



# STUDY GUIDE

Note to reader: This guide can be printed out at a larger size at [crossway.org/awomanswisdom](http://crossway.org/awomanswisdom).

You can work through this study guide on your own or as part of a small-group discussion. There is at least one question in each chapter that will require a bit more time than the other questions. These questions are marked with a special symbol: 🌸 You might also want to use the appendix as a handy way of reviewing various proverbs.

## chapter one

*what, exactly, is wisdom?*

🌸 1. Read through the book of Esther and jot down where and how you see her exercising wisdom. What impact do her choices have on her relative Mordecai? What sort of impact does she have on the king?

2. Name an area of your life (or more than one) in which you desire to grow in wisdom. Why do you think you need wisdom in this particular area?

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3. How does Proverbs define wisdom? Explain what is meant by this definition.

4. Have you ever experienced fear of God? What did you learn about him through that time? What was the outcome?

5. Which of the characteristics of wisdom listed in chapter 1 most speak to you and why?

- Wisdom is clear
- Wisdom is near
- Wisdom is pleasant
- Wisdom is primary
- Wisdom is hospitable

6. Describe what it means to guard your heart (Prov. 4:23).

7. What is the link between wisdom and humility, and how do we cultivate humility?

8. What is our role in obtaining wisdom?

9. Which of the benefits of wisdom grabs you most and why?

- Security
- Guidance
- Sanctified common sense
- Generally good living
- Happiness
- Self-knowledge

10. Describe the biblical link between Christ and wisdom.

## chapter two

### *why folly is really bad*

1. What is the primary distinction between a foolish woman and a wise one?
2. Name some ways that women today can be easily enticed by the world. What for you personally tends to be an enticement?

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✿ 3. There are many proverbs that mention money or wealth (see the appendix). Why do you think that this Bible book about wisdom has this emphasis? We also find a number of passages about wealth in the New Testament that address it primarily in terms of its impact on Christian discipleship. Study the following passages and summarize what you see:

- Matthew 6:25–34
- Matthew 13:18–23
- Luke 16:13
- Acts 8:9–21
- 1 Timothy 3:2–3
- 1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19
- 2 Timothy 3:1–5
- Hebrews 13:5–6
- James 5:1–6

4. In what ways does a foolish woman show contempt for godly knowledge?

5. How can we tell the difference between patient waiting and sinful complacency? As you ponder the difference, does it speak to your life in some way?

6. Where in your life do you detect a need to become more like the ant of Proverbs 6:6–8? Is there a lack of zeal in your work, in your relationships, or in your walk of faith? If so, what concrete step will you take to address it?

7. In a society that upholds autonomy as a great virtue, living in dependence on God and in transparency before your Christian community can be especially challenging. Describe the difference between godly independence and sinful autonomy. Consider Proverbs 18:1 and 1 Thessalonians 4:9–12.

8. Review Proverbs 6:16–19. From this passage make a list of things God hates so much that they are categorized as “abominations.” Then, using this list, pray the prayer found in Psalm 139:23–24 either alone or with your small group:

Search me, O God, and know my heart!  
Try me and know my thoughts!  
And see if there be any grievous way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting!

You also might want to see if you find yourself resonating with something on the why-oh-why and if-only list on pp 51–52.

9. In what way is overcoming our folly more a matter of rest than of work?

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10. How do the following passages showcase Jesus as our wisdom?

- Matthew 12:38–42
- Luke 2:40–52
- 1 Corinthians 1:18–31
- 1 Corinthians 2:1–13
- Colossians 2:1–3
- Colossians 2:20–23
- Colossians 3:16

## chapter three

*wise women know the power of words*

1. What important part do our words play in our role as helpers? Keeping in mind the examples we considered from Scripture (Esther and Delilah), describe a time when your words swayed a situation for good or ill. Is there a particular teaching from Proverbs that your experience proved true?

2. Proverbs offers a good bit of insight into the destructive nature of lying. Where have you seen those truths worked out in your own life? (You might want to review specific proverbs using the appendix).
  
3. In what ways is the term *false witness* much broader than just telling the truth in court?
  
4. Of the particular speech follies we covered in chapter 3, are there any that you have always viewed as no big deal? If so, how has your view about them changed as a result of studying Proverbs?
  
5. Some types of talk, while not outright sinful, are nevertheless foolish. What, according to Proverbs, is included in this category?
  
6. Is gossip a struggle for you, whether with tongue or ear? What truths from Proverbs about gossip most directly impact you and why? Select one proverb about gossip to memorize.
  
7. Is there something in your life at present that might make you susceptible to flattery? How will you guard against it specifically?
  
8. What are some characteristics of wise words?
  
9. How are our ears linked to our tongues when it comes to wisdom?

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🌿 10. Read the following verses about wise and foolish talk from James, the New Testament book of wisdom. What do you find here that reinforces or builds on what you learned from Proverbs?

- James 1:19–20
- James 1:26
- James 2:8–12
- James 2:14–17
- James 3:2–12
- James 4:11–12
- James 4:13–16
- James 5:12

## chapter four

*wise women choose friends carefully*

1. With whom do you spend the most time? How did these friendships come about and develop?



2. What tends to draw you to particular friendships? Consider both the pitfalls and the godly qualities we looked at in chapter 4.

3. Are any of your friendships characterized by chaos? If so, what proverbs address that, and how?

✿ 4. Proverbs cautions us against giving our hearts to angry people. Why? Consider developing a fuller biblical picture of anger by studying the following passages:

| God's Anger       | Man's (Woman's) Anger |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Ex. 32:1–10       | Gen. 4:1–7            |
| Num. 11:1         | 2 Sam. 6:5–10         |
| 2 Sam. 6:5–10     | Ps. 4:4               |
| 1 Kings 11:1–9    | Ps. 37:8              |
| 2 Chron. 28:22–25 | Eccles. 7:9           |
| Ps. 30:5          | Jonah 4:1–9           |
| Ps. 38:1–4        | Matt. 5:22            |
| Ps. 85:1–8        | John 7:32–33          |

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| God's Anger   | Man's (Woman's) Anger |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| Ps. 86:15     | 2 Cor. 12:20          |
| Ps. 90:1–12   | Gal. 5:20             |
| Isa. 57:16–17 | Eph. 4:26             |
| Jer. 3:6–13   | Eph. 4:31             |
| Jer. 4:22–26  | Eph. 6:4              |
| Hos. 14:1–4   | Col. 3:8              |
| Mark 3:1–6    | James 1:19–20         |

5. Why must we be cautious in deepening a bond with someone given to sensual indulgence? What sorts of indulgences might this include beyond just food and drink?

6. What are some of the biblical principles for choosing wisely in friendships? In keeping with that, do you have an “iron” friend (Prov. 27:17)? What about that relationship causes mutual sharpening?

7. Do you find it difficult to speak up when you see your friend straying from godly paths? What is the perceived risk you fear? What is the

difference between speaking truth in love and judgmental criticism? How do you think we can distinguish between the two?

8. Have you ever been caught in an idolatrous relationship? If so, what bad fruits of idolatry were evidenced? How did the relationship end? If it hasn't yet ended, describe how the steps of repentance in Hosea 14 can help you.

9. What does Scripture say about friendships with professing believers who live in unrepentant sin? How do we determine when to move closer to the sinning one and when to move away?

10. Jesus, of course, is the ultimate friend. What do these verses teach about this aspect of our relationship with him:

- Exodus 33:9–11

- Psalm 25:14

- Luke 7:33–35

- John 15:13–15

- James 4:4

## chapter five

*wise women know the secret of self-control*

1. In what area do you find self-control to be a perpetual struggle?
2. What is gluttony? Why can those who eat too little be considered gluttons?

✿ 3. How can we eat to the glory of God? Use the following passages to provide an answer.

- Psalm 104:14–15
- Psalm 104:24–26
- Proverbs 23:20–21
- Proverbs 25:16, 27
- Proverbs 27:7
- Matthew 6:25–33
- Romans 14:13–21
- 1 Corinthians 8:8–13

- 1 Corinthians 10:23–33
- 2 Thessalonians 3:10–12
- 1 Timothy 6:17

4. How does Proverbs 25:28 describe self-control? From where does the analogy of broken-down walls come, and why is it a fitting analogy?

5. Read Romans 1:18–32. Describe the downward spiral of sin. Based on this passage, what causes someone to get stuck in a destructive sin pattern, in what today is called “addiction”? How does Galatians 5:17–26 show us the way out?

6. Which of the five hindrances that we considered in chapter 5 might best describe your personal struggle with self-control?

7. How does James 4:2–3 factor into the struggle with self-control?

8. How do Colossians 1:29 and Philippians 2:12–13 speak to our efforts at self-control?

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☛ 9. What place does alcohol hold in your convictions? Does that differ from what you practice? Meditate on the following passages and those in the appendix that mention the consumption of alcohol:

- Numbers 6:1–21
- Psalm 104:14–15
- Luke 2:1–12
- Romans 13:10–14
- Romans 14:13–23
- Ephesians 5:15–21
- 1 Thessalonians 5:5–8
- 1 Timothy 3:8
- Titus 2:1–4
- 1 Peter 4:1–3

10. Ultimately, what four factors lead to self-control?

## chapter six

*wise women know how to think, feel, and want*

1. Discuss or describe the ways in which our thoughts, feelings, and desires can shape our lives. Provide some concrete examples.
2. Why is it wise to give greater weight to thoughts than to feelings?
3. What is the link between humility and wise thinking?
4. Read the following passages about thoughts:
  - Romans 8:5–7; 12:1–2
  - 2 Corinthians 10:4–6
  - Ephesians 4:17–24
  - Philippians 2:3–8

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- Colossians 3:1–3


- 1 Peter 1:10–16

What imperatives (commands) do you see that pertain to our thought life? Why, according to these verses, is our thought life so vital to our faith?

5. Contrast single-mindedness and double-mindedness. You might first want to read Psalm 119:113 and James 1:5–8; 4:1–8.

6. Discuss or describe what it means to be obsessed with something or someone. How can obsessions impact us spiritually? Why is it wise to guard ourselves against obsessive thoughts?

7. Review what Proverbs teaches about anger (see, e.g., Prov. 10:11; 14:29; 15:18; 16:32). What can we learn about anger from the life of Jesus? Ephesians 4:26 warns us, “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.” What are some ways we can handle anger without sin?

 8. In what way was David’s grief excessive? (Read 2 Sam. 18:1–19:8.) How can we handle grief with godliness?



9. What turns a good desire into a sinful one? What does Proverbs teach about desires that are aligned with God's truth? (See Prov. 10:24; 11:23.)

10. According to Proverbs, how can we handle our desires in a godly manner?

## chapter seven

*wise women are financially savvy*

1. Do you have an informed understanding of your personal or familial financial picture? Why or why not?

2. In what way can keeping abreast of family finances be a way in which we fulfill our calling as helper in marriage?

3. Discuss or describe the overall teaching of Proverbs about money management. To what does Proverbs link financial prosperity?

4. What does Proverbs teach about borrowing money? How do you think this teaching can be applied wisely in our present-day culture?

5. Proverbs 22:7 says, "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender." Discuss or describe how you've seen this played out in your life or in the life of someone you know.

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6. Discuss or describe some of the stresses that can accompany wealth.

🌿 7. Read the following passages that mention money:

- Proverbs 3:9; 13:11
- Ecclesiastes 5:10–12
- Matthew 6:24–33
- 1 Timothy 6:6–10
- Hebrews 13:5–6

Describe the attitude that a disciple of Jesus should have toward money. How does your attitude align with Scripture's teaching?

8. Reread the prayer of Agur in Proverbs 30:8–9. Can you wholeheartedly make Agur's prayer your own? If not, why not?

9. Why can money be a spiritual danger?


10. Discuss or describe from Scripture why there is hope for Christians who are floundering due to unwise financial decisions.

## chapter eight

*wise women safeguard their sexuality*

1. What was the original purpose for Proverbs' instructions about sexual purity? Why is this instruction important for today's women?
2. Discuss or describe why sexual activity outside of marriage is evil. Base your answer on Scripture passages such as 1 Corinthians 3:1–13; 6:12–20; and 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8.
3. Why are we so susceptible to sexual temptation?
4. Identify the consequences for sexual sin put forth in Proverbs 5:9–21 and 7:22–27. Where have you observed the reality of these consequences?
5. What link do we find in Proverbs between immoral behavior and discontentment?
6. Discuss or describe some character traits of the immoral woman in Proverbs.

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7. Discuss or describe some practical ways to avoid sexual sin.
8. Why is adultery a direct attack on marriage and not merely a violation of it?
9. What are some ways Proverbs gives for safeguarding our marriage from adultery? How might these safeguards be applied practically in our own marriage?
10.  Read the story of David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11:1–12:23. What truths from Proverbs about adultery do you see manifested in this story?

## chapter nine

### *the woman of proverbs 31*

1. How does the Proverbs 31 woman function in the book of Proverbs—in other words, how are we meant to view her?
2. In what ways does the Proverbs 31 woman depict a wife who can be trusted?

3. Considered in light of how the statement was discussed in chapter 9, do you agree that all women are called to be homemakers? Why or why not?

4. The Proverbs 31 woman is depicted as active from before sunrise till long after sundown. We aren't meant to make a literal application of that to our lives—we couldn't anyway! But what changes can we make to our lives to better fulfill Paul's mandate in Ephesians 5:15–16, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil"?

🌿 5. Read the stories of the wives in Scripture (listed below). Give concrete examples of how they compare and contrast with the ideal wife of Proverbs 31.

- Rebekah (Gen. 25:19–27; 27:1–35)
- Abigail (1 Sam. 25:1–42)
- Michal (2 Sam. 6:16–23)
- Jezebel (1 Kings 21:1–16)
- Sapphira (Acts 5:1–10)
- Priscilla (Acts 18:1–27)

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6. Discuss or describe all the ways the Proverbs 31 woman is held forth as a nurturer.

7. What is your view of mothers working outside the home? Does the Proverbs 31 woman influence your view? What do we see in the poem that made her business endeavors godly rather than sinfully selfish?

8. What can we learn from the Proverbs 31 woman about the value of a woman's personal appearance? What makes an effort to look attractive either godly or worldly?

9. What is the significance of the fabrics we find in the poem?

10. The Proverbs 31 woman is depicted as confident (vv. 21, 25). What is the basis for her confidence?