

The Invaluable Woman of God

Lessons from the Proverbs 31 Woman

"The Prioritized Life"

Have you ever heard the term, "you need to get your priorities straight", or "I just need to prioritize my life"? Getting our lives *prioritized* can sometimes feel like an impossible job to do, with all of the things we can have going on in our lives at any given moment. But the truth is, until we learn to allow God to help us *prioritize*, our lives just might continue to feel like a chaotic adventure, instead of a purposeful life that is ready for anything. This week we are going to focus on Spiritual Priorities, because that is truly the most important priority in the life of a Woman of God. When our spiritual lives are in order and directed by the Holy Spirit, everything else will naturally fall into place. Unfortunately, we can get things reversed and think we must get "everything else" in order, then if we have time for our spiritual lives we squeeze in some time with God, only to find we are too tired or distracted and then another day has passed in our busy life. As we learn to allow God to help us get our lives prioritized according to His will, we will live more productive lives, available lives, and much less frustration and regret. Throughout scripture we see that God is truly a God of order, and desires our lives to be in order as well.

Day 1

1. Define the word "priority". (If you want to go a little further, you may also write a few synonyms of the word "priority.")

2. At this time in your life, what are your priorities? Honestly review the last few weeks or even days of your life, what do you see has been your priority list? (Do not answer the question the way you think you should be prioritizing, but honestly what do you see in your life?)
 - a. What motivates your priority list? Pleasing yourself, others or God? (Answer truthfully)

 - b. As you listed your priorities out, are there areas you see you want to change?

3. As we study this wonderful Proverbs 31 woman, a woman who displays invaluable characteristics, we find an example that we can pattern our own lives after. Read Proverbs 31:10-31. List examples of how her life is *prioritized*. In other words what areas do you see in her life that show she has her priorities right?

a. Verse 30 gives the summary of this woman's life and what her first priority is; everything in her life is based on this. Write verse 30 it here:

b. What is the result or *fruit* of her life because she has the right *priority*?

4. What does it mean to fear the Lord? Look up the following verses and share what you find.

Psalm 111:10

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

The word *fear* translated from the Hebrew word means to "revere morally" and "to stand in awe"; fearing God, is giving Him honor with your life. We do not obey God or seek to please Him because we are afraid of God, we seek God because we want to please Him when we realize just Who He is, the Almighty God who loves us and thinks thoughts of good not evil toward us, we can confidently trust Him and His Word. Fearing God gives us wisdom for every area of our lives.

a. Does your life reveal to those watching that you are a woman *who fears the Lord*?

5. This woman has set priorities for the practical things in her life that obviously affect her family, her friends, and her community. Her life is positively affecting just about everyone around her. When our lives are not prioritized, it will affect our family, our friends and our communities as well. (Consider your "community" think about your church, neighborhood, workplace, schools, etc.) Give examples of how having a life that is not prioritized can affect our family, friends or community.

6. **Optional...** *Iron sharpens Iron...* Scripture tells us we sharpen each other. As we grow in Christ, we can share the lessons that God has taught us, and in turn we help each other grow. As we look at the practical things this Godly woman does, we can also connect them to her spiritual life as well. As you read Proverbs 31, can you find a few spiritual applications as well? Provide a scripture to support your application. Be prepared to share with your group. (You don't need to find one for each verse, just a few that speak to you)

Example: Verse 13- She willingly works with her hands

Spiritual lesson: She is not lazy, the bible warns us against being lazy in Proverbs 24:30-34

7. Before you go any further in your study this week, please take several moments right now to honestly go before the Lord in prayer and ask Him to speak to you about your life and the areas you need to re-prioritize. As He speaks to your heart and bring things to your mind, write them down here. Commit these areas to the Lord and ask Him to help you set things in order, to prioritize these areas with His help and direction. Proverbs 16:3 "*Commit your thoughts to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established.*"

This week's Memory Verse: "*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*" Matthew 6:33

Day 2

Our Greatest Example...Jesus!

As we continue our pursuit of the Prioritized Life, today's lesson we will *look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith (Hebrews 12:2)*.

1. Read the following scriptures and write what they reveal to you about the Lord's first priority.
John 5:30, John 6:38-40, Hebrews 10:8-10

We know that the "will of the Father" that Jesus would fulfill was ultimately to save us, reconcile us to the Father, and to ensure that we would live forever with God in Heaven, rescued from Hell. Obviously Jesus' purpose was quite different from ours. However, God does have a "will" for us to seek after and desires that we too would say "I desire to do the will of My Heavenly Father."

- a. According to Romans 12:1-2, how can you know the will of the Father? What is your part?
 - b. Have you made it your priority in life to do what Romans 12:1-2 exhorts you to do?
What are practical things you are doing in your life now to present yourself to God, and to not be conformed to this world?
2. Aside from doing the will of the Father, we can see how Jesus was able to accomplish the will of God. Read John 17. This will take a little time, but please read it completely. What do you see as Jesus' priorities?

- a. Verses 1-2 reveal that Jesus' goal was to glorify the Father. The word "glorify" in various forms is written 5 times in those two verses. Review your list of priorities from Day 1, does it reflect your desire to glorify God as well?

- b. We also see His priority to pray. Who and what do you see that the Lord is praying for?

- c. As you read what He was praying for, which of these prayer requests ministers to you today? Is there something that encourages you to know He has prayed for you? Is there something He is revealing to you about how you should pray, or to pray for someone else?

Prayer ought to be at the top of every believer's priority list. It is a practical thing that will affect everything we do in the Spiritual and practical realm of our lives. The Proverbs 31 woman that we have been studying must have been a woman of prayer, because we see in verse 30, she is a woman who fears the Lord. You do not *fear the Lord* if you do not have a healthy prayer life!

3. Proverbs 31:15 and 31:18 tell us that this woman of God rose early, while it was still dark, and that her lamp did not go out very early in the night. She was active from the time she arose, to the time she laid her head to sleep. Because she was a woman who feared God, we can rightly assume that she included time for prayer. As you review her qualities in Proverbs 31:10-31, what things do you think she was praying for?

- a. As you wrote your list above, are there things that you see you should be praying for in your life as well? Put a star next to those things you need begin to pray for more diligently in your own life.

She was an early riser. How many read this and cringe because you just aren't your best in the morning? We are not under law, however, the important thing is that you have your spiritual priorities in order, because that will result in everything else falling into its proper order as well. This woman made the most of every moment of her day, and rising early gave her more time to accomplish the things that were necessary for her family to be taken care of, for her to have a productive business, to bless others and to live a life that reflected that she honored the Lord in all areas of her life. So whether you rise early, or stay up late, make wise use of your time.

4. What does Mark 1:35 tell you about Jesus?

a. What do you think are the benefits of rising early to pray?

5. As you have done this day's lesson, you have seen in Jesus that His priorities were to seek to do the will of the Father, to pray for others, and to glorify God. Is there something the Holy Spirit has been convicting you about, or encouraging you to do? Write those things down here, and pray for His help to do those things. Challenge yourself to rise early each day and pray, or maybe you just need to leave your lamp on a little longer in the night to ensure that you have made time to pray. (Optional) Share with your group any changes you made and any results you saw, such as prayers that were answered, your life more in order, etc.

This week's Memory Verse: *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."* Matthew 6:33

Day 3

Avoiding Distractions

1. Many times we can get our lives in order and have great success in keeping our priorities straight both spiritually and practically, but there are also times when we get off track and need to reassess our lives. What are some of the ways, or things (or people) that can get our priorities out of balance?

2. Read Matthew 6:19-33. Jesus gives some pretty relevant areas that we can get off balanced in. What are they?

3. According to verse 24, what is the deception of pursuing money and possessions above your relationship with the Lord?
 - a. Having wealth or being financially secure is not a bad thing, but if our hearts or motives are not right before the Lord, these things take over and become our priority or obsession. Matthew 6:21 says *"for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* How will what you "treasure" affect how you set priorities in your life?

4. Because our Proverbs 31 woman has her priorities right in her life, what does Proverbs 31:21 tell you about her?

a. Review Proverbs 31:10-31, what do you see from her life that allowed her to be so confident?

5. Matthew 6:25 & 28 reveal another area, that if we do not control, can get our priorities way off course. What emotion is Jesus cautioning us about?

a. *Worry* goes hand in hand with fear, not godly fear, but fear that is born from doubt that God is in control and able to help us in every area of our lives. What does Matthew 6:27 tell us *worrying* can do for us?

b. Have you ever allowed your worry, doubt or fear side-tract you and cause you to make the wrong decision? What was the end result?

c. Have you ever **not** allowed your worry, doubt, or fear to side-tract you? What was the result?

When life brings circumstances that cause us to worry or fear, we must purpose in our hearts and minds to trust the Lord with our lives. It is during those times that our first priority to seek the Lord must be adhered to with all that we have within us! Do not let your worries and fears dictate your priorities in life, seek God to show you what to do in every situation.

6. Remember the parable of the seeds in Matthew 13? Read Matthew 13:3-8 and 13:22-23. Describe the what will happen in our lives if we let the cares of the world and deceitfulness of riches be our priority?

7. How does Matthew 6:33 teach us to keep our priorities straight in the midst of situations that might cause us to worry, doubt or fear? Write out the verse.

8. Close your time today in prayer. Are you allowing worry or fear to rule how you make your decisions? Have you been focusing on the wrong things and is it getting your priorities off track? Pray and ask the Lord to help you regain your focus and to get your spiritual life re-prioritized and in alignment with His will and His Word so that you don't have regrets, or find yourself distant from the Lord. He is with you and is working all things together for good in your life. Make time to "seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness."

This week's Memory Verse: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Matthew 6:33

Day 4

Today we will visit a familiar portion of scripture that addresses the thing that matters most, according to Jesus Himself! Let's examine the lives of two women from the Bible who were close to Jesus.

1. Read Luke 10:38-41. Describe the difference in each of these women's priorities.
 - a. Verse 40 states that Martha was "*distracted with much serving...*" Define the word "distracted". (Use a Bible Dictionary if you have one available, otherwise use what you have available.)
 1. How could Martha serving her guest actually turn into a distraction? What was she distracted from?
 2. What should her first priority have been?

Martha was surely doing things that needed to be done to take care of her guests, and that is not wrong. The problem is that she got distracted with details that were just not as important as sitting at the Lord's feet, because He had things to share with her. Jesus desired fellowship with Martha because He loved her. We are exhorted in scripture to serve the Lord (John 12:26) to serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13), to serve with all diligence (2 Peter 1:5-10). Serving is not the cause of our distraction, but when our hearts or the motivation to serve Him are not an act of true worship, but an act for others to see or to promote our selves, then serving becomes the distraction.

The word used for "distraction" when translated from the Greek, actually means *cumbersome, or dragging all around*. Martha's preoccupation with the setting, was hindering her from her time with Jesus, and she was a frustrated woman! She was dragging around bitterness, pride and a distorted focus!

2. In contrast, what was Mary doing while Jesus was in their home? (Luke 10:39)

- a. Mary was not just hearing or listening to Jesus, she was receiving and understanding what He was saying. This is a picture for us of how we ought to come before the Lord. Explain the difference between hearing/listening and receiving/understanding what you hear and how it affects your life.

Surely Martha was listening to the Lord's conversation, but was she too preoccupied with everything else that she did not really receive or understand what it was He was trying to say? Her distracted mind was hindering her from true fellowship with her Savior!

3. Martha was distracted with much unnecessary "busy-ness", and it led her to question the Lord. What was her question in verse 40?

In essence Martha is asking, "Lord, don't you care about me and what I am doing?" When our priorities do not include sitting at the feet of Jesus as our first priority, then we too will begin to question the Lord's care for us as well. But had Martha been focused on Jesus first, she would have known how He cares for her, and His presence would have satisfied her life!

4. Martha was criticizing Mary for putting first things first; Mary **chose** to sit at the feet of Jesus to receive from Him. It was not that Mary was a lazy girl, not serving at all, for we see examples of Mary serving throughout scripture. What did Jesus say about Mary's choice to sit with Jesus first? (verse 42)

5. Of these two women, you see two different "priorities" in their lives. If we are honest, we know that at times we also get our priorities mixed up in these areas as well. Which of these two do you most relate to? Is there a change you need to make? Be like Mary, take the time to sit at the feet of the Lord and pray. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you can implement that change and to show you the practical things you can change that will impact your spiritual walk. Write what He shows you here, and consider sharing this with your group, if you feel comfortable with that. It may just encourage someone else.

This week's Memory Verse: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Matthew 6:33

Day 5

1. Write out Proverbs 31:27 here.

a. "*Watching over the ways of her household*" implies she is watching over the comings and goings, habits and activities of herself and those in her home. Whether you are married, single, with children or no children, what are ways we watch over our households?

b. When it comes to our actual home, the dwelling we live in, we must always remember it is something God has provided and we are to be good stewards of our homes just like any resource God has blessed us with.

Do you think it is important to keep it in order? (cleaned, supplied, etc) Why or why not? How can it affect you and your family when it is not in order?

Married or single, Godly excellence can be lived out in our homes in the way we manage our affairs. For those of you with children, especially daughters, have you considered that you are raising a little "invaluable woman of God"? Our children will learn and live out what we have modeled for them. It is important that we teach them to "watch over the ways of the household" even as young girls. Obviously they are not to run our homes, but we teach them to be homemakers (Titus 2:4-5) by teaching them practical things like cleaning up, to help with chores, to learn to cook and to take care of the things that God has provided for them. You might just be raising some blessed man's Proverbs 31 wife! And if you raise boys, start praying for his wife now, she needs it!

2. "*...She does not eat the bread of idleness.*" Using whatever resources you have available, define the word "idle" or "idleness".

3. When we allow ourselves to become *idle* we can become lazy and slothful in all areas of our lives. However, regarding our spiritual lives, we must be diligent to not become *idle*. Read these scriptures and write what you learn about the results of "*idleness*" in our lives.

Proverbs 6:6-11

Proverbs 19:15-16

1 Timothy 5:13

- a. What are some of the obvious compromises that occur in our lives when we become "spiritually" idle, or lazy? What are some of the things in our lives that might not be bad, but when we are *idle* and not careful to exercise self-control, can become a danger or distraction?
4. The Proverbs 31 woman "*watches over the ways of her household.*" Remember from our previous that she is a "*virtuous*" woman. The word *virtuous* actually meant to be *War-worthy, strong, having power, might and moral integrity.* What would happen if a soldier went to war and was often idle and not watching over their post?
 - a. What will happen in your life if you are often *idle* and not watchful over every area of your life, and if you are a parent, over your children's lives?
 - b. How will having a prioritized life help to protect you from becoming *idle*?
5. Close your time today doing inventory of every area of your household and your heart. Is there an area where you have become *idle, slothful or lazy* in? Be brave and ask the Lord to reveal to you what areas you need to be watching over a little more diligently. Is there a habit or obsession that you have been catering to in your time of *idleness*? Our goal is to be a Virtuous Woman, and it is also God's will that we become one as well. Confess any sin to the Lord at this time and ask Him to renew your strength to be a wise woman who watches over the ways of her home. Write what God shows you, then write a prayer to the Lord asking for His help. Writing it makes you accountable to yourself to make the necessary changes and serves as a reminder to keep you on track.

2 Peter 1:3 "*His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness...*"
 Rejoice knowing that you are filled with the Holy Spirit and you do have the power to live this prioritized and Godly life!

Write out this week's Memory Verse: