



Beloved

365 DEVOTIONS FOR YOUNG WOMEN

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introduction

It's hard to be a young woman sometimes. We're bombarded by lots of different messages about who we're supposed to be—and often, those messages contradict each other. So, what's the right path? Who do we listen to? Which messages should be filtered out and which should be embraced?

If we're followers of Jesus, we look to God's Word for answers. What does God think about the issues we face? What does he say about who we're supposed to be and how we're supposed to act? What does it mean to be a godly woman, anyway?

We can find a lot of wisdom about this in Proverbs 31. But is that all the Bible has to say about being a girl? Maybe you feel like your entire identity as a woman can't fit into a proverb. Welcome to the club, sister. Few of us feel like we can be summed up in a small sound bite.

Thankfully, the Bible has *so much more* to say about the unique challenges—the heartaches and the high points—of being female. There are dozens of women in the Bible, some named but many unnamed. We're going to take a look at about sixty of them. Through their stories, we'll discover role models and cautionary tales, tragedies and triumphs. And guess what? The stories of these ancient women are surprisingly relevant to our lives today.

Your identity as a woman matters to God, beloved daughter. So, let's see what he has to say about it.

day 1



"You are altogether beautiful, my darling; there is no flaw in you."

—SONG OF SONGS 4:7

Some people think that the Bible is a "guys' book." A book written by men, about men, for men. That girls and women have little or no role in God's interaction with humankind. That we're afterthoughts.

What a strange misconception. The truth is God not only protected, upheld, and valued women in ways far beyond most cultures in the eras when the Bible was written, but he also saw fit to include many three-dimensional portraits of historical women in his Word. Our female examples in the Bible rarely fall into the two stereotypes so often foisted upon women—virtuous angels or wicked seductresses. No, most women of the Bible are drawn in real, human shades of gray—sometimes displaying good qualities, sometimes displaying negative qualities, filled with wisdom as well as bad choices, walking in faith and stumbling in darkness. Just like the men of the Bible. *Just like us.*

Girls and women are not God's afterthoughts. We're his daughters. Valued. Adored. Cherished. Beloved.





day 2



“The LoRD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’ . . . So the LoRD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LoRD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.”

—GENESIS 2:18, 21-22

These few lines from Genesis have sparked a lot of debate in the millennia since they were written. Are they proof of women’s inferiority to men? Are they proof that women were created to serve men? Are they proof that a woman’s worth depends entirely on what she has to offer a man?

When we look closer, we can see something beautiful here. We see that God was not creating an accessory for Adam—something pretty to dangle from Adam’s arm like a piece of jewelry. God was creating a missing piece for Adam. Mankind, God’s highest and most treasured creation, was not complete without women.

We are not mere accessories, ladies, and we never have been. We are the final piece of creation, formed in a way unique from every other creature God made.

day 3



"A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies."

—PROVERBS 31:10

If you ask a hundred people what the “ideal woman” is like, you’re likely to get a hundred different answers. Depending on the worldview, culture, and personality of the person you’re asking, you could hear anything from “meek and mild” to “independent and assertive.” But what does God have to say on the matter?

There probably isn’t one “ideal woman” from God’s perspective either. He has made us wonderfully diverse with varying strengths, weaknesses, and interests, just like men. But when we read about the “Wife of Noble Character” in Proverbs 31, we can begin to see some of the qualities that are biblical ideals for femininity. No matter our personality or our interests, whether or not we’ll be someone’s wife, these qualities are worthy ones for all women who seek to serve God.

So, what does God’s ideal woman look like? Is she a superheroine or a regular girl? Is she tough or tender? The answer to all those questions is . . . yes, she is. She is all these things, and more.





day 4



"She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come."

—PROVERBS 31:25

Strength. The Wife of Noble Character is a pillar. She doesn't crumble. She exudes confidence because she is capable and respected. She's straight-up strong, and there's no denying it.

This sounds like all of us, one hundred percent of the time, right? Ahem. Yeah, probably not. Sometimes we're not oozing confidence. Sometimes we're the awkward girl in the back of the room hoping no one will notice us. Sometimes we're the girl who feels overwhelmed by her responsibilities and who would very much like to crumble.

That's okay. An ideal is something to shoot for. If we can grasp how God sees us—as beloved daughters, equipped to do everything he has set before us—then we can begin to grow in strength and confidence. We can nurture this godly ideal that lives somewhere inside each of God's daughters. Embrace your strength. It's there already, waiting for you to grow into it.

day 5



"Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life."

—PROVERBS 31:11-12

Enriching. That probably seems like a strange word to add to our "ideal woman" picture. Maybe the idea of enriching brings to mind food that has vitamins added to it. So, are we supposed to be like the vitamin D in milk?

Yes, kind of. The word "enrich" means to add to—to make better or to increase. A godly woman enriches the lives of those around her. We can be an enricher wherever we are—at home with our parents, at school, in the workplace, with our friends. Take a moment to think about that. What do you bring to the lives of those around you? Do you add joy, stability, strength, kindness, compassion, humor, love?

Think of one or two ways you can focus on enriching those around you. You'll bless them, no doubt, but you'll find yourself equally blessed.





day 6



"She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness."

—PROVERBS 31:26–27

In some ways, Proverbs 31 sounds like an ancient woman's daily to-do list. And goodness, did she get a lot done! We lead equally busy lives in modern times, though our to-do items probably look very different from those in Proverbs.

Two things carry through the ages, though: productivity and clear-mindedness. This ideal woman goes about her daily affairs with wisdom. She makes good decisions and plans for the future. She doesn't waste a bunch of time. She understands the value of hard work.

If you're shrinking away from these qualities thinking, "I will never fit that ideal!" don't worry. It can sound daunting, especially in this day and age when we have so much going on, whether that's school, sports, music, art, friends, or even catching up on your latest Netflix guilty pleasure. It's okay to relax and have fun, but the point of this verse is that the great girls and women of God work hard to make the most of their lives here on Earth. What are a few ways you can use *your* time wisely?

day 7



"Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living."
—GENESIS 3:20

What better place to begin our look at the triumphs and trials of biblical women than with Eve, the first woman? Eve's name is derived from the Hebrew word "to breathe" or the related word "to live." How cool is that? Breath and life, two words that bring to mind "vitality," and that's what Eve was. With Adam, she began human life.

Eve's story, more than perhaps any other biblical woman, represents the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. She alone of all women lived without sin for a while. Eve experienced the fullness of God's favor and his blessing. She was female kind as we were created to be. And only in understanding that can we fully appreciate the great tragedy of Eve's mistake.

Eve was deceived into disobeying God's one command (Genesis 3:5–6). She broke a rule that probably felt so small at the time—a mere tiptoe away from the Father and toward her own desires. Just one bite. But that tiptoe sparked catastrophic results. In Eve, we have both our first role model and our saddest cautionary tale. Using Eve's mistake as a warning, we can grow in obedience to God's commands, big and small.





day 8



“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

—GENESIS 1:27

In English, we always refer to God using the masculine pronoun “he.” When Jesus was born in a human body, it was a male body. God is our Father, and men were made first. These facts—all true!—have been used for centuries to justify lessening the dignity of women. But is that what’s in God’s heart? Does God believe his male creation is a better reflection of himself, superior to his female creation?

Look at this verse in the very first chapter of the Bible, speaking of Adam and Eve. Male *and female*, human beings were created in God’s image. That means women are every bit as much a reflection of God as men are. God is bigger than either gender and more complete than both. Men and women each reflect different aspects of God’s character, and mankind wasn’t done until womankind was added into the mix.

Don’t ever feel less-than-beloved because you’re a woman. We are all created in God’s image.

day 9



"The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called "woman," for she was taken out of man."

-GENESIS 2:23

Eve is someone who has been defined by her mistakes for thousands of years. Literally thousands. Can you imagine? Can you imagine if your worst mistake, the offense you committed that you were *most* ashamed of, echoed through millennia and became one of the single most important moments in redemptive history?

Yikes. We may worry that our biggest mistakes get publicized on social media and go viral. That would be bad enough. But being known as "that girl who started the whole sin thing" for all of written history is infinitely worse. And yet that's not the whole of who Eve was. Remember how we talked about womankind being the missing piece of the creation puzzle? God fitted that perfect piece through Eve. She was *that* before she was "the sin girl."

You are not defined by your mistakes, either, no matter how much it feels that way sometimes. God saw Eve as the complete person she was. She suffered consequences, absolutely, but God also blessed and cared for her. We don't have to let our mistakes become our identity.





day 10



“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”

—GENESIS 2:24

Not everyone has a desire to get married, which is perfectly okay. Paul writes about the benefits of the single life, focused on serving God, in 1 Corinthians 7. Singleness—both as a long-term lifestyle and as a shorter season before marriage—can be a wonderful, God-honoring, God-serving time in our lives.

But if you *do* have the desire to be married someday, consider praying for your future spouse, starting right now. You’re never too young to start praying for the character of the person to whom you’ll be joined for the rest of your life. That’s a very big deal!

Even if you’re years away from considering marriage, the same principle applies to dating and choosing a good boyfriend. How do we discern between a good, godly partner and one who is merely attractive? It’s important that we consistently ask God for wisdom in this area because sometimes emotions make our discernment fuzzy. Relationships with the opposite sex can be confusing, but God wants to help guide us toward good choices that honor him. We just need to ask and follow his leading!

day 11



"Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."

—GENESIS 2:25

The last time you walked around naked in front of anyone you're not related to, you were probably young enough to be wearing diapers. In fact, many of us have had actual nightmares about showing up in a public place after somehow forgetting to throw on our pants. It would probably be on almost everyone's list of top ten most embarrassing things that could happen, ever in the history of all things.

And yet, our embarrassment about our nakedness and our desire to show some degree of modesty is a result of sin. Before sin, Adam and Eve felt no shame about their bodies. There was no worry about lustful looks or scandalized stares. They were naked and they felt no shame. That tells us our bodies are beautiful things and not in themselves shameful.

Still . . . don't walk down the street naked, or anything close to it. (Seriously, you could get arrested.) Instead, consider growing in appreciation of the wonderful body God created for you. Speak positively about your body. Avoid nitpicking your physical appearance. Understand that your body is not a shameful, sinful thing. It was created as a thing of beauty.





day 12



“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil!”

—GENESIS 3:4–5

Oh, Eve. The fateful words of the serpent live on in infamy, and each time we read them, we may have the desire to shout at her, “Don’t do it!” We know the end of the story. We feel the effects of Eve’s actions each day as we battle against our own selfish desires.

Even though most of our struggle with obedience to God might come from within, battling our own impulses or wrong choices, we’re not totally unlike Eve. Chances are you don’t have a literal serpent squirming through your garden trying to lead you astray, but what about a metaphorical serpent?

Perhaps it’s someone in your life you know is a negative influence, constantly tugging you away from God. Perhaps it’s a worldview which says there is no God, and everywhere you turn, you’re confronted by that serpent asking you, “Did God really say . . .” We can learn from Eve’s mistake. We know how it turns out when we give in to the serpent. Return to God’s Word to reaffirm all you know to be true and battle against those deceptive whispers.

day 13



“And he said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?’ The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’ Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’”

—GENESIS 3:11-13

It took about three seconds from the time we first sinned to the time we first shifted the blame to someone else. And let’s be real—that struggle continues today in full force. Small children don’t need to be taught to try to blame someone else for their wrongdoing. We have a natural, if sinful, instinct to try to wriggle out of trouble.

But accepting blame when we’ve messed up is important. Really important. It goes so much deeper than just being willing to face our consequences or making sure someone else doesn’t have to face the repercussions of our actions. These things matter, of course, but they matter in a worldly sense.

Accepting responsibility is *spiritually* important because it’s the first step toward repentance. If we’re busy trying to convince others (or ourselves) that we did nothing wrong—that the serpent made us do it—then we can’t turn away from that wrongdoing. We can’t apologize to God or anyone else we’ve hurt. We can’t walk away from that mistake and commit to never do it again. Accepting responsibility is the start; true repentance is the goal.

