



Beauty by
THE BOOK

Becoming a Biblically Beautiful Woman
A 7-Week Study of Proverbs

by **Laurie Cole**

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Loving God most. Seeking God first.

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Dedication

*To my biblically beautiful friends,
Janet, Pam, Shanda, Debbie, Jan, Courtney and Stephanie,
the staff of Priority Ministries*

About **THE STUDY**

This Bible study is a simple tool to help you discover life-changing truths from God's Word. Think of this workbook as a chisel and your Bible as a gold mine. Each day you'll "dig-in" to God's Word to discover precious treasures that will enrich your life for His glory (Psalm 19:9–10, 119:162). Homework for this study will require approximately 20 minutes per day, five days per week.

The Holy Spirit will be your Divine Tutor throughout this study (John 16:13), and prayer will be essential in facilitating your sensitivity to His leadership. Therefore, a *pray* paragraph is included at the beginning of each day's homework. At the conclusion of your daily study, you'll be encouraged to record any insights the Holy Spirit has shown you in a brief *reflect* section.

A good translation of the Bible will be essential as you use this study. The *New Living Translation*, Second Edition, the *New International Version*, the *New American Standard Bible*, the *New King James Version*, or the *King James Version* are all very accurate translations and are highly recommended. In this study, the author will primarily use the *New Living Translation*.



About **THE AUTHOR**



Laurie Cole is the Founder and President of Priority Ministries, a ministry dedicated to encouraging and equipping women to love God most and seek Him first. Raised in a strong Christian home, Laurie became a Christian at an early age. But in her early twenties, God tested and taught her the importance of truly giving Him priority in her life.

In 1985, Laurie enrolled in an in-depth women's Bible study. Encouraged by the older women who led the study, Laurie received training and began teaching and leading a group where God affirmed His call upon her life to teach. For over 20 years, Laurie has taught dozens of Bible studies, spoken at numerous women's events and conferences, and is the author of two in-depth Bible studies: *There Is A Season* and *The Temple*. Her passion for God and hunger for His Word continues to grow.

A minister's wife, Laurie and her husband, Bill, serve the Lord at Sagemont Church in Houston, Texas, where he is the Associate Pastor of Worship and Praise. They have been married for 29 years and have three sons (David, Kevin, and J.J.), one beloved daughter-in-law (Stephanie), and two glorious grandchildren (Ezra and Juliette).



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Introduction TO THE STUDY

I have a confession to make. If you'd told me a couple of years ago that I would be writing a Bible study about beauty, I would have shaken my head, squinted my eyes and replied with absolute disdain, "No way. A Bible study about beauty? How shallow." Wrong!

Not only was I wrong in thinking I would never write a study about beauty, I was even more wrong in my attitude toward the topic. So what changed my condescending outlook, and who convinced me of my wrong-headed point of view? God. And now I know what He knew all along: beauty is no shallow subject. In fact, God wants all of His daughters to be beautiful—biblically beautiful, that is.

In today's culture, beauty is an idol worshipped and pursued by multitudes of women both young and old. Biblical beauty, however, is vastly different from worldly beauty; but you probably already know that. What you may not know, however, is just how much you have been influenced by the world's definition and beliefs about beauty. Therefore, before you even begin this study, I must warn you:

This Bible study contains material that may be deemed offensive by women (maybe even you), but I'm writing it anyway. Study at your own risk.

OK, I wrote that little warning with a smile on my face, but I really do want to caution you about something: God's Word is powerful. It has the power to reprove and correct, to judge and offend, and to pierce us to the very quick of our hearts (2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 4:12). And believe me, I can testify to this power firsthand. One of the very first reproofs I experienced as I was researching this study was about how much time and money I have spent worshipping the idol of worldly beauty. Ouch!

My research for this study also confirmed the enormous chasm that exists between God's standards and the popular standards of today's world. When contrasted with the prevailing philosophies and "enlightened" beliefs of our current culture, God's Word seems (I said "*seems*," not "*is*") old-fashioned and out-dated. Therefore, adopting God's definition of beauty will require us to swim against some very strong cultural currents.

Like the constantly changing hemlines of today's fashions, the world's definition of beauty will continuously evolve. But one thing will never change: God's Word—The Book. More relevant today than the latest issue of *Vogue*. More liberating than the most recent reinvention of feminism. God's Word is timeless, transformational, and true. Study its standards, practice its principles and, my beloved sister, you will become a true beauty—a biblically beautiful woman of God.

Your Sister,

Laurie



*“The grass withers, and the flowers fade,
but the Word of our God stands forever.”*

—Isaiah 40:8 *NLT*

Week One • **FIVE BEAUTY DOS & DON'TS**

This week I will be introducing you to five women. These five females all make their home in the Book of Proverbs. For the next six weeks, we will be spending quite a bit of time with them as we learn how to become biblically beautiful women of God. But before you meet them, you need to know something: not all of these women qualify as true biblical beauties.

Let me explain. You've probably seen those "beauty do" and "beauty don't" photos in the fashion magazines haven't you? Well, some of the five women you're about to meet are biblical "beauty dos," but others are biblical "beauty don'ts." And trust me, you won't have any trouble telling which ones are which.

So, c'mon. Let's head to Proverbs—our home for the next six weeks.

P.S. Don't worry about coming down with a bad case of "cabin fever" from being stuck inside Proverbs for six weeks. We'll get out often and visit women in other books of the Bible, too. I've even arranged for us to take a few topical tours through the Scriptures together. Girl, these six weeks are going fly by!

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DAY ONE

I almost forgot to tell you, there is a sixth "woman" we'll be getting to know in Proverbs. Her name is Wisdom. All throughout Proverbs, the author uses the female pronoun "she" to refer to wisdom. Don't you just love that! But let's not get too carried away, because there is a seventh "woman" mentioned in the Proverbs, and her name is Folly.

This sixth “woman”—Wisdom—will be the focus of our daily *pray* time. If you want to become a biblically beautiful woman as I do, it is essential that we get to know Ms. Wisdom well.

1. Good news! Wisdom is available to everyone who needs it. And we *all* need it. James 1:5 promises that “if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men generously and without reproach and it will be given to him” (*NASB*). Begin your first day of study by bowing your head and praising God as the source of true wisdom. Ask Him to pour out His wisdom upon you and make you wise.



*Wisdom shouts in the streets.
She cries out in the public square...
“Come here and listen to me!
I’ll pour out the spirit of wisdom
upon you and make you wise.”*
—Proverbs 1:20–23

2. Brace yourself. You’re about to meet Beauty #1, the first female mentioned in Proverbs, and she’s a doozy. Allow me to introduce you to the **Immoral Woman** as you read Proverbs 5:3–6:

³ *For the lips of an adulteress [woman] drip honey,
and her speech is smoother than oil;*
⁴ *but in the end she is bitter as gall,
sharp as a double-edged sword.*
⁵ *Her feet go down to death;
her steps lead straight to the grave.*
⁶ *She gives no thought to the way of life;
her paths are crooked, but she knows it not.*

—Proverbs 5:3–6 *NIV*

3. Based upon Proverbs 5:3–6, please answer the following questions about the Immoral Woman:
 - a. What’s the very first thing you learned about her (verse 3)?



7. A few minutes ago, you prayed and asked God for wisdom. What wisdom has He given you through your study today? And if you're a mom, how could Proverbs 5:3-6 be particularly useful to you?



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DAY TWO



1. Tuning into God has never been more difficult than it is today. Hearing His still, small voice over the constant cacophony of technology—ringing cell phones, busy blackberries, and 24/7 access to the worldwide web—is no small feat. But by daily and deliberately making today's Proverb a priority, you can still hear God speak. So, right now, tune out the racket around you, and tune in to God and His wisdom through prayer.

*Tune your ears to wisdom, and
concentrate on understanding.*

—Proverbs 2:2

Today you will meet two more women from Proverbs: the Indiscreet Woman and the Irritating Woman. I know. They probably don't sound like the kind of women who can teach us much about biblical beauty, but here's a great passage to remind us why we can't afford to ignore them:

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.

—2 Timothy 3:16–17

2. Keeping 2 Timothy 3:16–17 in mind, meet Beauty #2 by reading the following scripture:

*A woman who is beautiful but lacks discretion
is like a gold ring in a pig's snout.*

— Proverbs 11:22

Wow! That's one blunt verse, huh? While Beauty #2, the **Indiscreet Woman**, may be rich in the looks department, her lack of discretion is her ruin. Thus, one of the primary principles we can learn from her is that no amount of make-up, spa treatments, Botox® injections, or even plastic surgery can cover up a deficit of discretion. So, what exactly is discretion, and how can we get it? In a couple of weeks, we'll study discretion in detail; but for now, find out a few basics about it by completing the following assignments:

3. Look up the following words in any dictionaries (secular or biblical) you have, and record their definitions in the space provided:

NOTE: Please feel free to search for these definitions online. The *Merriam-Webster* dictionary at www.m-w.com or *Dictionary.Com* at www.dictionary.research.com are both excellent resources.

a. discretion

b. discreet

c. indiscreet

d. prudent (often used as a synonym for “discretion”)

We need to move along now and meet Beauty #3, the **Irritating Woman**. We won't spend much time with her today, but that's OK. A little time with her goes a long way!

6. Meet Beauty #3 by reading the following scriptures:

*It is better to live alone in the corner of an attic
than with a contentious wife in a lovely home.*

—Proverbs 21:9

*It is better to live alone in the desert
than with a crabby complaining wife.*

— Proverbs 21:19

We've all met this woman before haven't we? But let's be honest: at times, we've all been this woman, too. And while these verses may specifically apply to married women, you and I both know that crabbiness does not discriminate. Anyone (married or single, young or old, male or female, Christian or non-Christian) can exhibit the classic symptoms of what I call "3C Syndrome": (1) Contentiousness, (2) Crabbiness, with frequent bouts of (3) Complaining.

Fortunately, 3C is not generally contagious, and there is a cure (we'll uncover it in the weeks ahead). But for now, let's focus on the primary and possible long-term effects of 3C.

7. According to Proverbs 21:9 and 19:

- a. How does 3C affect our relationships with others?

- b. What potential long-term effects could 3C cause in our relationships with others?

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8. Might *you* have a mild (or possibly serious) case of 3C? Take a quick check-up by circling the word that most accurately completes each of the following sentences:
- a. My friends and family would probably say that I am crabby:
rarely occasionally frequently
 - b. My friends and family would probably say that I complain:
rarely occasionally frequently
 - c. My friends and family would probably say that I am usually:
easygoing a little high-maintenance downright difficult
 - d. My friends and family would probably say that my words are usually:
encouraging and kind sweet and sour negative and nagging
9. If your check-up revealed a possible case of 3C, a quick dose of wisdom and instruction from Proverbs should ease some of your symptoms until we can study the cure in the weeks ahead. Begin applying the following verses to your life as often and as liberally as needed:

*Don't talk too much, for it fosters sin.
Be sensible and turn off the flow!*
—Proverbs 10:19

*Kind words are like honey—
Sweet to the soul and healthy for the body.*
—Proverbs 16:24



10. Do you agree that there is a lot we can learn from the two women we've met today? What insights has the Holy Spirit taught you today through the Indiscreet Woman and the Irritating Woman?



DAY THREE

1. The fear of the Lord is a very positive and beneficial thing. It is where true wisdom begins. So what exactly is it? Very simply, the fear of the Lord is reverence for God that results in obedience to God. It is both attitude (reverence) and action (obedience); and when you put them together, you get wisdom! Before you begin today's study, submit yourself in reverence before God in prayer, and commit to obey Him. Then watch for wisdom to show up.



*Fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.
Knowledge of the Holy One results in understanding.*
—Proverbs 9:10

2. I am very excited today to introduce you to Beauty #4. This woman bears no resemblance to the three women you have previously met in Proverbs—thank goodness! So, without further adieu, it is my privilege now to introduce you to Beauty #4, the **Captivating Woman**:

¹⁸ *Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you.
Rejoice in the wife of your youth.*
¹⁹ *She is a loving doe, a graceful deer.
Let her breasts satisfy you always.
May you always be captivated by her love.*
—Proverbs 5:18–19

The first seven chapters of Proverbs are specifically addressed from a father (Solomon, the author of the Proverbs) to his son. In the Proverbs 5 passage you just read, the father is exhorting his son to seek love and sexual satisfaction within the bounds of a monogamous marriage to a captivating woman.

3. According to Proverbs 5:18–19, what are the characteristics of a Captivating Woman?

7. As a woman (or as a wife), how has God spoken to your heart through His Word today?



DAY FOUR

1. What's at the top of your "want list"? You know what I mean—most of us have a list in our head of things we'd really like to have. But do you know what should always be at the very top? Wisdom. Take today's passage before the Lord in prayer, and commit to giving it priority on your "want list".



*Choose (wisdom's) instruction rather than silver,
and knowledge over pure gold.
For wisdom is far more valuable than rubies.
Nothing you desire can be compared with it.
—Proverbs 8:10–11*

2. Thus far, you've met the first four women from Proverbs. Are you ready to meet our final beauty, Beauty #5? You've probably heard about her before. Hands down, she's the most well-known woman in Proverbs. Prepare to be dazzled as you meet Beauty #5: the **Ideal Woman**.

Proverbs 31:10–31

- ¹⁰ *Who can find a virtuous and capable wife? She is worth more than precious rubies.*
¹¹ *Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life.*
¹² *She will not hinder him but help him all her life.*
¹³ *She finds wool and flax and busily spins it.*
¹⁴ *She is like a merchant's ship; she brings her food from afar.*
¹⁵ *She gets up before dawn to prepare breakfast for her household and plan the day's work for her servant girls.*
¹⁶ *She goes out to inspect a field and buys it; with her earnings she plants a vineyard.*
¹⁷ *She is energetic and strong, a hard worker.*
¹⁸ *She watches for bargains; her lights burn late into the night.*
¹⁹ *Her hands are busy spinning thread, her fingers twisting fiber.*
²⁰ *She extends a helping hand to the poor and opens her arms to the needy.*
²¹ *She has no fear of winter for her household because all of them have warm clothes.*
²² *She quilts her own bedspreads. She dresses like royalty in gowns of finest cloth.*
²³ *Her husband is well known, for he sits in the council meeting with the other civic leaders.*
²⁴ *She makes belted linen garments and sashes to sell to the merchants.*
²⁵ *She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs with no fear of the future.*
²⁶ *When she speaks, her words are wise, and kindness is the rule when she gives instructions.*
²⁷ *She carefully watches all that goes on in her household and does not have to bear the consequences of laziness.*
²⁸ *Her children stand and bless her. Her husband praises her:*
²⁹ *"There are many virtuous and capable women in the world, but you surpass them all!"*
³⁰ *Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the LORD will be greatly praised.*
³¹ *Reward her for all she has done. Let her deeds publicly declare her praise.*

After reading such an extensive passage extolling the virtues of the Ideal Woman, the phrase "total package" comes to my mind. Wow! This woman's got it all and, furthermore, she's got it all *very* together.

But let me tell you something totally liberating that I learned several years ago about Proverbs 31:10–31: this passage is *not* describing a day in the life of the Ideal Woman (thank you, Lord!). Instead, this passage paints a panoramic picture of her life and career as a wife, mother, minister, and entrepreneur. So, if you are dismayed instead of dazzled by this passage, take heart. The Ideal woman didn't arrive at "Ideal-ness" in a day, or a month, or even a year. But make no mistake, she *did* arrive. And so should we.



3. Proverbs 31:10–31 details many of the qualities, characteristics, and accomplishments of the Ideal Woman. As you review the passage, which qualities, characteristics and accomplishments do you most appreciate and desire for your own life?
 4. How does Beauty #5 compare or contrast with:
 - a. Beauty #1: The Immoral Woman (pages 3–6)
 - b. Beauty #2: The Indiscreet Woman (pages 6–8)
 - c. Beauty #3: The Irritating Woman (pages 9–10)
 - d. Beauty #4: The Captivating Woman (pages 11–13)



5. As you take a panoramic look at your own life and Christian walk, what spiritual growth have you seen in your character, service, and relationships? Record your answer by praising and thanking God for some of the specific ways you've most recently seen Him at work in your life.



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DAY FIVE



1. The Book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings written and edited by Solomon to teach us how to live wise, godly lives (Proverbs 1:1–6). As you've already seen, it's an extremely practical book. But a proverb is not a promise. While each saying and proverb is generally true, there are exceptions (one of which you're about to see. We've all known wise people who died young). Still, the benefits of wise living are obvious. As you conclude the first week of your study, pray and thank God for the wisdom you've already gleaned and for the benefits you've already seen.

Wisdom will multiply your days and add years to your life.

If you become wise, you will be the one to benefit.

If you scorn wisdom, you will be the one to suffer.

—Proverbs 9:11–12

This week, you've briefly met the five females from Proverbs. In the next five weeks, these women will teach us the basics of biblical beauty. But before we conclude this first week of study, there's one very important thing we must do: we need to define biblical beauty.

Beauty by THE BOOK

5. Based upon everything you've studied this week about biblical beauty, check the box that correctly describes each of our 5 Beauties from the Proverbs:

- a. The Immoral Woman is a: Biblical Beauty Do
 Biblical Beauty Don't

- b. The Indiscreet Woman is a: Biblical Beauty Do
 Biblical Beauty Don't

- c. The Irritating Woman is a: Biblical Beauty Do
 Biblical Beauty Don't

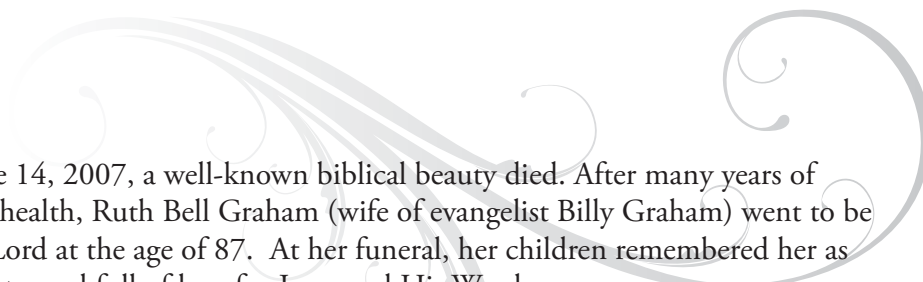
- d. The Captivating Woman is a: Biblical Beauty Do
 Biblical Beauty Don't

- e. The Ideal Woman is a: Biblical Beauty Do
 Biblical Beauty Don't

6. Do you know someone who is a Biblical Beauty Do? Did any familiar faces come to mind as you reviewed the Biblical Beauty Dos in this week's lesson? If so, then take a minute right now to pick up the phone or drop them a note. Thank and affirm them for the godly example they have been in your life. Trust me. You will make their day and bless them immeasurably.



7. As you reflect on what you've learned and studied this week, what primary principle has the Lord most impressed upon your heart and life?



On June 14, 2007, a well-known biblical beauty died. After many years of declining health, Ruth Bell Graham (wife of evangelist Billy Graham) went to be with the Lord at the age of 87. At her funeral, her children remembered her as funny, feisty, and full of love for Jesus and His Word.

Although he was not expected nor scheduled to speak, Billy Graham (impelled, no doubt, by the Spirit) rose to his feet and spoke at Ruth's service. In his brief address, he recalled the previous evening when he'd visited the funeral home to see Ruth one last time. Then he said, "I wish you could look into the casket because she's so beautiful." Ruth's beauty transcended even death.

In a world that worships physical, temporal beauty, the life and death of Ruth Bell Graham proves that biblical beauty is timeless and eternal. It has the awesome power to grow and intensify even as our bodies weaken and fade. It is the amazing promise to all who love the Lord and live His Word. It is real beauty. It is rare beauty. It is beauty by The Book.



