

Becoming *the* Woman God Wants Me *to* Be

A 90-DAY GUIDE
TO LIVING THE
PROVERBS 31 LIFE

DONNA PARTOW



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Introduction

Welcome to the next ninety days of your life. These days will unfold whether or not you live them with purpose and passion. You can just mark time, muddle through each day, and stumble closer to the end of your time on earth, or you can choose to “run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Heb. 12:1). This book is your invitation to run with perseverance. But it’s more than an invitation. It’s your own personal jumpstart for living the Proverbs 31 life!

I’ve been following God and studying his Word for nearly thirty years, yet somehow I thought the Proverbs 31 woman was a mythological creature or worse—I thought she was a weapon spiritual leaders use to make all of us ordinary Christian women feel bad about ourselves.

But then I met her in person.

They say the wife of noble character is hard to find, and it’s true. But I finally found her, tucked away in the mountains north of Bogotá, Colombia. And having met her, I became convinced that becoming the woman God wants me to be, the woman he describes in Proverbs 31, is not an impossible dream. It’s the only goal worthy of my life’s devotion.

I had been invited to Colombia to speak at a conference for Christian leaders from throughout Latin America. Afterward my host, Hector Torres of Hispanic International Ministries, invited me to spend a few days with his family at his aunt’s home at the base of the Andes Mountains. I didn’t know quite what to expect. The bookstore didn’t have a travel guide on Colombia. The book they had on Latin America didn’t even devote

a chapter to the country, which has been torn by civil war and drug trafficking for the last three decades. It simply said: it's too dangerous; don't go there. The mountains, in particular, are known for guerilla activity. I was somewhat apprehensive, to say the least.

Imagine my surprise when I arrived at Hector's aunt's home and stepped into the most peaceful paradise I'd ever experienced anywhere in the world. Our hostess, Beatriz Duenas, was the picture of beauty, elegance, and ease as she welcomed us, showed us to our rooms, and then gave us a tour of the breathtaking grounds. We walked and talked amid trees bursting with avocados, bananas, blackberries, guavas, oranges, papayas, plantains, and tangerines. She showed us her chicken coops, trout pond, coffee crop, and even her worm farm. Every inch of her property is productive; it's a reflection of a woman who embodies energy, creativity, and productivity.

Breakfast the next morning featured a variety of fresh-squeezed juices, eggs scrambled with tomatoes, peppers, and onions, and freshly grown coffee—and every item on the menu was produced right on the property. Our morning walk took us to her favorite place: a small stone and wrought-iron chapel with wooden benches that looked centuries old. Beatriz exuded quiet God-confidence as she explained that she has spent many hours praying, reading, and meditating in this open-air sanctuary. I knew I was standing on holy ground.

In the early afternoon, following our three-hour horseback ride through lightly tamed jungle that featured every conceivable shade of green, we sat by an open-fire woodstove, eating steak from a nearby cattle ranch along with freshly grown and grilled vegetables. I marveled at the self-sufficiency of this beautiful place and the beautiful woman who oversaw it all.

But Beatriz's story doesn't begin in this beautiful paradise. Later that night her story unfolded. In 1950, at the age of sixteen, Beatriz married a handsome nineteen-year-old, Jose, whom she had met at a relative's wedding two years earlier. A year later she had their first child and three more daughters followed in fairly quick succession. She worked side by side with her husband in an auto parts store they began together with borrowed money. Although still a teenager, Beatriz had a knack for business. The couple began to prosper. Soon they had a successful corporation, complete with employees and multiple store locations. They were business partners and best friends. They were inseparable.

Then on January 23, 1984, at 6:30 p.m., Jose was driving home from work when his car was surrounded by six kidnappers who seized him and, *two months later*, demanded the outrageous sum of thirty million dollars for his release. On March 19 Beatriz paid her husband's captors one million dollars.

She never saw her beloved husband again.

Through the pain of that ordeal, Beatriz began seeking God and learned to walk by faith. She started attending a little church where she found Christians who comforted, encouraged, and sustained her. The believers gave her the strength she needed to make one of the most difficult decisions of her life: to remain in the mountain home her husband loved so much and to continue tending the gardens that brought him such joy. Slowly she began planting money-producing fruit trees, using funds that came in from rental properties in which her husband had wisely invested. She was learning to make it on her own.

Her first major business venture was building four massive chicken coops, which now house forty-eight thousand chickens. She has no regrets about taking out a second mortgage on the house to start this business, because it now generates a very steady income for her and will continue doing so for many years to come.

Then Beatriz began taking classes to learn how the coffee industry operated. Today her coffee harvest fills in the income gap when fruit is out of season and there are no chickens ready to send to market. Somewhere along the line, she started a worm farm—she's quite proud of it, although I bypassed that part of the tour! About six years ago, she added a grouper pond. "It hasn't succeeded yet," she admits, "but time will tell." Given her track record, it's bound to become another success. At age seventy-three, Beatriz still works three to four days a week, energetically managing her business affairs.

But what I will always remember about Beatriz is not her thriving enterprises and the wisdom God gave her to develop multiple streams of income. What I will always remember is the overwhelming peace that permeated her countenance, her home, and her entire surroundings. I'll always remember her as one of the most capable, dignified women I've ever met. In a word, she is altogether *lovely*. There was not an ounce of bitterness or self-pity in her voice as she recounted her losses. There was only

gratitude for the goodness of God. I asked her for her secret. “*Forgiveness*,” she answered immediately. “It took me a long time to completely forgive the people who kidnapped my husband and robbed me of all that could have been. But the moment I did, the peace of God overcame me and it has never left.”

Beatriz Duenas personifies the peace that passes understanding. It’s a peace that’s returning to these mountains. “The guerillas used to be active in this area, raiding farms and cattle ranches, destroying people’s livelihoods, and trying to intimidate everyone,” she recalls. “But I refused to live controlled by fear. I refused to be intimidated and driven out of my own home. Now there are cattle on the hills again.” There were tears of both pride and joy in her eyes as she spoke that last miraculous sentence. She knew she had outlasted the guerillas. Even the developer who decided to build a discotheque in her peaceful mountain town didn’t stand a chance against her prayers. Day after day she sat in her small chapel, praying for God to intervene. And he did. The disco never opened. The developer did all the work, then sold it to a group of Christians who turned it into a church instead.

Beatriz can laugh at the days to come, not because the days before were so easy, but because she knows her God. Her parting words to me were, “Tell the women they must come to full confidence and assurance that what God has done for me, he can do for them also.” Just two short days in the presence of a genuine Proverbs 31 woman gave me that assurance. It’s the assurance I pray you’ll find in the pages of this book.

There’s something else I want to assure you about, too. And this is important. God has been working on Beatriz’s life and character for seventy-three years. Do not expect to be entirely transformed into her clone in the next ninety days. Not only is that impossible, it’s not even desirable. God has a completely customized plan for your life. Trust him. He has brought this book into your life at this particular time because there are certain things he wants to show you, lessons you need to learn. This book is intended to encourage and educate you; if at any moment you are discouraged, stop and focus on what you are *learning*. You won’t be able to apply every lesson or implement every strategy. That’s okay. Let the Holy Spirit be your guide as he instructs you day by day.

This journey will be different for every woman who travels it. What will be the same is our final destination of becoming the woman God wants each of us to be. To support you along the way, I encourage you to find at least one partner to work through this material with you, and preferably, join with a group. Of course that's not always possible. You can also visit www.donnapartow.com to find out about the 90-Day Jumpstart online support program.

Program Overview

Here's what you can hope to accomplish on this 90-Day Jumpstart:¹

Faith

- Complete a comprehensive study of Proverbs 31:10–31.
- Memorize the entire passage, one manageable portion at a time.
- Discover practical, contemporary applications for this ancient biblical wisdom.
- Establish a routine of spiritual disciplines you can follow for the rest of your life.
- Develop the habit of daily Bible reading and time alone with God.
- Pray ninety Scripture-based prayers, which will have both immediate and eternal impact.
- Practice the learned skill of positive prayer journaling.
- Cultivate an awareness of the constant presence of God.
- Increase your biblical knowledge in a broad range of subjects.

Family

- Gain practical insight and advice to improve the quality of your most important relationships.

Fitness

- Begin the habit of a daily prayer walk.
- Learn about the powerful impact of diet on your total well-being.

- Follow a simple cleansing diet, designed to promote greater vitality and weight loss.

Personal Appearance and Fashion

- Develop a well-balanced approach to personal appearance.
- Determine the colors that look best on you.
- Streamline your wardrobe to save time and money.
- Discover when less is more, and when more is more!
- Learn the keys to age-appropriate dress.

Finances and Retirement Planning

- Get your finances in order.
- Start an automatic savings and investment plan.
- Implement a debt-reduction strategy.
- Create a retirement strategy.
- Study basic financial principles from God's Word.

Household Management

- Discover the simple, proven method for keeping yourself and your family on track.
- Get your home in order by de-junking, de-cluttering, and creating a realistic, personalized household routine.
- Discipline yourself to fulfill your obligations and to do so on time.

Ministry

- Turn your home into a center of life and ministry.
- Make your home a mission sending station.
- Incorporate ministry into your life naturally.
- Live your life on mission to fulfill God's purposes for you and the world at large.

Business

- Study what the Bible says about self-employment.
- Discover the importance of developing multiple streams of income.
- Get an overview of real estate investments.
- Consider various business opportunities.

Self-Management

- Learn powerful self-management tools guaranteed to increase your personal effectiveness.
- Maintain a positive attitude by changing your focus.
- Fill your mind with ninety Scripture-based affirmations (personalized statements of God's promises).
- Restore strength and stability to your soul (your inner life of thoughts, decisions, and emotions).

Do these sound like worthwhile goals to you? The best part is that we'll accomplish them together, little by little, using God's Word and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit. Our motto will be "Little bits with consistency." Each day will include spiritual actions and practical actions.

Spiritual

Becoming the woman God wants you to be means, first and foremost, becoming spiritually healthy. To strengthen your spirit, you'll devote time each day to the spiritual disciplines of Scripture memory, Bible reading, praying Scripture-based prayers, and prayer journaling. All four are described below.

SCRIPTURE TO MEMORIZE

The first item on your daily journey is your Scripture to memorize. Every week you will be assigned a new portion of the Proverbs 31 passage to commit to memory. At the end of the ninety days, you will have mastered all of Proverbs 31:10–31. (At the back of the book, you'll find cut-out cards to carry in your purse to help you memorize the verse assignments on the go.)

PASSAGE TO READ

Each day you will have a Bible passage to read. For your convenience, I've printed out the entire text right here on these pages.

GUIDED PRAYER

Next, you'll find a Scripture-based prayer derived from the daily passage. Please, don't rush past these. Instead, slowly pray through each one. I would strongly encourage you to pray them aloud. That way, the words become more than just marks on a page; they become the prayer of your own heart. When you not only base your prayer requests on Scripture but actually turn Scripture into a prayer, you don't have to worry whether or not you are praying according to God's will—you are.

AFFIRMATION

Next, you'll have a positive statement, or affirmation, to recite. Most of the affirmations are rooted in Scripture and many are simply rephrased Bible passages. Here again, as you observe how I have done this for ninety days, you will be able to transform Bible verses into affirmations on your own. I cannot overemphasize the importance of these affirmations. I believe they are an extremely powerful component of this ninety-day program.

Practical Actions

God cares about every area of your life, not just the spiritual stuff like prayer. He cares about your total well-being: mental, emotional, relational, and practical. He's concerned about your home, your family, your career, and your finances. He cares about your physical well-being: what you eat and how you care for your body. The Bible is filled with advice for every area of our lives. *Becoming the Woman God Wants Me to Be* will address your total well-being in the following ways.

IMPLEMENTING LEARNING

Each day I will give you some action to take to implement in a practical way what you're learning. This is your opportunity to apply the force of your will toward a positive end. It's not enough to think new thoughts

or adopt a new belief system; you must take action. Each day we'll take a small step forward together.

KEEPING A PERSONAL NOTEBOOK

To follow the program as it is intended, you must begin on a Monday. To keep you busy until Monday rolls around, your first assignment is obtaining your Personal Notebook. Other than this book and your Bible, the most important component of this program is your Personal Notebook. It will become your brains and your base of operations. Rather than jotting things on slips of paper or relying on your memory, you'll discover how much more effective you can be when you let your notebook do the remembering for you. The only way the Personal Notebook will work for you is if you make a firm commitment to carry it with you everywhere you go for the next ninety days.

You'll have specific assignments concerning your notebook, so you'll need to purchase the "ingredients" right away. In addition to this personal organizer, which you can buy at an office supply store, you'll find photocopy-ready forms at the back of this book. All of the forms are also available for download-and-print at www.donnapartow.com/forms.

A Jumpstart

As you experience this 90-Day Jumpstart, it's important to remember that it's intended to give you a jumpstart—a fresh start—in a wide variety of areas. It's not intended to be a comprehensive overhaul of any one area. For example, if your home is a mess, you'll get a jumpstart toward transforming it into your dream house. But we're not redecorating it together. If your finances are in disarray, you'll start to get a handle on things and discover some powerful tools that can set you up for life financially. But you'll still have more work to do on day 91. And, of course, that's the whole idea. I want to whet your appetite by giving you a taste of living the Proverbs 31 life so you'll want to continue the always unfolding process of becoming the woman God wants you to be.

I want you to know that I'm excited for you and I'm praying that God will transform your life from the inside out. So let's get jumpstarted!

What You'll Need

What You'll Need to Get Started

Before beginning your 90-Day Jumpstart, you will need to visit an office supply store or personal organization specialty shop. Franklin Covey has stand-alone stores around the country. For the location nearest you, visit www.franklincovey.com. Your Personal Notebook is at the heart of the 90-Day Jumpstart. To begin, you will need

- a daily planner/organizer designed to hold 5.5" x 8.5" paper (I purchased a combination binder/purse from an office supply store that works extremely well for my needs. If you cannot afford a professional organizer, purchase a three-ring binder.)
- 5.5" x 8.5" filler paper
- monthly calendar
- five blank tab dividers
- pocket pages (some with and others without zippers)
- single-hole punch or a hole-punch specifically designed for use with your planner

To begin, insert the monthly calendar and the pocket pages in the front of the binder. Then put in the five tab dividers along with some filler paper after each tab. You will assemble the rest of your Personal Notebook as we progress along this 90-Day Jumpstart together. Get in the habit of carrying it with you *everywhere you go*.

Faith
WEEK ONE
FAITH FOUNDATIONS
Foundations

Day 1

Place Your Full Confidence in God

Scripture to Memorize

A wife of noble character who can find?
She is worth far more than rubies.
Her husband has full confidence in her
and lacks nothing of value.

Proverbs 31:10–11

Passage to Read

“For your Maker is your husband—
the LORD Almighty is his name—
the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer;
he is called the God of all the earth.
The LORD will call you back
as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—
a wife who married young,
only to be rejected,” says your God.

Isaiah 54:5–6

Guided Prayer

Dear heavenly Husband, how I thank you for choosing me to be your bride! I don't pretend to understand all that this means, but I do know your Word says it's true. You are my Husband. You are the one who loves, protects, and provides—even if you do it through my earthly husband. I acknowledge that you are the one behind every good thing in my life. It's awesome to know that you are almighty. You have all might, all power in your hands. Therefore no situation in my life and no challenge I'll encounter during these next ninety days will be more than you can handle. Thank

you for being a redeemer, the one who can take something worthless and transform it into something valuable. I invite you to redeem every area of my life that has potential for greater value.

Thank you for calling me back to a closer walk with you. At times I have felt deserted, distressed, and abandoned, sometimes by people in my life and sometimes—I want to be honest enough to admit—I’ve even felt like you have deserted me. Thank you for promising to never leave me or forsake me. The truth is, whenever there’s been a distance between us, I’m the one who has walked away from you. I long to draw near to you once more; draw me close to you through the pages of this book. Thank you for calling me back once again. Amen.

Personal

We place the highest value on the scarcest commodities. M&M’s are made from cheap ingredients and available for easy grabbing on your way out the door at any convenience store. But you won’t find diamonds within reach on aisle nine. No, high-quality diamonds are locked away behind the counter, and only serious buyers get to take a closer look.

Today, more than ever before, a woman of noble character is hard to find. To be noble means to be dignified and gracious. In the Amplified Bible, the word for *noble* is rendered “capable, intelligent, and virtuous.” A woman like that is not easy to come by anymore.

God wants us to stand out as women who know we have something valuable to offer the world. We are capable, intelligent, and virtuous women who inspire full confidence in those who rely on us most, whether our husband, children, employer, or co-worker. The people around us can have full confidence in us because we have full confidence in God and we live accordingly.

You can have full confidence in God no matter what season of life you’re in right now. Maybe you’re a mother at home with small children. Or an empty nester. You may be single . . . or single again. I don’t know what situation you’re in, but I do know who is in the midst of that situation with you: a loving God who cares so much for you that he paid the ultimate price so you and he never have to spend even one day apart. He laid down his life to ensure that someday you’ll be the honored guest at the ultimate

wedding in heaven, when Jesus celebrates the church as his eternal bride (see Revelation 21). In today's Passage to Read, God declares himself our Husband. Since we'll be studying in depth the Proverbs 31 woman—the wife of noble character—the passage in Isaiah is an ideal place to start.

You may or may not have an earthly husband, but you do have a heavenly Husband. Married or single, God wants you to be *his* wife of noble character. So this study of Proverbs 31 is relevant to all of us. I want to encourage you to listen for his encouragement along your journey, whether or not you receive any positive feedback from anyone else. You may live with a critical husband or be in an otherwise difficult marriage or family relationship. Remember, you are on the road to becoming the woman *God* wants you to be. Ideally, everyone shares the same goals for you as God does. Hopefully, everyone you know wants you to be the very best you can be, but that's not necessarily the case. Some of you live with people who seem determined to discourage you or people who want to drag you down. Don't focus on human feedback. Focus on your relationship with your heavenly Husband and live to please him.

As God transforms your life, you'll become an ever more beautiful bride and a woman whose noble character eventually brings her praise from the most important people in her life, whether that's your husband, children, extended family, or circle of friends. It may not happen overnight, but I believe someday our children (whether physical or spiritual) will stand up and acknowledge what God has done in and through our lives (see Prov. 31:28). Meanwhile, enjoy the inner satisfaction that comes from becoming the woman God wants you to be.

To begin our journey together, I want you to complete a simple but important exercise: writing your Personal Vision Statement.¹

1. List two of your unique personal qualities (e.g., creativity, enthusiasm).

2. List one or two ways you enjoy expressing those qualities when interacting with others (e.g., through supporting, inspiring).

3. Assume the world is perfect. Then describe it as you see it—what are people doing, how are they interacting, what does it feel like (e.g., everyone is freely expressing his or her talents in harmonious and loving ways)?

4. Combine your three answers above into a single statement (e.g., “My personal vision statement is to use my creativity and enthusiasm to support and inspire others to freely express their talents in a harmonious and loving way.”).

It's really pretty simple. Here's what I wrote:

1. Energetic, powerful
2. Challenging, motivating
3. Everyone is actively serving God by serving others, thereby making the world a better place.

Therefore:

4. My Personal Vision Statement is to use my energetic, powerful communication skills to challenge and motivate Christians to go into all the world, impacting lives and making the world a better place.

There you have your first assignment and your first step toward becoming the woman God wants you to be.

Affirmation: I place my full confidence in God. He has a good purpose for my life.

Practical

Now it's your turn. Become the woman *you* want to be—start with a clear Personal Vision Statement.

1. Two unique personal qualities:

2. How you enjoy expressing these qualities:

3. What people are doing in the ideal world:

4. Combine into one sentence:

Notebook: Assemble your notebook as described on page 19, if you haven't done so already. Write your Personal Vision Statement on the first page of your notebook.