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Welcome to day 1 of the GMG Proverbs 31 study!

Today is a simple "meet and greet" for all of us! I'll start....My name is Erica and I'm a Christian, a wife, and a homeschooling mama of 4. I blog at www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com, and I love online studies like this because it allows me to get into the Word and talk with other ladies without taking me away from the family! :o)

SCRIPTURE:

- Our assignment is to read Proverbs 31:1-2
- Page 5 in Courtney's booklet

Courtney's book is just a quick introduction, but I love it! I feel like that often when I read Prov. 31, like wow, I could never compare! But I rest assured that this study is going to be an encouragement to us all in our walk as we take a closer look into each verse!

TAKE ACTION:

Visit the links below to get the Proverbs 31 eBook, the study guide, and to join our facebook group:

- Subscribe to [Women Living Well](#) to get the free [Proverbs 31 eBook](#)
- Join the [Confessions of a Homeschooler Proverbs 31 Facebook group](#)
- [Download the Proverbs 31 Study Guide](#)
- Not up for printing the guide? Check out <http://www.soapstudy.com/>
- Join the [Good Morning Girls Facebook](#) page

Welcome to Week 1, day 2

SCRIPTURE:

- Proverbs 1:3-4 for receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to those who are simple, knowledge and discretion to the young.

OBSERVATIONS:

Today I wanted to take a minute to share some of our struggles with each other. As a woman, I think it's important to show that we are NOT alone in our daily struggles and weaknesses, but together we can find encouragement! And if you need prayer please ask, we have a large group so let's use it to the fullest! Having lots of prayer warriors will be a blessing to us all. Likewise, I'd also like to encourage you all to pray for requests as they show up as well. You don't have to comment if you don't have time, a simple heart felt prayer is blessing enough! (Though I'm sure people would love to know you're praying for them! ;o)

I'll start...oh where to begin I have so many weaknesses it seems! I think foremost what comes to mind right now is my time in God's Word. Homeschooling is no easy task, and combining it with blogging and all of the other duties of a mom it can get overwhelming quickly!

Even though I know that time in the Word is crucial to my daily survival, unfortunately finding time to get in the Word is where I tend to falter. Of course this is always apparent in all other areas of my life such as my patience, attitude, and grace towards others.

I'm hoping that this study will help hold me accountable and that together we can encourage each other to persevere and finish the study with gusto!

Welcome to week 1, day 3 of Proverbs 31 study!

SCRIPTURE:

- Proverbs 31: 5-6 lest they drink and forget what has been decreed, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights. Let beer be for those who are perishing, wine for those who are in anguish!

OBSERVATIONS:

As we embark on our study and several of us admitted to not spending enough time in the Word, I thought it would be beneficial to fill our hearts and minds with verses! Today I'd love it if we could each share our favorite verse, or for some our life verse. Please write the whole verse then why you love it!

I'll start. I don't have a life verse really, but I do have several that I turn to regularly! Here are a couple of my favorite verses:

- Prov 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.
- Phil 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

I think from my verses you can tell I have an issue with worrying about things. I think that directly translates into a lack of faith, and even sometimes I fear what God actually has planned for me! I'm sure if He'd told me when I first married, that I would eventually be homeschooling 4 children I wouldn't have believed him anyway! Sadly, I may have even chosen disobedience over this calling! Looking back now I guess it's good He reveals things to me on a need to know basis!

Another favorite of mine and always on the tip of my tongue as a reminder....James 1:20 ...for the wrath of man [mom] does not produce the righteousness of God. I tend to be low on patience, so a kind reminder that I won't win my children's hearts with my anger is something I need!

Welcome to week 1, day 4 of Proverbs 31!

SCRIPTURE:

Proverbs 31:7-9 Let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more. Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

OBSERVATIONS:

As we finish up the introduction they suggested that we share our testimonies. I realize for some of you this might be difficult, but hopefully we can all share and encourage one another! If you're reading this after the online study, I'd like to encourage you to take a minute and write down your personal testimony. It's a great reminder of what God has done in our lives!

I'll try to keep this brief; here it is in a nutshell: I grew up in a loving home, but our version of 'religion' wasn't really about 'relationship'. None the less I felt confident I was 'covered' when it came to heaven. I met and married my husband (neither of us were really saved) and we started having issues almost immediately. I remember calling my mom crying around our 1 year anniversary saying this wasn't what I'd had in mind in regards to marriage. Really right at my breaking point, the Lord did something extraordinary and place my husband in a job where a co-worker held bible studies. My husband, an almost atheist at this point, started asking questions and finding answers in the Word, and soon accepted Jesus as his Savior. Just as I was thinking of leaving him, he suggested we go to a church in our area. I felt like it was like a last ditch effort to salvage our pathetic marriage, and assumed it was just a phase he was going through.

I went to church with him reluctantly. Honestly I was thinking how much my husband needed to straighten out his life. Of course I never thought there was anything I needed to do to change! I thought it was just a temporary change my husband had made to appease me, but about 2 months in (I'm a slow learner), I realized that even if my husband wasn't serious, what really mattered was if I was seeking God in my life! I was saved on March 8, 2001. My husband then told me he'd accepted Christ a couple months back and was just waiting patiently for me!

Since then it's been a whirl-wind of blessings in our life. Our marriage was saved, and we were blessed with our first child about 3 months later. As you know, He graciously trusted us with 3 more of His precious children, continuous work for my husband, the opportunity to homeschool, and a blog. Something that I didn't start out to do, but He obviously had other plans for us. Thankfully my husband and I chose to accept His salvation, and were obedient to His will our lives, or I can honestly say that my family would not exist as it does today.

God has worked in so many crazy ways in our lives, and He sees our big picture even when we don't. He sacrificed His only son for me, and for that I'm eternally grateful!

Welcome to week 1, day 5 of the Proverbs 31 study!

We have a little break so no reading assignment today. Relax and spend some time in prayer before we delve deep into our study. Today, I'd like us all to share what our goals are for this study. Keep in mind goals are not to condemn us, but something to strive for! Hopefully we can help encourage each other and hold one another accountable as we proceed!

Like I mentioned one of my struggles is staying in the Word consistently. One of my goals with this group is to help hold myself accountable to stay in the Word daily. Another one for this study specifically is to try and seek to become more like our Proverbs 31 woman. She seems so hard to measure up to, but I'm sure God has a version of her in all of us, we just have to seek His will to find out what that means for us individually!

I'm also praying that through this group, we can make some new friends, help encourage each other, and lift up one another in prayer as we go through this journey together. I know God has blessings for us, and I think it's already evident in the testimonies and prayers that I've seen flowing through our group. I'm already so encouraged to see you all praying for each other, and ministering to your fellow sisters!

I'd like you all to try and take time to read through the goals for today, and like before, if you see someone that has similar goals as you, or someone you feel led to encourage, please feel free to drop them a message! We have a big group and the power of prayer can be used mightily here!

So take a minute and leave a comment on this post sharing your goals for the Proverbs 31 study with us.

Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart."

I hope you all have a wonderful weekend, and will be greatly blessed by this study!

Welcome to week 2: day 1!

SCRIPTURE:

- Page 6 of the Proverbs 31 eBook
- Proverbs 31:10 A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.
- Proverbs 12:4 A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.

OBSERVATIONS:

Wow! I absolutely want to be that ruby to my husband, sadly I am not doing great in some of these areas! I can for sure rival my husband, complain about my duties, be discontent at times, and yes...selfish. The good news is that I'm willing to change, I'm committed to praying, and I have God on my side!

I'm always blown away by the comparisons found in scripture. A "disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones". Other translations say "rottenness in his bones". Either way, it's not good, and what a graphic image. We women can cut right down to the bone!

It reminded me of Proverbs 27:15 "A quarrelsome wife is like the dripping of a leaky roof in a rainstorm." And then there's Proverbs 25:24 "Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife." Or Proverbs 21:19 "Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and nagging wife." You get the idea right? We women have a lot of power over the overall "mood" of our homes.

Although Prov 31:10 usually refers to a married woman, some translations say "A woman of noble character". Either way I think that it contains lessons that apply to all women. We can be trust worthy, walking in the light of our Lord Jesus Christ, and a blessing to those around us. And remember, we are the bride of Christ no matter our earthly marital standing. As a mom, one thing that always comes to mind, is that I'm teaching my daughters how to be a Proverbs 31 woman each day. They watch me, imitate me, and easily take on my attitude towards things. This is a calling that I need to take careful heed to.

Rubies...I did a little research, and the comparison to rubies is quite significant. Rubies are one of the most precious gem stones, and can even cost more than diamonds! Along with their rarity, they are also the hardest gemstones, with the exception of diamonds. Ladies, we are beautiful, valuable, and durable! And honestly, as a wife, mom, and homeschooler, that durability really comes in handy!

As we evaluate our strengths and weaknesses through this study, remember,

that you are valuable dear ones! And as one of my good friends always says "You are loved by an Almighty God!" Take this study and use it to your benefit, commit to change the areas you are weaker, and hold fast to those where you are strong. Seek Him first, continue in prayer and He will give you the strength to change so you can become the woman He intended you to be!

My prayer for each us, is that God would use this study to show us the way to be the "wise woman" who builds her home, and not the "foolish" woman who tears it down with her own hands! ~Prov 14:1

Today I'd like to share our thoughts on these readings, as well as any strengths or areas of weakness we need covered in prayer. As you read through your fellow sisters comments, please make sure to lift them up in prayer, and if you see someone you might be able to minister to, make sure to send them a message!

Welcome to week 2 day 2!

SCRIPTURE:

- Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the Lord.
- Proverbs 19:14 Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the Lord.

OBSERVATIONS:

One thing I love about these verses, is that they talk about finding a good wife. I have to confess when I first got married, I was not exactly a "good" wife, and I certainly did not feel like a gift from the Lord! My husband and I weren't saved, and both of us were selfish. Living for our own desires, and each doing our own thing.

But the cool thing is that if you put your faith in Him, He can turn you into a "good" wife! He will change your heart, and your focus so that you can be a blessing to those around you, and a witness to His glory!

Like yesterday, I think this also applies to all women, not just wives. What I mean is that through Jesus Christ all things are possible, and if we just seek after Him in everything we do, we will be blessed, and we will also be a blessing to those around us. He is the only one who can change our hearts, and turn our path so we are walking in the light.

I hope you all have a blessed day, I would love to hear your thoughts on these verses.

Welcome to week 2 day 3!

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov. 31:11 Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.
- Prov 11:28 Those who trust in their riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.
- Prov 28:26 Those who trust in themselves are fools, but those who walk in wisdom are kept safe.
- Page 7 in the Proverbs eBook

OBSERVATIONS:

Today's reading talks about our husbands having full confidence in us. I tend to do okay in some of the areas listed in our reading for today, but one area that I was falling short was #4 "Reputation". Now that's not to say that I ever intentionally belittled my husband in front of other people. However, after looking back at my actions I realized that I have done this in the past but always in a joking manner. However after reading "For Women Only" by Shaunti Feldhahn, I came to the realization that making small jokes at my husband's expense, even if it was intended to be funny, was indeed speaking poorly of him! What seemed like a little wise crack, was actually me disrespecting my husband. Yikes! Looking at it from his perspective, I certainly wouldn't want him telling a group of people about my funny little flaws, even if he was joking.

And by the way ladies, the same concept applies to how we talk about our children. I think it's important to build them up with our words. Especially think about this when we're on the phone to friends. Do you call your girlfriend during the day to vent about your kiddos? Think they're not listening? Think again, and consider how hurtful it might be if someone you loved called a friend and complained about you.

My husband and I still tend to joke around a lot together, we are both kind of sarcastic people...okay, I think I am more sarcastic than he is. But since then I've been very careful not to do that in public. We do jest in private sometimes, however once I realized that my 9 year old daughter was starting to talk to my husband in the same sarcastic manner as I did, I am now careful not to joke that way in front of our children anymore either. Kids pick up things quickly, and what may seem funny coming from you, isn't usually as funny coming from the mouth of one of your babes.

From now on I'm subscribing to Eph 4:29 ~ "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." It's funny that I spout that verse off to my children daily (actually it's hanging over the door of

our homeschool room) but yet, apparently I don't think it applies to me!

Are the things coming from your mouth benefiting those who listen?

Again, this is a lesson for us all, single or married. How we talk about others can tear them down, or build them up, and I'd rather error on the side of building up!

Welcome to Week 2 day 4!

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 16:20 Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD.
- Prov 28:25 The greedy stir up conflict, but those who trust in the LORD will prosper.
- Prov 29:25 Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.

OBSERVATIONS:

So far our study has been talking about how we can be a woman of noble character. Be a blessing to those around us, trustworthy, and faithful. How our families can have confidence in our abilities to run our homes, train up our children, and make wise choices financially and emotionally.

I love how today's verses bring it all back to trusting in the Lord. Certainly no matter how hard we may try, we can't be the perfect "Proverbs 31" woman all on our own. Running a home, raising children, working outside the home, doing endless loads of laundry, cleaning toilets, fixing meals, chauffeuring little ones around, and still having enough left to give to our husbands can be an overwhelming task.

I often get asked "How do you do it all?!" and my only response is "Only through the grace of God!". And it's literally true. If I can truly trust in His will for my life, then He will also provide for all of those things He's called me to do. He will equip me to homeschool my children, to be a Godly wife, to manage a home, fix meals, and the list goes on. He will also confirm to me when I am choosing to do things that are not His will for my life, and give me rest when I heed His instruction.

~Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

If I am not seeking God first, then yes, I will be toiling in vain under my own strength. But if I am seeking and trusting in the Lord these verses remind me that I will be blessed, I will prosper, and I will be kept safe. And you know what the best

part is? When God fills us up, it also overflows onto those around us!

A quick note on the 'fear of man' thing. As a homeschooler, there are a lot of skeptics, people with opinions, and self-doubts that can plague us. Sometimes I can even be my own worst skeptic! But the only thing that has gotten me this far in our journey is to have faith in the calling that God has placed upon our family. He knows what He is doing, and all of the pressure is off of me when people ask "are you sure you can or should do that?". I can answer with a resounding "YES!" because I am being obedient to His calling in my life and that is all that matters. I will not be answering to anyone else but God at the end. I want to be faithful to what He has for us and not worry about doing something because I am afraid of what other people will think.

I would love to hear how you are all doing so far with the study, and to encourage you to continue on as we progress through God's vision for women!

Welcome to Week 2 day 5!

Friday's are "reflection" days to give us some time to ponder what we've learned over the week.

I know not everyone here is married, but for me, I think one of the most important things I've been meditating on this week is just to make my husband a priority. So, my time in the Word with God comes first, then my husband, then my kiddos. With four little ones putting their needs first is an easy trap to fall into. They still need help with basic things, and their needs can seem so immediate.

It can get very overwhelming with all of the demands on me, but it will also be devastating to my marriage if I'm continually putting all of those things ahead of my husband. After a long day of school, chores, errands, chauffeuring kids from one thing to the next, dinner, and finally the bedtime routine I'm kind of burnt out and just done for the day.

I really don't want my husband to have to come home from his equally long day at work to a worn out tired wife whose got nothing left for him. Unfortunately this does happen more frequently than I'd like.

With the holiday weekend coming up its a perfect opportunity to work on one of my Action items from our SOAP study. That is to enjoy some downtime with my family. To be present with my kids and actually hang out with them and play. And to put my husband's needs ahead of phone calls, emails, and even demanding kiddos. Basically I want to put my husband back into the spot in my

life that he deserves, the spot he once had when we first got married. The spot he slowly fell from as time went by.

I'm also going to take some time to re-evaluate commitments and make sure that I'm doing what God has called me to do and not a lot of other extra things that might be causing me to feel burnt out and unavailable to my family.

I would love to hear your thoughts on this week and how God has been working on your heart!

Blessings to you all and I hope you have a wonderful long and relaxing weekend!

Good morning ladies, welcome to week 3 day 1!

SCRIPTURE:

- Proverbs 31:12 “She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.”
- 1 Kings 11:4 “As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.”

OBSERVATIONS:

Wow, I have to say when I read the verse on Solomon, I was totally convicted! Deep inside I know I have the power to influence my husband, but I don't think I've been very careful with that influence. I know Eve mislead Adam, and Sarah talked Abraham into taking her maid servant when she didn't have faith to wait on God's promise. Those are just a few examples in the Bible of women leading their men astray and oh how I don't want to be one of those women!

Sometimes I am overwhelmed by the influence I have in my home. I can definitely tell that my attitude sets the tone for the whole house, and you know what? Some days I don't feel like being cheery all day! But sure enough, when I'm cranky and frustrated, that will rub right off on my children and also my husband about two seconds after he walks into the door.

I actually did a little experiment one time. I committed to having a positive mood for the day, then noted how it affected the kiddos and my husband. The following day I did the opposite, I was cranky, impatient, and frustrated most of the day. That wasn't entirely on purpose, but it just so happened that it worked out that way. The house was in disarray when my husband walked through the door, and you know what happened? Almost immediately my husband followed suit.

I can't imagine what it must be like after a long day at work, for my husband to walk into a home that is a wreck, with kids crying, and a wife that looks like she's been through the ringer. But I can say that I don't think I'd be in that big of a rush to get to that home if it was like that every day. Now, certainly we have bad days, and thankfully my husband can typically detect this with his amazing powers of observation. He'll usually hop right into the fire and relieve me of my duties while I get a hold of myself.

But wouldn't it be nicer if he came home to find his household in order, kids happily playing, and a warm dinner ready? Okay, so I'm not exactly June Cleaver in the kitchen, but I can at least strive to have our home in order when he walks through the door...and yes ladies, even if it's been a bad day.

Now onto the last part of that verse regarding Solomon. While we are not the

leader of our home, we are the manager of it, and I want to encourage my husband to be devoted fully to the Lord! The last thing I want to do is distract him from that. He is in charge of our family devotions at night, and what happens if I don't have dinner ready, or the house is crazy when he walks in? Typically our devotion gets skipped, not always on purpose, but just due to the chaos of it all. No one has the energy left to do anything when our home is in disarray like that.

Now, I realize that this sounds like a lot of pressure to take on ourselves. But guess what? I don't have to do that all by myself! As good friend reminded me tonight that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!" (Phil 4:13) He will give me the strength to be the wife and mother that He wants me to be. Hallelujah and Amen!

Welcome to week 3 day 2!

SCRIPTURE:

- Proverbs 31:13 "She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands."
- Col 3:23 "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men"
- Proverbs 31 eBook: Page 9 & 10

OBSERVATIONS:

When I first read today's devotion I pridefully thought to myself how I am not usually a lazy person. I do work hard in my home, and I get quite a bit done on a daily basis. But then I got to the part where Courtney was talking about our perspective. Am I really working for my family with a cheerful heart?

Unfortunately my answer is no. Often I spend too much time complaining, even if it's just in my head, to realize all of the blessings around me. Some days everything can seem like a chore to me. What's for breakfast? What's for lunch? Time to fold laundry. Did you clean the toilet? What's for dinner? Did you vacuum? Why am I still stepping on Lego's? And whose sock is this under the kitchen table?

In her post today on GMG I love how Courtney said that she frequently stops and prays a quick prayer of thanksgiving for her laundry load, her groceries, her washing machine, etc.! How true is that. I did a post back in June of last year when we were going through the Ministry of Motherhood by Sally Clarkson that I think fit well with today's reading.

Click here to read it:

<http://www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/blog/2011/06/ministry-of-motherhood-week-6.html>

God offered us His gift of salvation (really I should stop there, that's enough to be thankful for in itself!) But He didn't stop there, He also blessed us with four wonderful children, a nice home, clothes, food, and toys for our children, and even the opportunity to homeschool. Yet I complain endlessly. Why is that? I think I've gotten lost in the daily grind, and forgotten about all of the blessings that surround me. I have forgotten to be thankful to the calling God has placed on my life!

I found myself needing to start over at step number 1 in today's eBook. Pray. Work unto the Lord. Change my perspective. Research and find inspiration. And yes, rest.

As we're nearing the end of the school year, everyone is ready to be done, most of all me. A break is definitely needed. What awesome timing for me to be reading the encouragement and motivation of today's verses to get my perspective back! God has given each of us our own specific callings, let's work steadfast for Him!

"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." 1 Cor 15:58

Welcome to week 3 day 3!

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 31:14 "She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar."
- Prov 9:1-2 "Wisdom has built her house; she has set up its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table."
- Proverbs 31 eBook page 11

OBSERVATIONS:

I tend to be a fairly organized person, keeping the household running and cleaned up, homeschool going (almost done!), and kiddos fed and at their various sporting events on time. But am I really like the Proverbs 31 woman, going the distance because of my love for my husband and children? Unfortunately right now, I am not! I'm more like the crazy lady with four kids

running around like a chicken with her head cutoff.

We're in the middle of overlapping sports right now and are literally running from one thing to the next. I certainly haven't made enough time to shop carefully, nor make healthy homemade meals for my family. Today was a perfect example of my unpreparedness. We literally had 45 minutes to get from swimming, back home (about a 20 minute drive) to change clothes, eat dinner, and then off to my son's baseball game. Had I planned ahead a little better I would have had my son's baseball clothes with us. And I could have packed a healthy dinner for us to eat on the way. But instead, I depended on fast-food. Yuck. The poor kiddos ate in the car, we ran home and my son changed and hopped right back into the car and we headed out.

Not exactly your organized Proverbs 31 mom, eh? And today wasn't the only exception, over the last two weeks our schedule has been just as overwhelming, and I really need to get back to my schedule and make healthy meals at home! I have a monthly meal plan that I shop off of, and normally I stick to that. I shop only for what is on the list that week which helps save money. This also ensures that I actually have the necessary ingredients to make the meals I plan for. The other nice thing about a prepared meal plan is that I don't have to "think" about what we're having for meals. I simply go to my chart and follow it.

If you're interested here is a link to my monthly meal plans:

<http://www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/blog/tag/monthly-meal-plan> .

Another great site for meal plans is <http://www.emeads.com/> they send you weekly meal plans along with a shopping list and create their menu's off of store sales!

As far as shopping diligently, certain items like fresh fruit, peppers, and onions freeze really well! You can purchase them in bulk on sale, come home and chop them and store in sandwich baggies then freeze. When it comes time to use one, just pull out a bag of them. They thaw very quickly and are already chopped!

I'm still not great at using coupons or price matching, but I know Wal-mart will match any price you find, so if you save your weekly grocery ads you can take them with you and they'll price match anything! Something to add to my ACTION list!

The other thing that stood out to me was Prov 9:2 where it is talking about wisdom setting her table. I just mentioned how crazy our schedule has been, and though it should calm down here shortly, I am saddened that our dinner/family time has been suffering. We haven't had many dinners at home this week, not to mention at a nicely set table! I wrote yesterday that dinner time is also our family devotion time and sadly we've let that go over the last couple weeks as we're rushing from one thing to the next. I can definitely tell in the

attitudes of everyone when we are not spending that family time talking, sharing, and getting into the Word of God together. I definitely need to re-set my priorities in this area!

My daughters absolutely LOVE to set our table, one loves to fold napkins into fancy forms, and the other is gaw-gaw for yummy smelling candles lit at dinner time! Why not take a few extra minutes to create a fun and welcoming environment when you sit down to eat? I forget how nice it is to share a meal like this, with our family sharing stories, thoughts, and laughing together! Something wonderful happens when we sit down together and focus on the Lord...He is with us! (Matt 18:20)

So I have some new goals for this week...and beyond: Take time to shop carefully, make dinner at home, and pick our family devotions back up. Oh, and why not decorate our table well and add a few candles to make it a little more welcoming and encourage conversation?

Welcome to week 3 day 4!

SCRIPTURE:

- Gen 24:15-20 - Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milkah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor. ¹⁶The woman was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever slept with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again. The servant hurried to meet her and said, "Please give me a little water from your jar." "Drink, my lord," she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink. After she had given him a drink, she said, "I'll draw water for your camels too, until they have had enough to drink." ²⁰So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels.

OBSERVATIONS:

In today's verses, the woman not only goes out of her way to serve Abraham's servant, but also his camels. We don't know how her day went prior to that, it could've been a long day like we all tend to have, or an easy one. But either way she was willing to help out a stranger without even a thought to it. She didn't look on this as an inconvenience, or an interruption, but instead served this stranger gladly.

One thing I like to model to my children is compassion for others in need. Most of

the times when we're going somewhere like the zoo or another field trip, we'll take an extra lunch with us. My kiddos love to seek out someone in need and offer a lunch to them. There's usually someone on the corner of a busy street on our way there asking for money. The kids love to share our food with them and they get to see firsthand what a blessing it is to server others.

One day I'd forgotten to take an extra lunch with us and sure enough we pulled up to the stop where a young man was standing with a sign for help. I was pleasantly surprised when one of my children offered up their lunch for him knowing they would be hungry until we got home. It such a blessing for me seeing that they had compassion for another human being even if it required a sacrifice on their part!

One other thing I loved about these verses was God's faithfulness to provide the perfect bride for Abraham's son. I think sometimes after the 'honeymoon' phase wears off, we can doubt our marriage, or even wonder if we've married the wrong person. All though at one point we truly loved our husband, and would have done extraordinary things to be with him, now we might be a little less "on fire" so to speak. This verse reminded me that God put our marriage together, and He does not make mistakes even though we do. When we're truly in love we are willing to do almost anything for those we hold dear. Serving our families like the Proverbs 31 woman isn't even like a chore when we are motivated by love. More specifically, when we are motivated by His love.

Much like our initial obsession with our spouses can fade, so can our zeal for God and His Word, and I really think this is where serving our family starts to seem like a chore to us. At first we're all gung-ho and can't wait to get more of Him in our lives. The more we pour Him into our hearts, the more love we pour out to those around us. Slowly over the course of being a Christian we can lose some of our enthusiasm. The things we were once grateful for, can now seem like a burden. If that's you right now, don't condemn yourself! He already knows your heart anyway, so be honest with Him. Tell Him your passion is weak and ask that He increases your desire for His Word! Ask that He give you His love for those around you and ask how you can best serve them.

I know you've all heard it before, but take a minute to read through 1 Cor 13:4-8,13 with me. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails...And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Do you need more of God's love in your life? Are you serving your family with the love of God in your heart?

I just want to encourage all of you who have committed to doing this study! You have taken the first step towards getting more of Him in your lives, and because of that your families and marriages will be blessed as well! I know our days can be busy and its tough to squeeze in time in the Word. But it's essential to our ability to serve those around us with a truly cheerful-self-sacrificial heart!

Hi ladies, and welcome to week 3 day 5!

As you know, Friday's are our day for reflection on what the Lord has been working out in our lives. One of the other leaders had a great idea that I'd like to do in our group as well, so...

I'd like to declare today a "Live It" day, instead of just discussing the verses like we normally do I want to challenge you to intentionally do one of the things on your S.O.A.P. Application list that we've been working on so far.

Next come back here and comment letting us all know what action you've chosen to take to literally "Live" out God's Word in your lives!

ACTION: My action item for today (and hopefully going forward) is to be diligent with our meals. That means planning, shopping, and cooking them! I mentioned this week that we've been running like crazy and meals have been less than healthy lately, so this is an immediate need for my family!

What action are you going to take to live out God's Word in your homes?

Welcome to week 4 day 1!

SCRIPTURE:

- Proverbs 31:15 "She also rises while it is yet night, And provides food for her household, And a portion for her maidservants."
- Psalm 5:3 "My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; In the morning I will direct it to You, And I will look up."
- Mark 1:35 "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed."

OBSERVATIONS:

Oh, this Proverbs 31 woman continues to be a challenge to me! So far we've learned that she is a blessing to those around her and that she works hard. Now we find out how she accomplishes so much...she rises early!

I'm not sure if any of you have emailed me before, but chances are your response came very late at night. This is the time I do most of my work. Partly because I am a night owl, and partly because I try not to let my blog thrive at the expense of my time with my family. I don't want my children to grow up remembering mom on her computer 24/7. I do my best to stay off of my computer until after the kids are in bed for the night. Which means I only have a few hours to get a LOT of work done.

So how do I keep up with the early rising Proverbs 31 woman? This is honestly an area I'm still working on. During school my wake time is supposed to be 7:30am. Unfortunately as the year progressed this turned into closer to 8:00am. Not a huge deal, but once our day gets going I can tell when I've gotten up too late. That usually means I don't do a morning devotion, it pushes breakfast back, which pushes school back, which pushes lunch back...you get the idea. Before I know it the day is over and I feel like I've been scrambling all day just to keep up!

Our day definitely goes MUCH better when I bite the bullet and wake earlier. If I'm up early, I can start getting breakfast going while the kiddos are getting dressed and ready. They come down, we eat, have time to discuss our day, do a devotion, then start school.

When I get up late, all of that gets pushed aside, and the whole day turns into a frenzy. I usually end up rushing the kids through school then get frustrated when they can't keep up!

hmm...let's see what we've observed so far...

Get up early = time with God, smooth day with lots getting accomplished
Get up late = no time for God, rushed day with a cranky mama, and no time to do extra things.

APPLICATION:

Set a bedtime and a morning rise time and stick to it! Make sure that my schedule allows me to get at least 7-8 hours of sleep each night. (Make sure bedtime is one that does NOT include me working so late that I can't accomplish said schedule!) That said I'm posting this a little earlier than normal so I can go get some sleep! ;o)

Welcome to week 4 day 2!

SCRIPTURE:

- Proverbs 31:16 "She considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard."

OBSERVATIONS:

I just wanted to start off with a praise report...sort of... if you recall yesterday I posted on how I was a night owl, and that I was going to pray for strength set a schedule that allowed me to get things done at night, but get up early so I have quiet time in the a.m. and am ready to start my day...remember that? God did. This morning my son woke me up at 6:45...followed by Tinker Bell...followed by the cat...my husband's alarm...and finally the thoughts of all I had to do for the day. NO kidding! I couldn't have gone back to sleep if I tried LOL! (Which by the way I did TRY!) Yep, in an immediate response to my prayers was God telling me to "GET UP!"

Okay, back to today's verse! I'm still reeling from my early morning rouse, but not enough to miss the fact that our Proverbs 31 woman is extraordinary! She is full of faith, a blessing to her family, a diligent worker, and smart! A woman who can consider a field and finally purchase it, is very savvy in my opinion! The way the verse is worded makes it clear that this woman has taken her time on this and not rushed into something on a whim. She is purchasing something that will ultimately bless her family even further by finally becoming a vineyard. This required foresight, patience, and perseverance. I'm not sure about you, but planting a whole vineyard on my own sounds like a tremendous amount of work. But our Proverbs 31 woman is diligent in her tasks. Since most of us aren't out buying fields right now I still think we can translate this into whatever we are passionate about that brings blessings to our family.

Right now my vineyard is my blog. I didn't intend it to become what it has, originally it was just a way to keep my husband and family members up to date the kiddos. Apparently God had other plans...and soon after starting I was praying for guidance on how to run this quickly growing ministry. I saw His hand in my venture in a great way and it quickly became a wonderful way for me to bless other homeschooling families. Our good and gracious God has used it to bless our family as well. At this point my blog is His ministry and I'm just along for the ride!

It's really is truly amazing what God can do in our lives if we take a step of faith and follow His commands. He can even grow a vineyard out of an empty field! Pray for His will in your life and direction in this area and see what He has for you!

Oh, and by the way...I did get up this morning, had time in prayer, made a good breakfast, and continued on with a wonderful day!

Welcome to week 4 day 3:

SCRIPTURE:

- Proverbs 16:3 "Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans."
- Proverbs 21:5 "The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty."
- Proverbs 31 eBook: Pages 14&1

OBSERVATIONS:

Continuing along with yesterday's verses, we see that our Proverbs 31 woman doesn't rush into things! She has shown herself a good steward of all that she's been given. She works hard, shops carefully, and isn't hasty. For me this speaks directly to impulse purchases! Sometimes I can be in a bit of a rush and I don't always think things through, or pray on them before acting.

Here we see that being careless with our purchases will indeed cause us more harm than good. The Bible makes it clear that we are to seek God and His kingdom first, and everything else will be added to us. (Matt 6:33) Taking matters into our own hands instead of waiting on His leading only shows our lack of faith in God to provide for our needs. Now, I know that giving full control to God is easier said than done, and there are numerous examples in the Bible of people not waiting on God...and their consequences. But part of this study is to stretch and grow us in our faith!

I love how if we commit our works to the Lord, our plans will be established. That

doesn't mean we have to know all the answers or the right steps to take! What a relief! He'll lead us in the right direction, the right home, the right purchase, the right career, the right curriculum...you get the idea. So how do we do this in a practical way? It's simple, just lay your burdens before Him in prayer. That doesn't mean some of your burdens, or go in half way. It means commit everything to God. It also doesn't mean that you don't do anything. When we put our concerns to God in prayer, we also need to be diligent to put forth effort on our part to accomplish whenever He's called us to.

But our plans are not God's primary concern here, what is first and foremost in His mind is our relationship with Him. If we are laying everything in His hands, then we are seeking and talking to Him constantly. Looking for direction, asking for help, relying on Him in every area of our life. This relationship is what will guide us and supply us with strength to accomplish His will through our lives!

APPLICATION & PRAYER:

Take some time this week to pray for your finances, and anything that's been on your heart in regards to that. Ask God for clarity and wisdom to make wise choices on how to proceed. Ask him to help you keep Him first and foremost in your minds. Listen to His voice, be filled with His Spirit, and work with joy as you commit it all to His glory.

Welcome to week 4 day 4!

SCRIPTURE:

- James 4:13-15 - Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

OBSERVATIONS:

The disciples had no way of knowing what tomorrow would bring them. Whether they would live or die, prosper or be faced with adversity. They were totally dependent upon Jesus, just as the apostle makes very clear in these verses.

Somewhere along the years we've fooled ourselves into thinking that we have some control over our lives. But the truth is...we don't. All of our plans are dependent upon Him, whether we want to admit it or not. Sure we can take things into our own hands just as Sarah and Abraham did, but consequences will be inevitable. The Bible says we are but a vapor, a mist that appears for a little while then vanishes. (James 4:14) Our lives are fleeting and only what we do for God will last. So then, doesn't it make more sense to seek His will in everything

we do?

“Therefore, my dear brothers [or in this case, sisters], stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” (1 Cor. 15:58)

What do we want to spend our times doing? Texting...checking Facebook...tweeting, oblivious to what is going on around us? Or serving our families, serving others, and making sure we leave a Godly legacy by how we raise up our children? The choice is ours, we only need to keep our eyes on the eternal and remain steadfast on the course He has laid before us.

CHALLENGE/APPLICATION:

I'd like to challenge everyone today to put down their iPhones, iPads, iPods, turn off the TV...you get the idea...and spend some quality time being present with your family! Serve them well, bless them with yummy meals, and take the time to do family devotions! Pray with them before bedtime, give them hugs and kisses, and tell them you love them!

Have your own challenge this week? I'd love to hear what your goals are after going through our study so far!

Welcome to week 4, day 5!

Happy Friday Proverbs 31 ladies! I'm always amazed at how time flies during these studies. I hope you are all being encouraged and blessed as we learn about what our Almighty God has in store for us!

One of the other leaders came up with a great idea for this Friday that I thought would be fun. Since we've been talking about how to bless our families and meal time is one of those necessary priorities in our lives, I thought it would be fun to do a "Facebook Friday Potluck!"

I know you probably think I'm crazy right about now, but since we can always use new recipe ideas, I think it would be fun for us all to share our favorite potluck recipes (Or favorite weekday recipe too!). Post your contribution to our Facebook Potluck in the comments for this post, and be blessed by all of the yummy recipes that are about to come your way!

As always feel free to comment with any reflections you have for the week, your thoughts are always welcome! Have a blessed weekend!

Welcome to week 5 day 1!

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 31:17 - She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.
- Ne. 8:10 - Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."
- Ecc 9:10 - Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.
- Proverbs eBook: Pages 16-17

OBSERVATIONS:

The first thought that came to mind for me while reading today, was how highly distractible I am. It's so easy for me to start off on one task, only to be diverted to something else! For example, I'll head into the laundry room to fold clothes, and on the way run into a mess to clean up. While cleaning that mess, someone will ask for water. While I'm getting water, the phone might ring. Since my phone is next to my computer, I'll see that I have new emails. While answering emails, I'll realize that I haven't made lunch yet so I start the oven. Half way through lunch prep a kid will need something, which leads me to their room, which reveals a whole new mess to clean up. Someone will ask what's for lunch and I'll remember I left it half made on the counter. On my way down to the kitchen I'll remember I was going to do laundry. On the way to the laundry room, I'll notice the dogs haven't been fed and call to whoever has dog duty today. The dog food is near my bathroom where I'll notice that the hand towel is on the floor, soap all over the sink, and toilet paper on the floor, so I'll pick that up. Forgetting what I was originally doing, I'll go back to finish lunch. If I'm lucky at some point during the day I'll actually make it to the laundry room to complete my task!

So far from what we've read about the Proverbs 31 woman, she is NOT highly distractible. She seems to have a plan and then actually follows through on that! Whether it's shopping, planning, keeping her home in order, blessing her family, or being diligent in her daily work, she is on top of things!

I'd love to say that was me, and from my blog I get a lot of questions on how I do everything! The short answer is that I don't! Things fall through the cracks, and as you read above, I am easily distracted. I think the main reason stems from having too much on my plate. My mind is always racing in about a billion different ways but rarely on the task at hand. Even when I'm playing with my kiddos, I'm not always fully "present". I am always thinking ahead, of what is coming, what I need to get done next...

APPLICATION:

I'd like to challenge all of you to take inventory of all of your daily chores and commitments. You can find a printable commitment worksheet here: <http://shared.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/momstuff/CommitmentWksht.pdf>

When your list is complete, sit down with your spouse (if applicable), and go over your commitments. See if there are any items on there that can be removed. Pray over the list and let God lead you. "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Ne 8:10). He will make it clear where you are to be spending your time, and by obeying His calling on your life, He'll also equip you to do the work set before you!

Once you have your commitments that you're keeping, make a schedule for each day. Give yourself a "do-able" amount of tasks and check them off as you go throughout your week. Make sure to add "Family Time" to your list and consciously try to be "present" during this time! (For a printable daily schedule, click here: <http://shared.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/momstuff/OurFamilySchedule.doc>)

As a side note to Courtney's comments on getting fit while you do chores:

Here are a couple of my favorite sites for staying in shape: <http://www.squeezeitin.com/> & <http://peak313.com/> both show how to make your daily routines into fitness exercises! I also wanted to mention another favorite of mine in regards to fitness, "Reshaping It All" (<http://reshapingitallwithcandace.blogspot.com/>) by Candace Cameron Bure. It's a motivational book for both physical and spiritual fitness!

Have some fitness tips to share or comments on today's readings? Make sure to comment below!

Welcome to week 5, day 2!

SCRIPTURE:

- Ps 118:24 "This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it."
- Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

OBSERVATIONS:

I know some of you said you were feeling discouraged by how you're not measuring up to the Proverbs 31 woman, and I just want to encourage you today! God does not expect us to be this perfect model of a woman. I think our verses for today are there to encourage us and show us WHERE we can go to strive to become more like her. As Philippians 4:13 shows us, He is our strength. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. If we were already this perfect example of a Godly woman then we wouldn't need God, we wouldn't turn to Him for help, pray for strength and encouragement, or bother to do a study.

Instead we would say "Sorry God, don't need you today, I've got this one covered!". But instead, He tells us to be content with our lot, give thanks in all circumstances, and "...seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

These verses and this study are all there to benefit us, not condemn us. They give us something to model after, if God never tells us what He wants, how are we to know? But instead, He lays out a model for us, someone we can strive to be like. Now, that doesn't mean we'll do every single thing to perfection, but it does mean we can be convicted to change where need be.

APPLICATION: Just as Psalm 55:22 tells us "Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall." Bring all of your weaknesses and areas to work on to the foot of the cross ladies, and He will meet you there! He will equip you to do what He's placed before you, strengthen you in areas of weakness, and create in you the Godly woman He desires!

Welcome to week 5, day 3!

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov. 31:18 "She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night."
- Proverbs 31 eBook Pages 18-19

OBSERVATIONS:

Blessings to all of you night owls out there! Just as our Proverbs 31 woman rises early, today we find out that she also works into the evening. Finally something I

can relate to! Today we're talking about burning our "night oil"...notice our verse didn't mention burning our "midnight oil."

I do a LOT of work at night, I'm sure many of you do as well. Once the kiddos go to bed, I do a quick clean-up of the house and make sure things are ready for the morning so we're not in a fury of chaos at 6:30am when we're getting up for swim team.

Next I start working. That usually involves answering emails, making sure any curriculum orders are taken care of, plugging away at any new things I've got in the works, and blogging. It's important for me to try and respond to everyone who emails me with a question, so that part of my day can take a while. I also want to create things that will benefit and encourage other homeschoolers as well as our own family. I like to think of this part of my day as seeing to it that my "trading is profitable". My vision for Confessions of a Homeschooler has always been to bless other homeschooling families. I view it as God's ministry so I am do my best to be diligent in this area.

Finally I take a few minutes (or more) to catch up on other blogs and search around for new and fun activities. This is usually when my time might move from being productive into the wasted minutes arena. From this point on, I can spend way too much time surfing around, following rabbit trails, and basically wasting valuable sleeping time! Sometimes I'll even start a movie in the background while I work. Once work is done, I'll finish the movie, which might mean I end up going to bed way too late! I remember reading line #6 from page 6 of Courtney's eBook in the beginning of this study and thinking...uh-oh...I'm in trouble!

If you don't recall here is what it said: "She does not spend her days doing leisurely shopping, texting, emailing, web browsing, watching late night movies, and sleeping in."Yikes...While I don't do leisurely shopping, I can be found doing all the rest of those items on that list! It was like she wrote it just for me! Unfortunately, the later I stay up, the crankier I am during the day! And guess who gets the outpouring of my impatience? Yep, you guessed it, my family! I'm sure my family would be happy to tell you just what a blessing I am to them following nights when I stay up late.

While our daily schedules are different for everyone, the main point I am taking away from this is that I need to be diligent with how I spend my time. Choosing to spend it doing things with an eternal perspective vs a worldly perspective. I'm not saying we can't have any leisure time, everyone needs a break, but just that we be purposeful with how we spend our time.

APPLICATION/CHALLENGE:

Today I'd like to challenge you to take an inventory of all of the things you do that might be construed as non-productive or time-wasters. See if you can eliminate that item for a week, or even one day just to see what a difference it can make in your productivity and sleep time!

Some examples: TV, surfing the internet, facebook, twitter, late night movie watching or book reading, and anything else that might take away from you getting a good night sleep!

PRAYER:

Lord, please help me work on the "to-do" list that You have set for me this day. Help me to work diligently and with a joyful heart! I pray that I would stay on task, and forgo the things that are a waste of time or not glorifying to You. I know that You will give me the rest I need, and the strength to do the things You have given me charge of. This is the day that You have given to me, help me be diligent and purposeful with my time!"

Welcome to week 5 day 4!

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov. 14:23 "All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty."
- 1 Thes. 4:11 "and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you,"

OBSERVATIONS:

I think today's verses are pretty self-explanatory. If we roll up our sleeves and get down to work, we will be productive. If we spend all of our time talking about doing things...yeah, not much gets done. Unfortunately sometimes this is easier said than done. Since I've started Confessions, I get a lot of questions from people asking what my day looks like. People want to know how I get everything done each day. While I don't always complete everything that I set out to do, I do my best to stay on track and get the main things done.

Here's a sample of our daily schedule, this post is older, but for the most part still accurate: <http://www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/?p=728>

What are some tangible ways we can be productive?

1. Get a good night sleep! Over the last few days we've been talking about our

use of time. A cranky mama isn't a blessing to anyone, so make it a priority to get to bed at a reasonable hour.

2. Start off each morning in the Word. Each morning bring your daily list to God and ask for direction on what He's got for you today. Then pray for the focus and discipline needed to complete said tasks. Also pray that you'd be flexible enough to know recognize the Holy Spirit's leading. This might change your plans a little, but wouldn't it be a blessing to encourage a friend if the need arose?

3. Schedule & Discipline: As the woman/mama it is our responsibility to run our homes in a manner worthy of our calling. It is up to us to take charge in this area. If we don't who will? I think that is why this verse speaks to me so deeply: "The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down." ~ Prov. 14:1. That might mean getting up...gasp...early...so our day goes smooth. Along with running a household, many of us are also constantly keeping little ones on task. We're getting things cleaned, washed, picked up, and organized. There's no short cuts or tricks here, just good ole' fashioned diligence and perseverance. There are tons of websites to help you get your daily tasks organized, each family is different, but I'd like to encourage you to get some sort of plan and do your best to stick to it. And don't be afraid to get your kiddos involved! That's why we have the chore chart I mentioned a few days ago. Our kiddos chip in, pick up the house, clean things, set tables, help cook, do laundry and take care of animals. There are no free rides over at the Confessions household! Remember, we are training these little ones up in the ways they should go. How will they know how to manage a home when they're older if they don't learn it now?

4. Forgo some of the time-wasting activities we might be tempted to fall into in exchange for more productive tasks.

APPLICATION:

I'd like to challenge everyone to come up with a reasonable daily schedule that will help your home run more smoothly and get things done! Here is a sample of ours: <http://www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/?p=174>

PRAYER: Lord help me to be organized and diligent in the tasks you have for me today! I pray that my perseverance would be a blessing to my family and those around me. And that you would help me to get the necessary items on today's to-do list completed as You see fit. I commit all of my work to You and pray you would help me to do everything with a joyful heart.

As a side note, another one of the GMG leaders found this post on yesterday's verses. I thought it was so encouraging and wanted to share it with you all as

well! What a great perspective on keeping our lamp filled!
<http://www.girlfriendsgiving.com/2012/oil-for-my-lamp-2/>

Welcome to week 5 day 5!

Today is a day for reflection on what we've learned so far in our study. I have to say that God was gracious to give me a revelation this week. I think I mentioned that we have swimming each morning at 7:20am. That means we need to get up by 6:30am eat and rush out the door by 7. There was much doubt as to whether I could keep up with this schedule as you all know I'm a night owl. I'd like to say that God was good and got me up each morning! How do I know it was God and not my pesky alarm buzzing? My alarm clock is set for 6:30am. For some unexplainable reason I'm waking up at about 6:15 all on my own. Well, clearly not on my own as this has never happened before, but by His grace!

So onto my revelation...I'm tired during the day. We have a lot going on and I always assumed it was just due to our busy schedule and lack of sleep. And I'm the first to admit I can be cranky when I'm tired. Well over the past several weeks that we've been getting up early, God has shown me something.

I'm tired whether I get up early or get to sleep in. But you know what? I'm actually crankier when I sleep in! No kidding! When I get up early, I start breakfast for everyone, they come down and eat, we clean together, then get rolling with our day. When I sleep in, the kids get their own food, and make lovely messes in the kitchen doing so. I wake up to a mess, which isn't fun, then end up spending the whole day just trying to catch up!

Now, I'm not saying I'm suddenly changed into an early bird, as a matter of fact it's 11:21pm as I write this now. But I do love how God uses studies like this to show us little pieces of His will for us!

If you missed the GMG post this week, I wanted share some of the key points with you as we reflect on our verses:

1. Build Spiritual Strength: Read God's Word daily, pray continually, participate in Godly fellowship.
2. Building Mental Strength: Memorize scripture, take your thoughts captive, be disciplined & organized with your time.
3. Building Physical Strength: Exercise, get rest, and eat right!

That's what God's been working on with me this week, what has God been teaching you?

Welcome to week 6 day 1!

SCRIPTURE:

- Proverbs 31:19 - In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.

OBSERVATIONS:

Okay, so normally I read the scripture first, then try to form my own observations before reading through the Proverbs 31 eBook just so I can get my own perspective. But I have to say I actually had to look up this verse just to figure out what exactly was going on here! Just as Courtney says, the Proverbs 31 woman is spinning her own thread. We haven't gotten that far yet, but most of you know as we read on that she clothes her family well, makes coverings for her bed, clothes herself, and even makes garments and sells them at the market!

Wow. I love how God has us born in the right time span in history! He knows that I would not be skillful in his area and was kind enough to have me born in a time when I could purchase clothes for my children, lest they be naked! LOL!

I know in this day and age, not many people spin their own thread, although there are a lot who do sew wonderfully! But I think the point I'm taking away from this is that the Proverbs 31 woman applies herself to her work, and she is skillful at it as well. She knows her strengths, and she uses them to her advantage. Her family and others who purchase her garments are blessed by her diligence.

I also like how even though she has servants, she still works hard for her home as well. She sets a good example for her children, as well those who are helping her. She provides well for her home and those around her. And above all she is a woman who fears the Lord. The law of kindness is written in her heart, and it can be seen by her works.

ACTION:

Just as Courtney pointed out in today's reading, our housework might seem mundane, repetitive, and endless. However these are the things we have been given charge over. My challenge for this week is to work with a joyful heart, doing everything for His glory. Laundry, wiping noses, cleaning, cooking, etc. Let's try to keep the big picture of blessing others at our forefront and focus on how the little things we do each day are a wonderful way to bless those around us!

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, I truly desire to be a blessing to those around me and to be useful for Your purposes. Please weed out any bad attitudes I might have developed over the years about the things you have blessed me with! Change my perspective so that I may work joyfully for You. And help keep me accountable to Your Word and what You are teaching me through this study. Amen!

Welcome to week 6 day 2

SCRIPTURE:

- Col 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.
- Eph. 6:7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people.

OBSERVATIONS:

I realize that today's verses are sort of a repeat of prior days, but the intention is to emphasize the fact that what we are doing is all for the glory of God. Otherwise what is the purpose? We are His craftsmanship, holy and blameless in His sight. He doesn't make mistakes, nor did we accidentally fall into the lives we are living. He has placed us here, put us in charge of much, and will equip us to do what He's set before us.

All we need to do is seek His will in our daily plans and do everything wholeheartedly as for the Lord. Imagine Jesus is coming over for dinner. What are some of the things you would do? Decide you'd clean bathroom on another day? Shove stray toys under the couch? Prepare hot dogs for dinner on paper plates? No way! You'd C L E A N your home. Prepare a special dinner, probably on fine china with candles. In essence you'd "go all out"! That is all He is asking us to do, work as though we are working for Him. Which in essence is exactly what we are doing every time we get a cup of water for one of our children, wipe a runny nose, fold another piece of clothing, wipe off another mess on the counter, and cook another dinner for our families. These little things may not seem important to us, but they are not to Him! In His eyes we are being good stewards of all that He has blessed us with. And that my dear sisters has eternal value!

Some of the other groups are saying that their ladies are feeling discouraged by this study, but I truly think they're missing the bigger picture here. As I said on a previous day, the Proverbs 31 woman is not there to make us feel inadequate or unworthy. But she's there as an example of what we can strive to be like. God is so good to put many examples in His Word of how we are to live. The Proverbs 31 woman is no different.

We are all Proverbs 31 women that God is still working on. Can you imagine if we were already perfect? We would have no need for our Creator, and we'd also be full of pride...and we all know what follows pride. But instead, we see our weaknesses through His Word and cry out to Him for all those things we need. For peace, patience, kindness, love, perseverance, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control! I mean who doesn't need those things on a daily basis? Have you ever had a day that was straight up perfect? Where there was no bickering among kiddos, where everything went exactly the way you'd imagined it would? I sure haven't!

But God is faithful to strengthen me in all of the mini-trials I face each day. We are all a work in progress, Proverbs 31 women in the making! And we can be confident in His promise to us..."being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." ~ Philippians 1:6

Please don't be discouraged by this study ladies, but be inspired! That through His strength, we can change for the better! None of us are perfect, not one. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Rom 3:23) But when we obey our Lord, and trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are made perfect in His sight.

Beloved sisters, we are precious to Him, each and every one of us, whether we feel like it or not. Please know that YOU are loved by an Almighty God!

Welcome to week 6, day 3!

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 31:20 - She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.
- Deut. 15:7-8 – If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need.
- Pr. 11:25 - A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.
- Proverbs 31 eBook Pg 22-23

OBSERVATIONS:

One thing that I have a hard time remembering is that my children CAN serve others. I serve at our church regularly doing graphic and web design types of things. Unfortunately the capacity in which I serve doesn't usually lend itself to having kids "help". But this weekend I witnessed something wonderful! Our

church was honored to have Ken Ham from Answers in Genesis come speak for a conference. Of course this type of thing draws a lot of people which also means you NEED a lot of people to help serve during this time. One of the things I was so encouraged to see were all of the children serving along side their parents.

They were holding doors for people, greeting, handing out flyers, and really anything else that was needed. They were having such fun serving along side the adults as well as their friends, and were really a blessing to those who came. It reminded me how important it is to give our children opportunities to serve others. Whether it be something big like this conference, or something smaller like baking cookies for a friend who needs encouraging.

APPLICATION:

I thought it would be fun today to share creative ways that we can teach our children compassion and how to serve others. If you have any ideas on how to show your kiddos how to serve and bless others please share it below! As always feel free to leave any comments you have on today's reading, or prayer requests as well!

Since we're talking about extending our hands to the needy, I wanted to share a bit of this week's GMG post for any of you who didn't have time to read it: Weekly Challenge: Pray and ask God to help you see the needs of others around you. Then bless someone this week by seeing the need and meeting it. Share with your group how God worked through you to meet this need. Ideas include:

- Helping someone while you are out and about during your day.....picking up something that they dropped, carrying out the groceries etc.
- Babysitting for the single mom down the road
- Going through your closets and giving some of your clothes, toys and other items that could be helpful to someone else.
- Surprise the family down the street who are having financial problems with a gift card or a check to help pay for one of their bills.
- Sponsor a child through Compassion or World Vision
- Help out in a soup kitchen
- Volunteer and be a friend to a woman who is in prison
- Help with VBS
- Invite a family or friend over for dinner who is new to your area or church.....give them the gift of your friendship
- The ways that you can help out are numerous.....just ask God to open your eyes so that you can see the needs around you, your home, your neighborhood, your church, your community and then put your faith into action and meet that need!

P.S. This past year I've really started to see some aging in my own hands! What perfect timing when I read about how our hands are made beautiful when we use them for God's glory!

Welcome to week 6, day 4!

SCRIPTURE:

- 1 Th. 4:11 - and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you
- Prov. 19:17 - Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done.

OBSERVATIONS:

Today's verses remind me that nothing that I think is mine is really mine. Let's say that together, "Nothing that I think is mine is really mine." But instead it all belongs to the Lord. Our children, our homes, our clothes, our food...everything we have and everything we are is a direct result of His blessings upon us.

Our family has been extremely blessed, and really there is not much that we lack for when it comes down to basic needs. God has been gracious to keep my husband employed, food on our table, clothes on our backs, and a home over our heads. Our kids have toys to play with...more than they need in my opinion...and we have the wonderful opportunity to homeschool our children. And in this country, we have freedom to worship God.

But what do we do with those who are less fortunate than us? There are so many ways we can bless others. Yesterday we talked about how to get our children involved in serving others and showing them the importance of "giving back". Prov 19:17 remind me of how we can give back on a global level.

For a while now as the Lord has lead our hearts, we have sponsored children through World Vision, Gospel for Asia, and Potters Field. We have a few missionaries we support as well. It occurred to me a few years back that even though we were doing this, our children had no idea. So I took a spot on our homeschool wall and put up pictures and information for each of our sponsored children. I titled it "Wall of Prayer". We went through and introduced our kiddos to our sponsored ones and they committed to praying for them. Now we take turns and each day they get to pick who they'd like to pray for that day. We also get letters and updates for our sponsored children, and our kids now have the pleasure of writing back as well!

I think it's a great way to get your children thinking of something other than themselves for a change. To show them real people in other parts of our world

who do not have the same freedoms that we do. To show that not everyone lives like we do and that there are people that need our help. We can show them we are being diligent as a family to obey God's Word and bless those in need.

Here is a list of some of our favorite ways to sponsor globally, I'd love to hear what you do with your families to give to those in need:

- Compassion International
- World Vision
- Gospel for Asia
- Potter's Field Ministries

On a side note, there was some discussion on 1 Th. 4:11 last week and really I think this direction to lead a 'quiet' life means that we need to focus on what God has called US to do, and not worry about what He's called others to do. I think this can really become an issue when we are feeling discouraged that someone else is doing more than we are. But instead pray for direction, obey His lead, and be diligent in areas that He has called you to! A dear friend once told me..."There are a million worthy causes, but you can't do them all!"

Welcome to week 6, day 5!

Wow, we're almost half way through our study and I hope you have all been as blessed by it as I have! I love reading all of your comments, suggestions, and prayers, I am blessed to be part of such a wonderful group of women!

As always today is a day for reflection, and I would love to hear what God has been working on for all of you. For me, God has really been working on me to keep my focus on what He's called ME to do. That I be content in my circumstances, and diligent in everything that He's placed before me. Not worrying about what others think or what they are doing. He's also been working on keeping my priorities in the right order, God, husband, kiddos, keeping our home...then everything else. If you really want to know what all is on my list of priorities feel free to read my Plate Spinning 101 post:

<http://www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/blog/2010/01/plate-spinning-101.html>

I also wanted to take a minute to encourage anyone who has fallen behind in our study! I always say better late than never, so if you've fallen behind, just pick it up where we are and start fresh! If you have time, read back through my daily posts as well just to get caught up a little bit. Remember, any time that you spend in God's Word will be a blessing to you!

As a Friday Fun Day, I thought it would be fun to share one little detail about

yourself to help us to get to know each other a little better!

About me: I'm a total clean freak...really I'm a little over the top. I can't even focus if my house is a mess. You can imagine what a conundrum that is for a homeschooling mom with a husband, 4 kids 9 and under, 2 dogs, 1 hamster, 1 cat, and 5 fish!

Welcome to week 7 day 1!

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 31:21 - When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.
- Prov 27:23 - Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds;
- Proverbs 31 eBook Page 24-25

OBSERVATIONS:

Just as Jesus is our shepherd, we are shepherds over our families. And just as He takes care of our every need, so are we to be careful to take care of the needs of those God has placed in our charge.

We are called to give heed to the state of our homes, make sure our family's needs are met, that they are well fed, and appropriately clothed.

I think that with all of her skills and diligence the Proverbs 31 woman probably made these fine clothes for her family. She was well prepared, diligent in her duties as the manager of her home, and thus her family was not lacking for anything they needed. And not only has she taken well care of her home, her finances, and her family, but she's adorned them with beautiful clothing!

I think as clothing is concerned, it is also important for us as moms to be a good example to our children on appropriate clothing. I do my best to explain what modesty means, and why certain clothing is inappropriate for my daughters. I not only want them to be beautifully clothed, but more importantly clothed in a way that is beautiful to God.

Scarlet was an emblem for the blood of Christ, and so it also makes me think her family was not only covered from the cold of winter, but covered spiritually speaking as well. She has been faithful to the Word of God, obeyed His calling on her life, and is not only beloved and respected by her family, but been found useful and honorable in God's sight as well.

APPLICATION:

What are we allowing our children to wear? I like Courtney's idea of taking inventory of our family's needs and being wise with our clothing purchases. I also think this week might be a good time to clean out closets, remove any "questionable" clothing choices we've allowed to slip into our homes. Make sure to explain to your children what you are doing and why.

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, I pray for direction in clothing choices for myself and my family. I pray that our clothing would be honorable in Your sight. I also pray that you would help me to be a good steward of what You have blessed us with, sensible when purchasing clothes, and to be well prepared in all things for the benefit of my family!

Welcome to week 7 day 2!

SCRIPTURE:

- Ps 46:1-2 - God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.

OBSERVATIONS:

In light of yesterday's verses, I think today fits in well to give me that added encouragement, that I can indeed fulfill what God has planned for me. Clearly from our study so far, I fail in many areas, however I am not alone in this journey. He has promised to be my strength and refuge. In many verses we find the words "Fear not, for I am with you..." Is 41:10, Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil..." Ps 23:4, "The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid"...Ps 118:6. Those are just a few examples I Googled a little and found that there are about 100 references in the Bible of God telling people "Do not be afraid, I am with you." Supposedly there are 365 references that tell us not to be afraid without using those exact words.

Either way, I think if God has chosen to repeat something so often it means two things. One, it is in our nature to be afraid, and two, He wants us to know that we should not fear because He is with us! So what does that mean for us today? It means that God knew what He was doing when He gave you the family He did. I don't know about you but there have definitely been days where I feel like the

my mountains are crumbling into the sea all around me. With four kiddos, it is very easy for chaos to reign if I am not well prepared and constantly aware of the goings on around our home.

I find that getting up early has helped tremendously in me being prepared for our day. And if I take a few minutes on the weekend to make lists of things we need in preparation for the week it goes even better.

Our previous verse noted that the Proverbs 31 woman was not worried when it snowed for her family was prepared, and we must also be prepared as well. To me this not only means being diligent in running my home, but also diligent to get my kiddos in the Word of God.

If we've been in the Word daily, their hearts are prepared and ready when trials and temptations arise. They will be more likely to make a good choice, or at least take our discipline better. If we wait to the last minute and suddenly expect our children to make good choices all on their own, I think we'll quickly see that they too are ill prepared. Tossing out corrective scripture in the heat of the battle such as "Be kind to one another!" (Eph 4:32) will be meaningless to them because they have not been living it daily.

APPLICATION:

Ladies, God's Word is our answer! He is our strength and refuge, and ever-present help in times of need. If you are having trouble maintaining all of the duties of your home, lay it before Him in prayer. Ask for help, strength, and anything else you need to complete His calling on your life.

Welcome to week 7 day 3!

SCRIPTURE:

- ~Proverbs 31:22 "She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple."
- ~1 Timothy 2:9-10 "I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God."
- Proverbs 31 eBook Page 26

OBSERVATIONS:

Yesterday I talked a little bit about being a good example to my girls regarding clothing choices. Today's verses just confirm those desires that God has placed

in my heart. And added to that I also think about how my appearance reflects on our family.

I can imagine the feeling my husband would get if he walked in with an unexpected guest and the house was a disaster, the kids were a wreck, and his wife was all disheveled and still in her jammies! Not exactly setting a good example right?

I know we all get dressed up for a fancy night out to dinner, or even when we're leaving the home, but what about when we're not leaving the home? What type of message is it sending our families if we don't bother to get ready for them?

A friend and I were discussing our daily routines. She said she likes to get ready in the morning and look nice for her day even if she's just staying home with the kids. She wanted to show them that they were worth getting ready for! How awesome an example is that! Because they are worth it right? Much more than a fancy dinner out, they are our heritage!

And what about our husbands ladies? Do we prepare ourselves for their arrival after a day at work? I think it's important to show ourselves beautiful for our husbands as well! What a blessing to them it is to come home to a well-kept home, family, and wife!

And even more important than our outward beauty is our inward beauty. Are you in the Word regularly? Are your children? Do you do family devotions? I encourage you all to make this a priority in your home!

~Proverbs 31:30 "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised." Now that's the type of beauty I want to have!

APPLICATION:

If you've fallen behind or never even started this study, I encourage you to grab your book now and just read the pages for today. Start fresh and make it a priority to get in the Word. The verses are short and doesn't take much time to get a few nuggets of God's beauty into your heart today!

Welcome to week 7 day 4!

SCRIPTURE:

- 1 Peter 3:3-4 "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine

clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."

OBSERVATIONS:

As women, I think we naturally desire to look nice. To have outward beauty, nice clothing, and current hairstyles. God made us this way and gave us this desire, and it seems to fit well with our husbands visual nature. I don't think that looking nice is unspiritual at all.

But today we're talking about inward beauty. I love meeting people who are in love with Jesus. You can almost see His glory shining through their sparkling eyes, and welcoming smiles! Having a heart for God really does translate into outward beauty in a way that no makeup, hairstyle, or pretty blouse can ever accomplish!

And when we're talking about family life, having a mom or wife seeking after God's heart in everything she does is much more beautiful and honorable! I'm sure my kiddos wouldn't care what I was wearing if I were yelling at them!

I'm not saying that we shouldn't seek to look nice for our families, I talked a little about that yesterday. But I really do want to stress the importance of seeking a richer and more permanent adorning, that of the heart!

We can't take our fancy shoes, pretty rings, or name brand clothes with us. Eventually all of that will burn. And don't forget, God can see your heart. He knows where your real focus lies. We can look nice to bless our families, and at the same time seek after Him in our heart!

APPLICATION: I had a fun idea to do with the family. Instead of spending the day in t-shirts, shorts, or whatever your normal garb might be, why not get all dressed up and declare it a day to honor God! Make some fancy snacks and get together as a family and read God's Word. If we're going to get all dressed up, what better reason than to spend time with our Almighty Father!

PRAYER: Dear Lord, please help me keep my focus and priority on You! Give me a desire to be in Your Word daily, and to share that enthusiasm with my family. Make me beautiful from the inside out, filling my heart with Your Word, so I can be a blessing to those around me. Amen!

Welcome to week 7 day 5!

Hi everyone, since we've been talking about clothing most of this week, I thought it would be fun to do organize a clothes swap like Courtney suggested!

I encourage you to contact a few close friends near you and see if they'd be interested in swapping clothes. And if they have kiddos that are of the same age as yours, how fun would it be for them to do a little swap too? Everyone loves "new to me" stuff!

For comments today, I'd love to know what are some ways, tricks or secrets do you have to stay modest with today's challenging fashion. Feel free to include ways to help your kiddos dress more modestly too!

My tricks: My daughters think mini-skirts are cute, so I purchased some fun colored Capri leggings for them to wear under their skirts! Very cute, and modest! If needed I'll wear a tank top under a lower cut shirt, if the tank top is too low, wear it backwards! For those low-rise jeans we just wear a long tank top under our main shirt. Layers are in ladies!

Welcome to week 8, day 1!

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 31:23 Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.
- Prov 12:4 A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.
- Proverbs 31 eBook: Page 27-28

OBSERVATIONS:

Virtuous: Having high morals or standards. Are you a virtuous woman? Are your ways glorifying to God? Do your words and actions bless your family or tear them down? These are some of the questions that came to mind for me today. I don't always think about how my actions are affecting others around me. I can definitely get into my own selfish world and forget that I am representing our family unit as a whole.

One thing that really came to my attention today...do I build my husband up when talking with friends, or degrade him with my words? Back during the GMG Ephesians study I wrote a post on 10 ways to bless my husband. I thought it might fit in well with today's verses:

<http://www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/blog/2012/03/ephesians-521-33-week-10.html>

For those of you out there who are not married, don't write off today's reading! We are also the bride of Christ. Not only are our actions, words, and homes a reflection of our families, but they also speak volumes to those around us about our faith in God! Do our homes bless Him? Are there things in our homes or lives that need to be removed so we can truly be a good witness for His glory?

APPLICATION:

I can be kind of sarcastic and a jokester, and that doesn't always stop when we're out in public. I've since tried to make sure I'm not making jokes or being sarcastic about my husband in ways that might be construed as tearing him down instead of building him up! This week I'd like to challenge all of you to be extra cautious about how you're representing your husband to friends and even to your children. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ~Eph. 4:29

PRAYER:

Lord please help me to watch my tongue in front of our children and out in public. Please help me to make sure my words and actions are blessing my husband and family and not tearing them down. Likewise let my actions be

glorifying to you in all circumstances! Help me to elevate my husband so he can be that which You've called him to. Amen.

Comments for today: I would love to hear little ways you step up and bless your husbands!

Welcome to week 8, day 2!

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 31:24 - She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.
- Prov 10:4 - Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.
- Proverbs 31 eBook Page 29

OBSERVATIONS:

Today we're talking about how the Proverbs 31 woman uses her talents to help provide financially for her family. This is a fine line for me. On one hand I love to make homeschool printables and share them with others. At the same time God has blessed our family in return by allowing my blog to help us financially. But there is a point when I think you have to be careful with that. I'm not saying everyone needs to be a stay at home mom, but I am saying that I often have to remind myself that my family needs to come first. And although my blog has turned into a business for me, I still need to be cautious to keep my priorities straight before God. He has blessed us with a wonderful family, as well as this "talent" so to speak. I'm thankful that He's also used that to bless our family, and hopefully other homeschoolers as well. But I also want to be careful not to leave my first love and let my priorities get skewed. Do I sacrifice my time in the Word because I have too many emails to answer? Do I push my children aside with the proverbial "One more minute" because I'm working?

I believe each of us has been blessed with a kind of talent given to us by our Heavenly Father. Are we making good use of that talent, as well as using it as He intended? Or have we lost sight of what our priorities are and allowed our talent to run our schedule and family? Or worse yet, have we put our gifting on the back burner for another time, essentially neglecting that which God has blessed us with? If you've done a good job at using your talents to benefit your family, that's awesome! If not, I'd like to encourage you to either start using your talents if you've laid them aside, or get them back in line with what God's purpose for you is.

APPLICATION:

Take a few minutes today to write out the talents or gifts God has blessed you with. Write down which ones you are using to the fullest, or which ones you have neglected. Make an effort to use your gifting in a way that glorifies both God and your families this week! Come back and comment on how you've used your talents this week!

Some ideas...if you're crafty, there are lots of moms selling their goods on www.etsy.com, check it out, maybe start up your own account and sell some of your things there! If you're technically savvy, start up that web design business you've been thinking about, or a blogging site that offers tutorials to those starting out. If you're good at encouraging, give a friend a call and share some verses. If you are a gifted teacher, start up a home bible study with friends. Whatever it is, I encourage you to step out this week and use your gift to bless those around you! Whatever you do, don't neglect it and let it go to waste! Like Prov 10:4 says, "Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth."

Welcome to week 8, day 3!

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 31:25 - She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.
- Prov 3:26 - for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared.
- Ps 23:1 - A psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
- Proverbs 31 eBook Page 30-31

OBSERVATIONS:

One thing I love about this verse is after talking about how the Proverbs 31 woman has sewn her own clothing, and also clothed her family, she hasn't neglected herself spiritually. She is confident and secure because she has clothed herself with the strength of the Lord! She can look forward to tomorrow without any anxiety, but instead with confident gladness for she has fulfilled her calling as a mother and a Christian woman.

So many of the battles we face come within our own minds. Are we good enough, do we look right, are we good mothers, wives, and Christians. It's a lot of pressure that we can take on ourselves, but the burden is not ours to carry. We can strive to become like the Proverbs 31 woman, but God has a special plan for all of us. All we need to do is place our faith and hope in Him and He will equip us to fulfill His plan for us.

The Proverbs 31 woman can rest in the comfort of knowing she was not idle or useless during her time here. That she used her gifts to bless those around her, she took good care of her family, and her ways were glorifying and honorable to her Almighty God. Her beauty comes from within, and her focus is on the eternal.

How did she get to this place? She put full faith in God, obeyed His commands, and then shared that with others. She was not out coveting her friends husband, or children, or home. But instead content with what God placed before her, diligent in her duties, and faithful to be a blessing to her family and to others.

APPLICATION:

I'd like to encourage you to take some time today and re-read Proverbs 31:25. Consider what it truly means to be clothed with strength and dignity. Clothing is something most of us put on each day when we arise. We don't usually wear the same thing during the day, then to bed at night, then just keep it on the next day and so on. Make sure to clothe yourself today in dignity and strength by spending a little time in God's Word this morning!

Welcome to week 8, day 4!

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 37:3 - Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
- Prov 3:5 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
- Philippians 4:19 - And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

OBSERVATIONS:

I wanted to quickly remind you that Proverbs 31 tells us what King Lemuel's mother taught him to look for in a Godly wife. These were probably qualities she did not fully possess, but knew would be things that would eternally bless her son. Instead of giving up to discouragement thinking we can never measure up to this woman, instead let's use her description as something to aspire to! What would you tell your son to look for in a Godly wife when the time came? If you don't have a son, remember that your husband is someone's son. Aspiring to be

like the Proverbs 31 woman is a way we can show our sons what to look for in a wife, and a way to honor our husbands and our God. Remember, your husband is someone's son. What a blessing it would be to our mother-in-law knowing that her son was in the hands of a woman seeking after God!

Lay any weaknesses that have been brought to your attention through this study at the foot of the Cross and God will meet you there. As Philippians 4:19 says, He will meet all of your needs according to His glorious riches! Imagine if we had to lean on our own understanding all of the time! What a burden that would be, but instead He tells us to lean on Him, trust in Him, be anxious for nothing, and He will provide that which we need.

As I write this I know many of you out there are single, divorced, or widowed. Again I want to encourage you to seek to live a Godly life. Take a minute to look at the life of Ezra. In Ezra 7:10 we read that Ezra was ready, he responded to the Word, and he shared and taught others. It's not an easy thing to do, it takes time and commitment, but it has eternal value!

Ladies, if we continue to put the Word of God into our hearts, we'll see the Word of God come out of us in return. We can do a study, read the Word, then we have a choice to make. We can look the other way, say it doesn't apply to us today, or we can choose obey God's Word to do what it says!

James 1:25 says "But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it." (NLT)

Never forget that we are teachers no matter how we "feel". We might not homeschool, or have children, we might be single, we might have a small family, or a large one. But whatever our circumstances are we are teaching those around us simply by how we choose to live.

APPLICATION:

If you're getting discouraged in this study, or starting to feel like you can't measure up to God's Word, I'd encourage you today to pick any verse in Psalm 119 and read it. It will encourage you to keep God's commands, obey His Word and keep your path straight!

COMMENTS: Come back and leave a comment on which verse in Psalm 119 blessed you most today! Take some time to read everyone else's verses as well, there might be something there for you!

Welcome to week 8, day 5!

Hi everyone, it's time for our reflection Friday! This was kind of a heavy week in terms of taking a long hard look at ourselves. For those of you riddled with self-doubt and thoughts of failure I wanted to encourage you with Ephesians 1:4-14:

“For he chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.”

Does that sound like God might have goofed when creating you? No! You were chosen, predestined, and sealed for the praise of His glory! Have a wonderful weekend, and be encouraged knowing that you are loved by an Almighty God!

Welcome to week 9, day 1!

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 31:26 She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
- Prov 10:11 The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.
- Prov 12:18 The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
- Proverbs 31 eBook: Pages 32-33

OBSERVATIONS:

I can already tell this week is going to be a challenge for me. I tend to be one who speaks before thinking sometimes. Especially in regards to disciplining kiddos and homeschooling, my words are not always kind and encouraging, but instead full of anger.

As always, God has been timely with this study! I just received our annual test scores for the kids. Some of the scores were not quite where I expected them to be. As I try to find a constructive way to present the results to my children, God was faithful to provide me with these verses today. Beating my children down with reckless and harsh words will not be of value in encouraging them!

As a family we have memorized Eph. 4:29 (Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.) and Eph 4:26 (Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.)

They are verses that are hung in our school room, repeated OFTEN during the course of our day, and imprinted on our hearts. Unfortunately even mom can sometimes forget them.

While today's verses are harsh to read, I think they are necessary. They serve as reminders of how hurtful our words can be. We can choose to be a fountain of life, speaking with kindness, wisdom, and healing. Or we can be hurtful, violent, and reckless. Which do you choose?

APPLICATION:

This week, and always really, I commit to watching my words. Being mindful to speak kindly, and even more diligent to remind my children to speak kindly to others as well. One verse that I hold on to is James 1:20 "for the wrath of man

[mom] does not produce the righteousness of God." How therefore can I teach my children to be kind if I first cannot control my own tongue?

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, please help me to watch my tongue. Help me to control my temper and keep my tone and words encouraging to others and my children. Help me to keep Proverbs 15:1 in mind this week as I seek to teach my children Your Word! Let no corrupt talk come from my lips, but only that which is encouraging and will benefit those hearing it. Amen!

Welcome to week 9, day 2!

SCRIPTURE:

- Eph 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.
- 1 Ti 3:11 In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.
- Prov 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

OBSERVATIONS:

I'm still working on being mindful of my tongue, being slow to anger, and quick to listen. One thing that I fail at frequently is not allowing my children to tell me what is on their minds. I am often distracted or busy and shew them away before they get to explain whatever it is they need to. Being quick to listen isn't one of my strong suits!

Another observation that came to mind for today is the topic of gossip. Reading 1 Tim 3:11 reminds me that we need to be careful in regards to talking about others. Careful to be trustworthy with our words, and not malicious. I think specifically of talking on the phone with a friend in regards to my children. I would be devastated if I heard one of them talking to a friend about all of the mistakes I've made that day. How much more hurtful is it for them to hear their parent, their protector and encourager, sharing all of their faults?

For some reason as adults I think we feel it okay to "vent" to friends about others, parents, children, husbands, etc. But is it really? Are those words we are saying benefiting the other people if they could overhear? Probably not. Now...as a mom and a homeschooler, I need some sort of venting outlet! I'm not saying you cannot seek Godly advice from a friend in regards to your children or marriage. However, I am suggesting we be extra cautious about the words we

choose to use when talking to others. This might also mean being mindful of who is in earshot of our conversations. If you really need help getting a math concept through to your child, consider going outside to your car while seeking advice from a fellow homeschooling mom, so your child doesn't hear you.

Of course our first course of action should be to take the item to the Lord in prayer. His resolution might come through the words of a friend, but they might also come straight from His own Word in the Bible. Seeking Him first is always your best bet.

APPLICATION:

Again I am concentrating diligently on keeping harsh words far from my lips. And instead keeping God's Word close in my heart, so that in the heat of things His wisdom is what pours from my lips!

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, please help me to imprint Your Words in my heart so that they will flow freely from my lips! Create in me a clean heart, one that pours out wisdom and encouragement to those around me. Let my words be from You and not myself! And please help me overcome any testing in this area as I know it will come when doing a study like this. Amen!

Welcome to week 9, day 3!

SCRIPTURE:

- Luke 6:45 A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.
- Prov 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.
- Prov 10:19 Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.

OBSERVATIONS:

As a woman I tend to like to talk about things. Over and over and over again. My husband often tells me that I just restate things in different ways over and over again. He's right. Sadly, my 9 year old once told me the same thing! I don't even remember what she did, but I kept bringing it up apparently, and later she explained that she knew what she did was wrong, and that I didn't have to keep talking about it over and over again! Yikes.

I don't even remember reading Prov 10:19 before though I'm sure I have. But today it hit hard! Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues. What is it about me that makes me think rehashing things will make them better?

The Good News Translation puts it this way "The more you talk, the more likely you are to sin. If you are wise, you will keep quiet." The New Living Translation says "Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut." W.O.W! How true is that! How many times have you been in an argument and instead of ending when you should have kept on going and said something you regretted?

My husband and I did "The Love Dare" awhile back, and the very first challenges for the study was to say nothing negative to your spouse. I can't tell you what a challenge this was to curb my tongue but at the same time what a blessing it turned out to be to both of us!

APPLICATION:

Whatever you put your time, energy, and money into will become more important to you. It's hard to care for something you are not investing in. Today choose to invest time in God's Word. The more you pour God's Word into your heart, the more it will come out of your mouth!

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, please help me to put energy into reading Your Word and obeying Your commands! Continue to help curb my tongue, and let me speak only that which will encourage and edify those who hear it. Help me to follow what I tell my children "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all!". Amen.

Welcome to week 9, day 4!

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 10:31 From the mouth of the righteous comes the fruit of wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be silenced.
- Prov 4:24 Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.
- Prov 10:19 Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.

OBSERVATIONS:

I feel better seeing that they put Prov 10:19 in this week twice! I have no doubt that we all need reminding of this to some extent, otherwise the Bible wouldn't have so many verses in the Bible about controlling our tongues...

Warnings:

- Psalm 34:13 Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies.
- James 3:6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.
- James 1:26 If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.
- Prov 15:4 The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.
- 1 Peter 3:10 For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.
- Prov 26:28 A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

- Praises: But if we heed God's Word we can use our tongue to bless others, confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, and shout His praises!
- Phil 2:11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
- 2 Samuel 23:2 The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; His Word was on my tongue.
- Job 27:4 my lips will not say anything wicked, and my tongue will not utter lies.
- Psalm 35:28 My tongue will proclaim your righteousness, your praises all day long.

APPLICATION:

Control my tongue, only speak words which encourage and benefit those who hear it!

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, please help me to keep my tongue far from corrupt and wicked talk. Instead help me to use it to share the gospel with others, to sing Your praises, and proclaim Your righteousness! Amen.

Welcome to week 9, day 5!

Wow, we're over half way through our study and I'm so proud of you all who have stuck with our study! Make no mistake that you and your families will be blessed that you've been faithful to keep up! I know how hard it is being a wife and mom to keep up with bible studies, but this is one area we can't afford to neglect!

This week we've been spending our time focusing on keeping our tongues from evil. Just as our Proverbs 31 woman opens her mouth with wisdom, I pray that we will all follow her example keeping our words pure, and having the law of kindness on them!

I would love to hear what God has shown you all this week in regards to this week's verses!

Welcome to Week 10, day 1!

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov. 31:27 She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.
- Prov. 13:1 A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a mocker does not respond to rebukes.
- Proverbs 31 eBook Page 34-35

OBSERVATIONS:

Wow, I don't know about you all, but just reading about the Proverbs 31 woman makes me tired! Strangely nowhere in these verses does it mention that she gets burnt out or slacks off. So where does this woman's diligence and drive come from? Clearly she's got her priorities straight and has put the Lord above all else. Through Him, she has the strength to do all of the tasks that He has called her to do.

From what we've read thus far it doesn't appear that she's wasted her time with things that do not honor God. For me this might mean books, movies, facebook, and all the other many things that can suck away our precious time. In a world infiltrated by social media, it's very easy to waste a LOT of time just surfing around and not actually accomplishing anything.

So what are some practical ways we can avoid this pitfall? If you're like me and have a blog, or are homeschooling, try to set limits on your online time. When I go online, I usually have a list of tasks that I need to accomplish and I make sure that I only do those things during that set time. I don't even open my facebook unless I'm posting these studies. Once I'm done with everything for the day, if I still want to I'll go in and browse around on facebook, or search online for fun ideas for our homeschooling.

The other thing I do to help keep on task, is to set a daily schedule and try to stick to it. Here is a sample, this post was written a couple years ago, but with a few exceptions it's basically the same. It's nothing fancy, just what works for us in this season of our lives.

<http://www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/blog/2009/10/whats-typical-day-like.html>

Here is another post on "How I Do It All"...not!

<http://www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/blog/2011/03/how-do-you-do-it-all.html>

APPLICATION:

Take a few minutes today to re-read the check list on page 34 of Courtney's eBook. 1. Keep our family our first priority. 2. Watch our family ways. 3. Watch over your household. 4. Do not eat the bread of idleness. See where your heart is on that list, and just do an inventory of your family ways. Are there things you need to change? Make a list and commit to those this week! Along with that list pick your favorite social media outlet to fast from today out of reverence to God... or hey, fast the whole week!

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, please help me to weed out anything in my life that does not honor You. Help me to be diligent with what You have set before me, and serve my family and home with a thankful heart! Amen.

Welcome to Week 10, day 2

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 9:1-2 Wisdom has built her house; she has set up its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table.
- Prov 6:6-11 Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.

OBSERVATIONS:

This is clearly a warning against being wasteful with the time the Lord has given us. Just as the ant is diligent, so should we be diligent in our spiritual walk with God and all that He's so graciously blessed us with. If we seek God's wisdom in all that we do, then we can be confident knowing that we've been obedient to His calling on our life.

We are the keepers of our homes, and thus need to be faithful to take care of the needs of not only our homes, our children, and our husbands. For me, that means staying organized. I find it a lot easier to keep things clean if we do it regularly. If I let things pile up, then it gets overwhelming and I don't feel like I can even handle the task.

But if I stay on top of things, I actually get more done and still have some rest time at the end of the day! Whoohoo! This is definitely work, don't get me wrong, but I feel much better at the end of the day knowing my home is in order and my family is well taken care of.

APPLICATION:

Take a few minutes to weed out some of the things that waste my time and cause me not to get the things done that need taken care of. If I spend my time wisely I will have more free time to enjoy time with my husband and children!

PRAYER:

Dear God, I pray You would make it clear to me the things that I'm doing that are wasting my time! Help keep me focused on the things that will bless my household and glorify You. Help me to get needed areas cleaned up and organized and then give me the diligence to keep them that way! Amen.

Welcome to Week 10, day 3

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 24:3-4 By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.

OBSERVATIONS:

Thus far the Proverbs 31 woman has shown herself diligent to keep her home running smooth. She is prudent with her purchases, takes good care of her family and herself, is an entrepreneur and a woman with a heart after God. In these verses we see the blessings of gaining wisdom. But how do we get that?

Our wisdom comes only from God. Much like our homes, our foundation must be strong! We need to be rooted in Jesus Christ and firmly grounded in our faith. Our house is not only the place we live, but our soul's ladies. Being diligent to be in the Word daily is critical to us and our families. I know some days I might not feel like reading my Bible and getting into God's Word, but those are usually the days when I really need to!

APPLICATION:

Make it a priority to be in the Word daily, preferably early in the day. Seek God's wisdom in everything I do for myself and my family so that I can make sure I'm obeying what He has for me!

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, I pray for direction and wisdom in regards to my family, my home, and my spiritual walk with You. I pray that I would seek you with my WHOLE heart, not just a part of it. And that You would make my way clear to me! Help me to fill each day with Your will, and that I be a blessing to my family and those around me. Amen.

Welcome to week 10 day 4

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 12:24 Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in forced labor.
- Prov 19:15 Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless go hungry.
- Prov 20:4 Sluggards do not plow in season; so at harvest time they look but find nothing.

OBSERVATIONS:

I think today's verses are pretty clear as far as keeping away from laziness. However I think for me specifically they speak to procrastination. With four children it's not hard for me to stay busy! I rarely have time to just sit and watch TV or even sit and read a book. I'm always running around the house busy with housework, tending to kiddos, cooking, laundry, and the like.

My issue is that I tend to be diligent with the things I actually WANT to do, but not so diligent with things I don't want to do! I eventually get around to them, but wouldn't it just be easier to take care of them right away so they don't build up and weigh heavy on me?

Another real question for me is am I busy with the things of the Lord, or am I just busy with things? Certainly I want to make it a priority to be busy with the things that God has for me, and not just with the things that I want to do.

APPLICATION:

Pray about commitments, time management, and what is occupying my time. Are they things from God or from me? If they're things that are not from the Lord for my life, I want to remove them from my "to-do" list and thus create time for the things that ARE from God!

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, please help give me direction in my day! Keep me focused on the tasks You have for me, and not what I have put before myself. I know you allow me enough time to do what it is that is from You, and by removing the other things I'll finally have the rest I need, and I pray my family will be blessed in return by my commitment to You!

Welcome to Week 10, day 5

Since we've been talking about keeping our homes in order, I thought it would be fun to share some tips and tricks you have for your home. Please comment below on cleaning tips, meal planning, scheduling, organization, and anything else you have up your sleeves to share!

As far as our planning goes, my biggest life saver is my monthly meal plan. I am usually frantically wondering what we're having for our meals and if I have it planned out, the stress is gone! Here are some of my monthly meal plans, they're nothing fancy, but things that everyone will eat and are fairly easy to whip together.

<http://www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/blog/tag/monthly-meal-plan>

Another thing I love are freezer meals! Taking out one day to prepare several freezer meals is very helpful for those crazy days when life gets the best of you!

<http://www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/blog/2010/05/freezer-meals-cooking-twice-month.html>

What things do you do to help make your home run smoothly?

Welcome to Week 11, day 1

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 31:28 Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her
- Proverbs 31 eBook Pages 36-37

OBSERVATIONS:

What will my children say about me when they're grown? I ask myself this question often. Some days I think they'll have praise reports, some days I think not. While no one is perfect, I do think it's my responsibility to do the best I can in raising them. To teach them to focus on God, trust in Him, have good character, and let God determine what is considered "successful" and not the world.

As a homeschooler, of course academics is important to me. It's easy to get caught up in appearing successful by the world's standards. But really what it comes down to is the character of my children. If I can teach them to love God and seek after Him in everything they do, they'll be successful.

I'm thankful that it says when they arise...as in grows to maturity! I'm not quite sure that during a time of discipline my children would exactly rise up and call me blessed! However I have definitely noticed that when I'm consistent with discipline not only is our home more peaceful, but the children actually do much better as well. As a matter of fact, this week I just instituted a new discipline tactics to curb some of the chaos that's gradually built up over our summer break.

It's tough interrupting what you are doing to take the time to properly discipline and disciple your children, but it has eternal value!

APPLICATION:

Set some household rules and stick to them! Don't get overly complicated, things simply like "Be Kind To One another", "Respect others", "Be thankful for what God has given you" and "Read God's Word daily".

Some of my most recent ones "NO tattling! Work it out, if you can't... both of you come to me and I will help" (That means either I'll help them come to a compromise, or give both a consequence").

PRAYER:

Lord, please help me be consistent with discipline in my home, and consistent with making Your Word a priority! Remind me daily: "Love the Lord your God

with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates." Amen.

Welcome to Week 11, day 2

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 22:6 Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

OBSERVATIONS:

Children copy what they see, they act like us at our best and worst. As a mom I often find my tone of voice coming out of my children, and it's not always pretty! At the same time I'll see them taking care of a baby, or helping a sibling. I realized a little while ago, that my actions, attitude, and words are of monumental influence on my children. Unfortunately it's not always a good thing! But like we discussed last week, what you put into your heart is usually what comes out.

Let's take a quick look at what we as parents are called to, and this is by no means a complete list!

- Deut 4:9 Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children
- Deut 6:7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.
- Deut 11:19 You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.
- Deut 32:46 he said to them, "Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law.

- Gen 18:19 For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice...
- Eph 6:4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- Prov 4:20-23 My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.
- Ps 145:4 One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.
- Joel 1:3 Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation.

If I can commit time to God's Word each day, be dedicated to fulfilling His will in my life, then the benefits will last far beyond me! My children, their children, and so on. Ladies, we're leaving a legacy behind whether we like it or not, the question today is what kind of legacy are you leaving?

APPLICATION:

Commit to daily time in the Word for yourself. You can't feed your sheep if you yourself are starving! Next take an inventory of your family devotion time, do you have one? If not come up with a plan that will work for your family and start it today! One devotion we are currently enjoying: "Our 24 Family Ways"

<http://tinyurl.com/759maqz>

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, thank you so much for all that you have blessed me with! I cannot even imagine ever repaying you, but I give you all that I have, my life. Please give me a desire to be in Your Word daily, and help our family dedicate time to You. Let us be a Godly model for our children so we leave a Godly legacy for our immediate family and future generations to come. Amen.

Welcome to Week 11, day 3

SCRIPTURE:

- Tit 2:4 Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children

OBSERVATIONS:

Let's take a second to expand today's verse and read it in context: Tit 2:3-5 - Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

Did you have a mentor that helped you at some point in your life? Think about the things that you loved about that person, make a list of the characteristics they had and why they were so meaningful in your life. When I first started homeschooling, there were a few moms who really helped me out. They helped with curriculum choices, organization, scheduling, and helped alleviate the overall stress associated starting to homeschool!

As moms and wives, we too are now responsible for teaching our younger children in the way they should go. We are a model of what they'll become when they have their own families. Just like yesterday, we're responsible for passing on God's Word to our children, and depending on our stage, even helping to mentor other new wives and moms. Our pastor always emphasizes that we are all teachers whether we like it or not. And even if we're new Christians, he says to learn what we can, then find someone who knows less than you and share it! As a mom that's easy for us to accomplish in any given day.

APPLICATION:

Find another new mom in your neighborhood or church and reach out to them! Bring over a batch of cookies and strike up a conversation. See if you can be a Titus 2 mom to someone else :o) And don't overlook your own family! If you have children, teach them something today that will help them when they have their own homes to tend to. Some ideas...teach your children how to do the laundry, load a dishwasher correctly, sweep the floor properly, cook a meal, make cookies to bless someone else, etc.

Welcome to Week 11, day 4

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 31:29 Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.
- Proverbs 31 eBook: Page 38

OBSERVATIONS:

This verse taken in context of all that we've read about the Proverbs 31 woman so far shows us what a blessing it is to have a heart for God. The Proverbs 31 woman has set her focus on the Lord and will someday hear those wonderful words "Well done my good and faithful servant!"

I have a dear friend who once told me "There are a million worthy causes but you can't do them all!" She was referring to my ambitious nature during a time when my priorities had gotten a little out of whack. I was serving at our church in way too many places, starting up homeschooling, leading a women's worship ministry, all the while much neglecting my household and my walk with God.

My friend was gently reminding me that I'd lost sight of my first love, and probably committed to things that God might not have for me specifically. I tend to volunteer for things when I feel like others aren't stepping up just so they get done. But that same friend reminded me that when I step up like that, I might actually be taking away a blessing from someone else who was thinking about serving as well. We prayed for direction on what God had for me, and that I would be wise in my commitments.

Now my husband and I talk about our commitments, discuss whether or not something will bless our family or take away from it. We also talk about what commitments we can do from home, and what things will take us out of our home. Now we base all of our decisions on these factors and not on our wants and obligations.

I think I shared this already, but just in case here is the Abiding Mom vs. Super Mom post to help remind us of what is really important:
<http://www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/blog/2010/02/super-mom-vs-abiding-mom.html>

APPLICATION:

Take the 31 days of Love-Marriage Challenge! <http://time-warp-wife.blogspot.ca/search/label/Marriage%20Challenge>

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, please help me to be the gift you desired for my husband. Help me to bless him and our home by keeping my focus on You and by obeying Your Word! Don't let me be distracted by opinions of friends or family, but instead keep my priorities set on that which You have placed before me! Amen.

Welcome to Week 11, day 5

Declare today a "Focus on the Family" day! Stay off of your computer (once you're done reading this post of course), TV, video games, etc. Have a family devotion time, then spend the whole day as a family taking care of things you've put off. Make a healthy dinner together and enjoy your evening by having a family game night. Then finish off night with some alone time with your husband!

Welcome to Week 12, day 1

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 31:30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.
- Proverbs 31 eBook Pg 39-40

OBSERVATIONS:

I hope you are all enjoying our study as we near the last couple weeks together! Prov 31:30 is one of my favorite verses in this passage of scripture because it reminds me where to keep my focus set. I've been married for 12 years now, and while that's a short time for some of you and a long time for others, a lot has changed over those years. After having 4 children, countless sleepless nights (last night being one of them!) and all the stress that comes with running a home on a regular basis, my body has taken a toll! I certainly don't look the same as I did 12 years ago when I said "I do". I've changed both physically and spiritually.

And while my body is aging, hopefully my spiritual soul is growing in beauty and reverence for the Lord. I know we've talked about taking care of others and ourselves during our study, but this is where the rubber meets the road ladies. How we take care of our spiritual growth is what will be our eternal legacy. It is what will bless our family for generations to come. And it is what will bless our husbands and those around us today that we are called to minister to.

Attaining Godly beauty in these terms requires that we study God's Word daily, be focused entirely on Him, and devote everything we do to His glory.

APPLICATION:

Take time to share and explain these verses to your children. Teach them how to have true beauty in the spiritual sense and to judge their beauty through God's

eyes and not those of the world. Discuss with your sons and daughters what “real” beauty is and how that contrasts with today’s worldly view of beauty.

PRAYER:

Dear Lord please help me to be a Godly example of beauty in our home. Help me to show my children what real beauty is based on Your Word and not on the world’s views. I pray that you would give me a desire for Your Word and remind me to be in it daily!

Welcome to Week 12, day 2

SCRIPTURE:

- 1 Peter 3:3-4 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes.

OBSERVATIONS:

In Prov 22 we read that our Proverbs 31 woman is clothed in fine linen and purple. That is really the only reference to what she looks like on the outside. The rest of the verses talk about her spiritual side. Take a minute today to look back and re-read Prov 10-31 and take an inventory.

Here are some of the characteristics that I believe give this wonderful lady her beauty: Noble character, confidence, strength, dedication, compassion, respect, dignity, wisdom, faithfulness, fears the Lord.

Don’t get me wrong here, I don’t think it’s bad to look nice and take care of ourselves, but the point here is that the external is not what makes us beautiful. And we certainly cannot attain all of those characteristics on our own. Only by living for God and being in His Word can we truly gain these qualities.

With all of today’s media, celebrities, fashion, makeup etc, it’s easy to get caught up in external adornment. But be careful! Don’t let the distractions of this world take your eyes off of God.

APPLICATION:

Take a minute to jot down some characteristics you have that are considered beautiful in God’s eyes! Post that note on your bathroom mirror to help remind you of what makes you beautiful! If you have children, do the same for them! This will bless your girls especially ladies!

Welcome to Week 12, day 3

SCRIPTURE:

- 2 Cor 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.
- 1 Ti 2:9-10 I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

OBSERVATIONS:

All of us are aging, there's nothing we can do about it unfortunately! Death is a certain fate for us, and our earthly bodies will continue to perish as the years pass on. But in 2 Cor 4:16 we have encouragement not to be disheartened! We are invigorated, encouraged, and blessed knowing that God is renewing our inward soul day by day!

This is assuming that we are filling our souls with the proper food though. As we draw nearer to God, we are filled with His strength day by day. I really think this means that the filling of our souls must also be on a daily basis. If we aren't making time to be in God's Word daily ladies, how can we ever expect to take care of all of the things in our lives? Where is that strength coming from? Ourselves? I don't know about you all, but I certainly don't have much left to give after about 9am! The rest of the day I'm pretty well dependent completely on God's Grace.

It is at this point that I have a suggestion. I know it's easy to put off our time with God because we've got too many things to do, too much going on, too many distractions to take us away from time with our creator. But when considering everything we do on a daily basis, and how much we can really handle all on our own, I ask this: Can you afford NOT to take time in God's Word each day? Wouldn't it be more beneficial to start off each day laying your agenda at His feet and seeking His guidance before beginning your day?

APPLICATION:

Commit to starting each day in God's Word this week. Even if it's only a few minutes in the morning before you get up. Read 1 Psalm each day, then pray for God's wisdom and direction in your day, pray for patience and strength to accomplish all that He has set before you.

Welcome to Week 12, day 4

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 15:33 The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.
- Prov 22:4 Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.

OBSERVATION:

What is humility? By definition humility is “A quality by which a person considering his own defects has a humble opinion of himself and willingly submits himself to God and to others for God's sake.” So as a Christian we are called to willingly submit ourselves to God's purpose and will for our lives. But doing so we will have wisdom, honor, and life.

The Proverbs 31 woman has certainly been an example of a humble life. She willingly submitted to serving her household whole heartedly. We never read of complaining or arguing. I didn't see in there where she threw herself any pity parties for all of the work she was doing either. And trust me I looked!

Instead she CHOSE to fear the Lord, to live her life for Him, to dedicate herself to His works. And look what happened? Her entire family and those around her were blessed! And not only that but God blessed her in return. She has chosen to be diligent in every aspect of her life, and in the end she is rewarded ETERNALLY.

APPLICATION:

Commit to your tasks this week as unto the Lord. No complaining or feeling sorry for ourselves this week, but instead do everything as though Jesus Himself were a guest in your home! Show your family the devotion that you would if Jesus were dining with you, and treat them in a way that will glorify your special visitor!

Welcome to Week 12, day 5

Hi ladies, wow, it's been a wonderful study this week! I've been really thinking on how I can better serve my family. One thing I've been convicted of this week is my time. Time I choose to spend on other things like Facebook...email...blog stuff...etc. Time I should be spending with my family, serving them, and in the Word.

I am going to make this weekend an “off-line” kind of weekend. Take some time to just hang out with God, enjoy my family, tend to my home, cook healthy meals, and just get my focus back on the Lord and off of the worldly things that have taken over. I guess you could say I'm getting a make-over....for my inner beauty :o) Like our Proverbs 31 woman, I CHOOSE to serve the Lord!

Would love to hear how your week was and any changes you're working on based on the study thus far! Just a reminder, we only have one more week of actual study, then a week of encouragement and reflections from some of our Good Morning Girls which will be an awesome blessing so stick around!

Welcome to Week 13, day 1

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 31:31 Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.
- Proverbs 31 eBook Page 41

OBSERVATIONS:

I have truly been blessed through this study and I hope you all have as well! But I have to admit that today it was difficult for me to read Courtney's questions on page 41. What do my children think of me? What does my husband think of me?

While I haven't always worked without complaining I at least have something to strive for now! I know that my girls are looking to me to see how to run their homes, and my son will most likely find a woman like me as well. That's a lot of pressure for one woman, but my diligence in being a Godly example for my children will have eternal value!

I like what Courtney said about “Who you are at home is who you really are.” Boy isn't that the truth! Would I really speak to my children, or husband in public the same way I do at home? Yikes...the best way I've found to keep myself accountable in this area is to imagine Jesus with me all day long. I try to speak to my family the way I think I would if He were physically present. I don't know why that works for me, but it does. And technically He IS watching all the time, it's just easy to forget since I can't visually see Him.

But I definitely want this Proverbs 31:31 reward, and I also know that I need to earn it!

APPLICATION:

Each day there are a few minutes that I find myself wondering what to do next on my list. I am going to devote that time to God this week and grab my Bible and read a passage of scripture! Getting God's Word into my heart is the only way that it will subsequently flow out freely to those around me!

Welcome to Week 13, day 2

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 14:23 All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.
- Prov 27:18 He who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who looks after his master will be honored.

OBSERVATIONS:

I'm a list maker, really it's the only way I get anything done. But being a list maker has its pitfalls. I can spend more time making my lists than actually accomplishing the tasks on them! As we've learned from our beloved Proverbs 31 woman so far, it is a blessing to everyone around us if we are diligent in our tasks.

No sitting around complaining, feeling sorry for ourselves, or procrastinating. Today is the day ladies, we are not promised tomorrow, so now is the time to get things done! Make getting in God's Word a priority, time with your family, and then household chores.

Get rid of those things that so easily waste our time, and make good use of our time here on earth. "Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." James 4:14

APPLICATION:

Pick a few favorite verses that you want to commit to memory. Write them down on post-it notes and stick them to your mirror, above your kitchen sink, and on your car visor. Take a minute to say them each time you see your sticky note and commit them to memory! If you have children, do the same for them.

Welcome to Week 13, day 3

SCRIPTURE:

- Ac 13:22 After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'

OBSERVATIONS:

I would love for God to describe me as a woman after His own heart! Conversely, I'd hate to be removed because of my disobedience to His will in my life. I've heard many times that God's mission will be done with or without me. And wouldn't it be sad if I passed up on all of the opportunities He's placed before me!

I love how David is used as an example here. We all know that David sinned, he was guilty of great offenses, but he also repented, obeyed God and sought to encourage his kingdom to follow God's commands. We are all sinners, but that doesn't mean that God can't and won't use us!

Ladies, as we near our study, I'd like to encourage all of you to make a few small steps towards obedience through the example set forth in our precious Proverbs 31 woman. She is depicted as wholly devoted to God and His will in her life. She is diligent in her home, with her children, and for the honor of her husband.

It's no low calling we have, but instead one of great importance and one that has eternal value! Remember Proverbs 31:10 "A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies." And sweet ladies, you are that wife! Live the most for the calling you have received!

APPLICATION:

Put God first on my list of priorities. Remember that it is Him whom I'm striving to please, and through my dedication to God, so will others be blessed!

Welcome to Week 13, day 4

SCRIPTURE:

- Prov 27:2 Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips.

OBSERVATIONS:

I don't know about you, but this study has been a true blessing! I definitely have a lot of things to work on, but thankfully I don't have to do it alone. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!" Phil 4:13

Today's verses remind me not to boast in my own accomplishments. I can be prideful some days thinking how great school went, how organized I was, etc. But really all of that is only a cosmetic covering of what is really going on in my home.

The things that are truly important are my time with God, reaching my children's hearts, blessing my husband, and honoring God with my words and actions. No matter how our day goes, if at the end of it my family does not feel encouraged and blessed by me then what's the point? If I'm not modeling God's love to them regularly, then what have I gained?

Instead I choose to rely on God to lead me, I trust in His Word to show me how to live, how to discipline my children, and how to spend my time so that I may live a life worthy of the calling I have received! (Eph 4:1) To give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thess 5:18), and to find peace in Him... "You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You." Isaiah 26:3

And if I live my life according to His will and purpose, then I won't be tempted to praise myself, but instead I will be a blessing to others around me and the glory will all go to God!

APPLICATION:

Since we are nearing the end of our study, today I'm going to take a few minutes to find a new study to go through to keep myself accountable to be in God's Word! The next GMG study will be an 8 week study on the book of Colossians, if you're interested you can find details on www.goodmorninggirls.org.

Welcome to Week 13, day 5

Well sweet ladies, we made it! All the way through the Proverbs 31 study together. I definitely have a lot to work on, goals to reach, and family to love on. I'm so thankful for this time together, and I pray each of you will continue your walk with the Lord daily!

I pray you were inspired, encouraged, and motivated to strive to be the women God has created you to be! To be content where He has you, thankful for all He's blessed you with, and willing to share your love for Him with others!

I just want to say a quick thank you to all of you who commented in the group! I read each and every one of your posts and was so blessed by all of your insights!

You've been a wonderful group, and I'm honored that you all chose to walk through this study with me! I also wanted to encourage all of you who have stuck with it, and those of you catching up. I know you're families are being well blessed right now thanks to your diligence and faithfulness.

Next week we don't have any reading assignments, but there will be reflections from the Good Morning Girls site, so please make sure to check over there to hear what they all have to say!

Since you have all blessed me so much, I wanted to return the love a bit. As a gift to each of you, I made a journaling pages download! Click below to download your journal, I hope it encourages you to keep going in your studies, and gives you a sweet place to keep your thoughts, goals, ideas, prayers, and anything else you'd like!

Blessings ladies, it's been an honor walking with you!

<http://shared.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/momstuff/myjournal.pdf>

*(If you have troubles opening the download, try to RIGHT click on it, then select "Save Link As".
You should be prompted to save the file to your computer)*