.

Discuss 1 Peter 3:3-5. Have the ladies talk about the most radiant person they know. What makes them so attractive?

Conclusion

God designed us to be beautiful women—His brides. But when we emphasize outward beauty, we miss the point! Inward beauty automatically shines outward as well. We bring Him glory through a mature, thankful spirit. When we pair that with savvy selection of clothes that enhance the shape, skin tone, hair He gave us, and we take care of that temple—any woman can be a WOW!

Spend some time doing a fashion show or demonstration.

COMMUNICATION (what you’ll announce/remind)

Next week, we will be talking about options of earning income from home (either primary or supplementary.) Bring in something that represents some income you have earned in the past, or do now, based on a skill you practice at home. If it’s food, bring something to share. If it’s a product you make, bring a demo. If it’s an internet business, bring in a printout of your webpage. We’ll allow you to share about your experiences earning money from home.

Remind them to pray for/contact their partner.

Follow up with email communication during the week.

COMPLEMENTS (how you can enhance/go deeper)

Icebreaker/getting to know you: What piece of clothing do you most often wear?

Questions related to this week's chapter.

1. *Comment on 1 Peter 3:3-5. Make it a personal application.*
2. *After reading day 43, share with us what you think your "core color" is. Does what you have in your closet correspond with what you've discovered your core color is? If not, what can you do to adjust this?*
3. *What responsibility do Christian women have for the ways in which they dress? Did this chapter speak to you or your family personally in any way?*
4. *The Proverbs 31 woman was clothed in fine linen and purple. What does this mean to you? In relation to the money chapter last week, are there adjustments you can/should make in terms of your purchases of clothing?*
5. *What are some of your favorite accessories? How do you think they add a little pop to your outfits?*
6. *Share one fashion tip that you think may help or encourage others. It could be related to anything to do with clothing: shopping, wearing, caring, accessorizing, etc.*

Becoming the Woman God Wants Me to Be – Lesson 8 – Home Enterprises

Notes by Beth Beutler for First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC. Beth also is the founder of www.hopeunlimitedforyou.com.

COMPONENTS (what you'll need/do)

- Allow women to bring/show something from a home enterprise/side job, etc.
- Timer (optional)*
- Prayer cards/prayer basket

Activity: the “home enterprise show and tell” time will be an opportunity to share ideas about making extra income from home.

CONCEPTS (what you'll teach/discuss)

1: Home should be the CENTER of our lives, not just a place to RECOVER from it.

Discuss the idea of home being the center point of productivity, rather than just a refuge. What advantages can there be?

“Cottage industries” are known as refers to the making of products from home, mostly as a part-time endeavor. They were very common in conjunction with farming, as they provided extra income and could be practiced when there were seasonal lulls (such as winter.) (Source: Wikipedia)

2. Develop MULTIPLE streams of income.

Brainstorm a list of various sources of income, then, discuss why it is important to have more than one stream of income coming in.

Read and discuss Proverbs 31:16-19 and Proverbs 31:24-25 and discuss the various industries the Proverbs 31 woman was involved in.

3. Home Enterprise Show and Tell

Allow women time to share a “cottage industry” or home enterprise they have been or are currently involved in. Caution: this should not be a big “sales” night—just a quick show and tell with each woman having about 3-5 minutes to share. If a woman has not tried a home business, ask her to share one that interests her or a talent she could think about developing into a business. Don't let outgoing sales personalities dominate this session.

*Consider using a timer if you have a large group, to objectively control how many minutes each woman has to share.

Conclusion

We need not be dependant on just corporate America to provide for our needs. One benefit of having income from various sources is that we become less reliant on any one source. This helps us re-focus our faith on God, who provides it all.

COMMUNICATION (what you'll announce/remind)

Next week, we will be talking about household management tips. This will focus on the home—collaborating with the personal management tips we learned a few weeks ago.

For our next session, we will have a gift exchange of items that would bring to mind freshening and bringing a new spirit of cleanliness, beauty and cooperation to our home. Please bring a wrapped item of \$5 or less, in keeping with the theme of a fresh, clean, God-honoring home (i.e. air freshener, scented candle, unique cleaning item, decorative item with a spiritual emphasis etc.) Be creative!

Remind them to pray for/contact their partner.

Follow up with email communication during the week.

COMPLEMENTS (how you can enhance/go deeper)

Icebreaker/getting to know you: If I were to buy you a scented candle, what scent should I buy?

Questions related to this week's chapter.

- 1. Look up Deuteronomy 8:18 and comment on how this may apply to a home business.*
- 2. Why is it wise to develop multiple streams of income?*
- 3. While having multiple streams of income is wise, you can run into some challenges, too. What challenges might there be and how could you be wise?*
- 4. Donna shares that our “home should be the center of our life, not just a place to recover from it.” In your experience, has your home been more of a center of productivity or a refuge? How do you feel about Donna's statement?*
- 5. Have you ever tried a home enterprise? Tell us a bit about your experience?*
- 6. Look up II Thessalonians 3:11-12. How could a woman be “busy” but not be productive?*

Becoming the Woman God Wants Me to Be – Lesson 9 – Home Management

Notes by Beth Beutler for First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC. Beth also is the founder of www.hopeunlimitedforyou.com.

COMPONENTS (what you'll need/do)

- Leave time for the gift exchange as you have asked women to bring one item related to a clean, sweet home
- Consider having a guest speaker, perhaps someone you know who is a great example of home management or a professional organizer who can provide great tips.
- Prayer cards/prayer basket

Activity: gift exchange, adjusting time if you happen to have a guest speaker.

CONCEPTS (what you'll teach/discuss)

Note: if you have a guest speaker, mention these concepts as an overview and allow the speaker to share from her heart about practical ways to manage the home. Give the speaker time and cut the amount of time on the gift exchange if necessary.

1: Continually DECLUTTER your home.

This has been mentioned in the past chapters, so simply review the value of de-cluttering and giving much away. The ladies may have been de-cluttering for weeks now, so let them share about their progress.

2. Develop shared SERVANTHOOD.

Why is it important to teach our children to serve?

Every home is different. Do not approach the concept of servanthood with your family from the position of a nag or controller. Instead, invite your family to figure out ways to contribute. It may mean a trade-off of chores and giving people a chance to do more of what they enjoy or feel good at and less of chores they hate.

3. Purify the home SPIRITUALLY.

Discuss ways to do this: pray over your home and throughout rooms; consider getting rid of items that may detract from spiritual growth; hang Biblical art, play joyful music, create a spirit of worship in your home.

This is a good lead in to the gift exchange. Hopefully, some gifts will demonstrate a spirit of worship and joy for the home.

Conclusion

COMMUNICATION (what you'll announce/remind)

Next week, we will be talking about family relationships. We will have a quiet, sacred time together as we think about our spouses, children, siblings and others we care about.

Remind them to pray for/contact their partner.

Follow up with email communication during the week.

COMPLEMENTS (how you can enhance/go deeper)

Icebreaker/getting to know you: What is the toughest area of home management for you? (i.e. meal planning/prep, organization, cleaning, finances, etc.)

Questions related to this week's chapter:

1. *Type out Proverbs 31:17. Analyze this verse and give us a breakdown of your thoughts.*
2. *This week, Donna again mentions de-cluttering. Why do you think this topic has come up more than once in this book?*
3. *Talk about the idea of shared servanthood as it pertains to your home. In what positive ways does your home demonstrate this? What challenges might there be to carrying it out?*
4. *Have you ever prayed over/through rooms in your home? How does that idea strike you? Do you think there is value in incorporating items into your home that stimulate the senses toward worship? (i.e. communion, praise music, scented candles, etc.)*
5. *What practical tip from this chapter most helped you this week?*

Becoming the Woman God Wants Me to Be – Lesson 10 – Family Relationships

Notes by Beth Beutler for First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC. Beth also is the founder of www.hopeunlimitedforyou.com.

COMPONENTS (what you'll need/do)

- Bread (or crackers) and grape juice for communion*
- Optional: giveaway of a Christian book about marital relationships or childrearing.
- Prayer cards/prayer basket

Activity: set up the room to be quiet and welcoming, perhaps using candles and soft music and lowering overhead lights.

*Note: if doing this in a church setting, be sure to honor the policies of that particular church. Some denominations have books of order with specific requirements for having communion. You might instead just display bread and grape juice and encourage people to have meaningful reflection times with their families. In some denominations it is preferred it not be referred to as “communion” unless it is administered by an ordained pastor.

CONCEPTS (what you'll teach/discuss)

1: Love your HUSBAND.

Spend some time talking about what it means to sacrificially love your husband. Refer to verses in the passage, especially verses 11, 12, 23, 28.

What does it mean to do good to our husbands? What are some ways we might do harm, even if we don't mean to?

2. Cherish your CHILDREN.

Discuss ways to show love to children, especially in understanding their different love languages/personalities. Ask women to share ways they can relate personally with each of their children in the midst of a busy schedule.

3. Enjoy family TRADITIONS.

Allow women to share one tradition from their family. Encourage sharing about something not necessarily related to a holiday, to allow for variety. (i.e. on Sundays, we tend to eat...)

4. Living in PEACE.

Encourage women to understand that they set the tone for their homes. Husbands are to be leaders, but wives are influencers. Much communication is directed to women because they make a lot of decisions about what the family will be involved in. *How can they encourage peace in their homes?*

Talk about making peace in all relationships and the importance of not being easily offended. It is wise not to look for our affirmation from our family/friends, but through God. That way, if our husband or children do not “arise and call us blessed” we can still feel loved by God.

5. Practice the SABBATH.

What are some things you can do one day of the week that makes it set apart from others? (i.e. giving up certain things like TV, computer, having communion together.)

End with communion as a group. Read from Luke 22:14-20, or Matthew 26:26-29 or Mark 14:22-25. Pass bread around to break and juice around to drink. Explain that this is symbolic, and though often done in church services, can be done in other settings—the purpose is to remember Christ's sacrifice.

Conclusion

COMMUNICATION (what you'll announce/remind)

Next week, we will be talking about the ministry of the home and hospitality. Please bring one fresh flower and we will make a bouquet to present to a person who needs encouragement.

Optional: have a potluck dinner or dessert next week because of the topic of ministry of the home. Alternatively, you can ask the women to bring in some favorite recipes.

Remind them to pray for/contact their partner.
Follow up with email communication during the week.

COMPLEMENTS (how you can enhance/go deeper)

Icebreaker/getting to know you: What is a typical Sunday like for you?

Questions related to this week's chapter:

- 1. Read Proverbs 31: 11, 12, 23, 28 and share what this means to you in relation to your marriage (if applicable.)*
- 2. Do you think Christians today tend to honor the Sabbath? Do you? What conviction may you be feeling and what change could you make in order to practice Sabbath principles (rest, renewing, and reflection) at some point each week?*
- 3. It is important for our homes to be places of peace. Women have great influence on this. Share some ways you can influence your home for peace.*
- 4. In what way will you specifically connect with a child this week (either your own or investing in a relative or neighbor.)*
- 5. Share about a family tradition that means a lot to you.*

Becoming the Woman God Wants Me to Be – Lesson 11 – The Ministry of the Home

Notes by Beth Beutler for First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC. Beth also is the founder of www.hopeunlimitedforyou.com.

COMPONENTS (what you'll need/do)

- Collect fresh (or silk) flowers brought in by women – plan to give it to a needy person or a person needing encouragement
- Optional: enjoy a potluck dinner together, or have ladies bring in recipes from favorite family meals.
- Optional: armor of God poster or figurine (check your local Christian bookstore.)
- Prayer cards/prayer basket

Activity: making bouquet for a person who needs encouragement.

CONCEPTS (what you'll teach/discuss)

1: Enjoy family MEALS.

If you chose to have a meal together, enjoy it and capitalize on the value of fellowship. Discuss (over dinner) how family meals benefit the family. It doesn't have to be everyday of the week, but having meals together regularly is valuable. If you did not choose to have a potluck, still discuss the value of family meals. Share a few favorite recipes.

We tend to be willing to do a special dinner for guests, but why not do this for our families?

2. Dressing for SPIRITUAL Success

Read and discuss Ephesians 6:14-18. Go over each part of the armor (use notes on page 266)

At the end of these notes is an outline from a lesson I created on the armor of God, called "Armor All!" Feel free to use it to enhance the discussion of this section.

3. Practicing HOSPITALITY.

*Discuss some unique ways to create a hospitable environment in your home.
Do people eat at each other's homes very often these days? Why or why not?*

4. MINISTER through your home.

How can you use your home as a place of ministry? (hosting visiting ministers, inviting new people from church, hosting a neighborhood Bible study, etc.)

Conclusion

COMMUNICATION (what you'll announce/remind)

Next week, we will be talking about retirement and planning well for our future. Please wear or bring an item that shows how you would like to spend your retirement. ☺

Remind them to pray for/contact their partner.

Follow up with email communication during the week.

COMPLEMENTS (how you can enhance/go deeper)

Icebreaker/getting to know you: What is the most recent act of hospitality you have enjoyed? (i.e. dinner at a friend's house, a special gift, etc.)

Questions related to this week's chapter:

- 1. How often do you eat meals with your family or with good friends? What is the value of having regular opportunities for fellowship like this?*
- 2. Pick one piece of armor from the passage in Ephesians 6:14-18. Share what that piece of armor means to you and why it is important to you personally.*
- 3. Think of someone you know who may have the gift of hospitality. Share some of the character traits/talents in her life that make her a natural in this area.*
- 4. How could your home be a place of ministry?*
- 5. Jesus often ate with the disciples. Think of a time that He shared food with them and share the Scripture reference with us. Why do you think Jesus shared everyday life with His followers, and didn't just conduct special services?*

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE ARMOR OF GOD FOLLOW IN THE NEXT TWO PAGES.

Armor All!

Ephesians 6:10-18 (New International Version)

10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

POSITION

Circle the “action words/phrases” in this passage (*as tables*). Examples: *stand, put on, pray, be alert, take up*
When you consider the words *stand, be, put, pray, take up* – in general, are you moving in a particular direction? *Not really. This isn't about being in attack mode so much as standing firm, being ready to defend, resist.*

As Paul describes this, a key piece of equipment is missing from what Roman soldiers would have had on—a javelin. In modern times, it would be like describing what a police officer is wearing without the sidearm. (Tell about riding with officer yesterday.)

We can stand firm in Christ and resist the devil. (Resist the devil and he will flee from you.) James 4:7

PURPOSE

Why do we need armor? We are in a battle. V12 – The ultimate victory is already decided, but there are battles, sometimes bloody ones, in the process.

June 6, 1944 During World War II, allies established a beachhead on D-Day. Although a major step, there were major losses and V E day, the day of victory over Europe, did not occur until May 7-8, 1945 when the allies accepted the surrender of Nazi Germany.

It is the same spiritually. God has established Himself as Victor, but enemy still prowls around seeing who he can defeat and discourage.

Our enemy's tactics:

Disrupt (discord)

Exhaust (discourage)

Vilify (shame)

Intimidate (fear)

Lie

Armor is provided as necessary **PROTECTION** but we must **PUT IT ON!**

PIECES

<i>Piece</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Spiritual Symbol</i>	<i>Key Applications</i>	<i>How to Put it On</i>
Belt	Leather belt with apron; Shields vulnerable spots	<u>TRUTH</u>	-Truth is the core of a healthy spiritual life...Jesus is Truth -Knowing the truth will help us defend against Satan.	Trust in Jesus alone as Savior
<u>BREASTPLATE</u>	Armor for the chest, chain mail or metal pieces, protects vital organs: heart, lungs, abdomen	Righteousness	-Righteousness is given to us through faith in Christ -Right living protects us	Living Biblically and with integrity Self care <i>Yes this is worship.</i>
Shoes	Sturdy shoes necessary for long term travel; Roman soldier's had studs to help keep from slipping	Gospel of <u>PEACE</u>	-Peace with God through Christ is foundation of our life and a journey with God. -Peace also refers to relationships with others and unanxious presence. -Readiness or preparation: be prepared to walk with God and share His message with others.	Prayer Balance between active and contemplative Christian pursuits Walking with God – shoes on Sabbath (rest) “kick off your shoes”
<u>SHIELD</u>	Goat or calf skin stretched over wood, often soaked in water to help quench flaming arrows, sometimes placed together to further provide protection	Faith	-Protection from temptation and darts of the devil. -Responding in faith shields us from anxiety and additional problems that come from worry and lack of trust. -Sometimes attaching shields together gives strength—Christians are strengthened by each other's faith. -Sometimes we must also lift our faith—looking up.	Worship in community Corporate Worship Fellowship gatherings Solid friendships

Helmet	Iron or bronze, protects head and neck	<u>SALVATION</u>	-God is final Victor – the head of the army -The mind is a chief place of attack, we need God to save us from incorrect thinking	Bible Study and meditation, “renewing the mind”
<u>SWORD OF THE SPIRIT</u>	Iron, about 2 feet long, used in conjunction with shield to advance	God’s Word (the Bible)	-Only offensive weapon -Word of God provides message of salvation and way to live as well as God’s story. --You can, and should, use Scripture to fight temptation and make Satan flee (Jesus did in the wilderness and Satan left Him.) -The term, “sharpen your sword” is used to mean professional development. Sharpening your sword as a Christian means reading, studying, and memorizing God’s Word.	Bible knowledge, Bible memory

Note, no armor is provided for the **BACK**. We are not destined to **RETREAT**.

Becoming the Woman God Wants Me to Be – Lesson 12 – Retirement/Future Planning

Notes by Beth Beutler for First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC. Beth also is the founder of www.hopeunlimitedforyou.com.

COMPONENTS (what you'll need/do)

- Clothing or items representing what people would like to do when they retire.
- Optional: invite an elderly widow (or group of widows) who is/are adjusting well to loss and allow them to share some wisdom.
- Prayer cards/prayer basket

Activity: take a few minutes to allow people to discuss what they would like to do in the future

CONCEPTS (what you'll teach/discuss)

1. Face REALITY.

Women often outlive men.

As we age, we are more challenged physically. Activity and healthy habits will help us avoid unnecessary health issues. While we may not be able to control everything that happens to us, a healthy lifestyle (good weight for us, keeping muscles and body strong, eating well most of the time) can help prevent, or mitigate, some diseases.

2. RETIREMENT should not be only about what we want, but for how to be in the best position to serve.

Have the group show the items they brought or wore that indicated the type of retirement they would enjoy. Likely, the items reflect vacations, hobbies, etc. Gently turn the conversation toward opportunities to give, serve, volunteer, mentor while not discouraging pursuits that they also enjoy.

3: While we trust in God, it is important to be wise about the FUTURE.

Look up Luke 14:28-30; 1 Corinthians 14:33 What do these verses teach us about planning?

- Avoid debt
- Avoid loaning to others—rather, give it away if you are interested in helping.
- Have legal/financial paperwork in order—great gift to your loved ones
- Be investing not only for your future but in the kingdom of God. When giving, give wisely.

Conclusion: Our future is in God's hands, but He gave us a mind and abilities to prepare for it. I

If you have time, discuss (without names) examples of people who seem to enjoy a wonderful retirement and those that are struggling. If you have visitors as mentioned above, you may not have time for this additional discussion.

COMMUNICATION (what you'll announce/remind)

Next week, we will be having our last lesson. It will be about finishing strong. We've dealt with a host of topics these 13 weeks, so please look back on the book and plan to bring three items that represent three of the most important lessons you will take away from this process.

Remind them to pray for/contact their partner.

Follow up with email communication during the week.

COMPLEMENTS (how you can enhance/go deeper)

Icebreaker/getting to know you: Tell us about a recent unexpected blessing.

Questions related to this week's chapter. Please answer at least three.

- 1. Tell us about a person you know who is older and has adjusted well to a loss (i.e. is a widow/widower). What do you think is a key factor in their positive mindset?*
- 2. If you are willing, share an example of some financial folly that you have fallen into at some point in your life. What would you advise a young person in relation to that choice?*
- 3. Why is it important to have a will and other legal papers? How does this demonstrate love to your family?*
- 4. While it is a difficult thought, women should be prepared for the very real possibility that they will outlive their spouse. In what ways can you prepare yourself for that possibility without falling into the temptation of sinful worry?*
- 5. Donna suggests pre-paying a mortgage. What are some other wise choices you can make in terms of getting your financial house in order in the future?*
- 6. Comment on how healthy physical habits put in place now could have a positive effect on the future.*
- 7. Look up Luke 14: 28-30. If you were teaching this passage, what approach would you take?*

Becoming the Woman God Wants Me to Be – Lesson 13 – Finish Strong

Notes by Beth Beutler for First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC. Beth also is the founder of www.hopeunlimitedforyou.com.

COMPONENTS (what you'll need/do)

- Hang a pretty ribbon throughout the room to act as a “finish line” (perhaps having women cross under it on their way into the meeting room.
- Tickets with numbers on them.
- Proverbs 31 themed gift basket (see end of this guide for suggestions)

Activity: Allowing time for women to share the one, two or three top takeaways from this course

CONCEPTS (what you'll teach/discuss)

1: Healthy AGING.

Discuss what healthy aging looks like. If you did not have a guest last week for retirement/future planning, consider inviting a healthy elderly person to briefly share with your class about what has worked for them.

2. A CALEB heart.

Read together and discuss Joshua 14:8-12. Ask the women to think of people they know that have a Caleb heart. Discuss the temptation to give up on dreams and plans when older or to feel one has “done their time” in volunteerism, etc.

3. Invest in ENCOUARAGING and STRENGTHENING yourself.

Why is it important to invest in yourself? Brainstorm ways you can do this. Reiterate that it is a form of honoring God when we take care of ourselves, provided our motivation is correct (not about drawing undue attention to ourselves but to glorify God.

4. DETERMINE to finish strong.

What does it mean to CHOOSE to do something well? Contrast the “I can do it!” attitude with a “Whoa is me” tendency. What contributes to optimistic versus pessimistic outlooks?

Conclusion

Take adequate time for the women to share their top takeaways from the course. Review various concepts and chapters that you may feel are especially needed for your group to revisit.

At the end of the evening, allow each woman to draw out one gift item from the Proverbs 31 gift basket. You may wish to have them draw numbers to determine the order with which they get to draw a gift.

COMMUNICATION (what you'll announce/remind)

Thank the women for taking this journey with you. Consider suggesting a reunion date...get it on the calendar NOW.

Continue to follow up with email communication occasionally as you feel led.

COMPLEMENTS (how you can enhance/go deeper)

Icebreaker/getting to know you: If you were a crayon, what color would you be?

Questions related to this week's chapter:

- 1. Share with us about a person you admire who is older than you and has aged gracefully and with a good attitude and reasonable health. What traits do you admire in this person?*
- 2. Read Joshua 14:8-12 and give us a synopsis. If you were in Caleb's shoes, how do you think you would have reacted? Be honest!*
- 3. List three things that you do, or could do, that would be an investment in encouraging and strengthening yourself. Why is this important?*
- 4. Share up to three "top takeaways" you will carry in your heart and mind from these 13 lessons.*
- 5. What will you choose to do going forward because you participated in this study?*

Ideas for creating a Proverbs 31 gift basket. Many thanks to Linda Coco of Montana for creating this idea. An alternative suggestion is to use the basket throughout the course to provide incentives for memorization.

She sees that her trading is profitable: pair of dollar store reading glasses, \$1 pocket calculator from Walmart.

Her lamp does not go out at night: set of tea light votives, mini hanging lantern with a tea light votive, from dollar bin at Target.

She speaks with wisdom and faithful instruction is on her tongue: a purple gauze bag filled with lip balm, chewing gum and breath mints.

She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard: lavender seed packet, gardening gloves with grape or ivy motif, small hand-held gardening tools. I've seen some feminine, pink-handled ones at department stores.

She sets about her work vigorously: latex cleaning gloves bought at Target dollar bin.

Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting: wrinkle or firming facial cream, a charm bracelet with dangling religious charms that read "believe, love, faith, grace, etc."

She is worth far more than rubies: a necklace with ruby-colored beads, clearance red brooches from Walmart, a keychain with a dangling "ruby" bauble.

She provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls: mini Pillsbury Breakfast & Brunch cook booklet from the Target dollar bin (or other recipes.)

She can laugh at the days to come: desktop 365-day flip calendar with witticisms by Anita Renfroe, that hilarious Christian comedian.

She is clothed in fine linen and purple: I hand-knitted a purple scarf, purple bandana.

Her arms are strong for her tasks: a pair of 1 or 2 pound dumbbells.

When it snows, she has no fear for her household, for all of them are clothed in scarlet: red scarf/glove set; red picture frame; created photo of a red barn in a snowstorm with the verse underneath using computer clipart.

She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness: Pillsbury mini bread cook booklet from Target dollar bin; a strip of yeast packets, a set of mini loaf pans; bread mix.

She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands: a skein of purple yarn, a packet of flax seed, a crochet hook or pair of knitting needles.

The underlining theme to the gift collection is purple with some red mixed in. I've displayed the gifts in a wicker basket that is decorated with ivy leaves and purple bows.