14	Week One: Discernment
14	
16	A True Woman is characterized by right thinking She knows "what accords with sound doctrine." Day 1: A Healthy Mind
20	Day 2: The Plumb Lineldentify the source of right thinking
24	Day 3: Discern the DifferencePursue the skill of right thinking
28	Day 4: Always Learning Recognize what can derail right thinking
32	Day 5: Handling Truth Engage in the pursuit of right thinking
36	Interior Renovation
20	Week Tree House
38	Week Two: Honor
	A True Woman makes much of Christ She is "reverent in behavior."
40	Day 1: Mind Your Manner Honor is a critical virtue
44	Day 2: Giving Precedence
48 52	Day 3: Me-First Mistake Dishonor devalues Christ's sacrifice Day 4: No Sassy Girls Honor is of special importance to women
56	Day 5: Growing Reverent
60	Interior Renovation
62	Week Three: Affection
	A True Woman values the family She "[loves her husband] and children."
64	Day 1: Dad's House The significance of family
68	Day 2: Family Dwelling Love for family is a must-learn
72	Day 3: Family Room Being a husband-liker
76	Day 4: Play Room Being a child-liker
80	Day 5: Homestead Being all about family
84	Interior Renovation
86	Week Four: Discipline
	A True Woman makes wise, intentional choices She is "self-controlled."
00	
88 92	Day 1: Say No to the Marshmallow The meaning of self-control Day 2: Staying on Track
96	Day 3: Pulling Out All the Stops The source of self-control
100	Day 4: Battlefield of the Mind The means of self-control
104	Day 5: Cultivating SōphrōnThe quest for self-control

Interior Renovation

108

110	Week Five: Virtue
	A True Woman cultivates goodness She is "pure."
112	Day 1: More than 99 ^{44/100} % PureIn Christ we are 100% Pure
116	Day 2: Love CanalPurity happens from the inside out
120	Day 3: It's Your Vice TalkingThose vices have to go
124	Day 4: Pure and ChasteChastity belts and purity vows
128	Day 5: Like Pure SilverRefining brings out the beauty
132	Interior Renovation
134	Week Six: Responsibility
	A True Woman maintains the right work priorities She values "working at home."
136	Day 1: It's Off to Work We Go History of work and women
140	Day 2: Nine to Five A theology of work
144	Day 3: Everyone's Got a Job More theology of work
148	Day 4: Working Where? Giving priority to the work of the home
152	Day 5: Important Work to DoWorking to invest in eternity
156	Interior Renovation
150	Wools Course Bonovalous
158	Week Seven: Benevolence
	A True Woman is charitable She is "kind."
160	Day 1: Great Act of Kindness Jesus is the Great Benefactor
164	Day 2: Putting on KindnessBenevolence starts in the heart
168	Day 3: A Kind WordBenevolence shows up in our speech
172	Day 4: Charity Begins at HomeBenevolence must be shown to family first
176	Day 5: With Charity for AllBenevolence draws people to Jesus
180	Interior Renovation
182	Week Eight: Disposition
102	
	A True Woman cultivates a soft, amenable spirit She is "submissive."
184	Day 1: Privileged Position
188	Day 2: Submission HoldUnderstanding submission
192	Day 3: Knuckle Under?Countering false ideas
196	Day 4: Uppity Women
200	Day 5: Abigail the Steel Magnolia Melding softness with backbone
204	Interior Renovation

206	Week Nine: Legacy
	A True Woman is a spiritual mother
208	Day 1: A Mother in Israel
212	Day 2: Old and Fruitful
216	Day 3: Woman to Woman
220	Day 4: Mentor Mama
224	Day 5: Passing the Baton
228	Interior Renovation
230	Week Ten: Beauty
	A True Woman displays the attractive
	God may not be reviled."
232	Day 1: Beautifying It
236	Day 2: Beauty Alert
240	Day 3: Beautiful Things
244	Day 4: Feminine Beauty
248	Day 5: Beautiful Pillars
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"It is time for women of biblical faith to reclaim our territory. We know the Designer. We have His instruction manual. If we don't display the Divine design of His female creation, no one will. But if we do, it will be a profound testimony to a watching, needy world."1 Susan Hunt Having a talented designer come in and create a new look for a home or restaurant is a popular topic of TV reality shows.

The shows follow a similar format. First, the designer and the owner take a look at the space and talk about how unsightly and dysfunctional it is. Then, the designer asks the owner to hand over the keys and trust him to do a renovation. Although she may be a bit nervous and doubtful, she agrees to let the designer take over and transform the space.

The designer comes up with a plan and quickly puts his team to work. They demolish and clear out everything old. They fix things that are broken, paint and paper the walls, lay new flooring, change the fixtures, bring in new furnishings, and choose just the right accessories to fit the new décor.

The highlight of the show is when the owner returns for the big reveal. The camera zooms in to capture the look of surprise, joy, and astonishment on her face as she takes in the change. The audience is shown "before and after" footage to demonstrate just how dramatic the transformation has been. The show ends with the happy owner giving a testimony about how much the metamorphosis means to her and how her life will change as a result.

These renovation shows are a great illustration for the object of this study. The Lord is the ultimate Designer. And He has a divine design for womanhood. He wants to come in and do a radical renovation of your heart. He wants to change you from the inside out. If you let Him, He'll give you an extreme makeover . . . a brand-new *interior design*.

The change won't take place overnight. But the outcome—a heart and character like His—will be grander than anything you could possibly have envisioned, better than anything you could have done on your own. And it all starts with trusting Him enough to hand Him the keys to your heart, asking Him to make a beautiful work of art out of your life.

And it doesn't end there. God wants to use you as part of His makeover team to help *others* experience His grand, interior design for their lives!

designing women

True Woman 201—Interior Design is a companion to True Woman 101—Divine Design. In 101, we examined the Bible's essential, foundational teachings on womanhood. We discovered that part of the grandeur of being created in the image of God is that He creates us either male or female.

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female He created them. (Gen. 1:27)

Contrary to what many claim today, God didn't create generic human beings. And gender is not interchangeable or fluid. God created male human beings and female human beings. And this is a marvelous thing!

Your womanhood is not a biological accident. It's not incidental to who you are or how you live. Our culture tries to minimize and neutralize the differences between men and women. It rejects the design God created for the flourishing of our lives together. It tries to convince us that male-female differences don't matter, and that each individual has the right to determine what gender means. But according to the Bible, the fact you were born female is profoundly significant. It's no minor or inconsequential detail. You are a woman to the depths of your humanity.

When you step into God's design for womanhood, you step into the great adventure of discovering who you were created to be. Dr. John Piper reminds us that "when it comes to human sexuality, the greatest display of God's glory, and the greatest joy of human relationships, and the greatest fruitfulness in ministry



come about when the deep differences between men and women are embraced and celebrated." 2

Embracing and celebrating God's design will help you thrive. All the things that make you "you"—your personality, talents, gifts, interests, intellect, emotions, and even your appearance—will mesh with who God created you to be as a woman. It won't look exactly the same for you as it does for your friends. Your womanhood will fit you like a custom-tailored outfit.

As we said in 101, your womanhood isn't about fitting into a cookie-cutter mold. It's not about following a checklist of prescribed behaviors or a rigid division of labor. The Bible presents a design for True Womanhood that applies to all women—old, young; single, married, divorced, widowed; with children or without; gregarious, quiet, adventurous, reserved; whatever. Cookie-cutter patterns won't do. God's design for womanhood is much broader and more wonderful than that!

womanhood curriculum

In *True Woman 101* we studied the Old Testament record of creation and the fall to discover God's beautiful design for womanhood and to explore how that design has been damaged by sin. In *201*, we'll turn to the New Testament, to the book of Titus, to focus on some important elements of redeemed womanhood.

Titus was a young Gentile pastor on the island of Crete. Most of the Cretan believers hadn't been raised in the Jewish faith, so they were unfamiliar with the ways of God. Paul gave Titus some general instructions—things every believer needed to learn about the Christian life. He also gave sex-specific instructions, so they would know how Christianity was to impact their lives as men and women.

Pastor Titus was to teach these truths to the older women in the church, and they in turn were responsible to train the younger women. The apostle stressed that the women's response to this teaching could adorn the gospel of Christ and make it believable to a pagan culture. OR—it could cause unbelievers to reject the Word of God.

In Titus 2, we see a portrait of the countercultural Christian woman—a woman who honors God and reflects the heart of Christ. In the opening paragraph (verses 1, 3–5), Paul points us to ten essential elements of womanhood: discernment, honor, affection, discipline, virtue, responsibility, benevolence, disposition, legacy, and beauty.



"I believe the time is ripe for a new movement— a seismic holy quake of countercultural men and women who dare to take God at His Word— men and women whose hearts are broken over the gender confusion and spiritual/emotional/ relational carnage of our day, and who have the courage to believe and delight in God's plan for male and female." 3



These elements make up the "basic Christian womanhood" curriculum for the women of Crete. But they weren't just for those Mediterranean believers. Paul's instructions apply to women in every nation and every generation. They're just as relevant today as they were back then.

Each week of this *True Woman 201* study examines one of the ten "design elements" of womanhood drawn from Titus 2 and is divided into five lessons—it should only take you about fifteen minutes to complete each lesson.

To get the most out of this study, we suggest you go through it with a group of friends. At the end of each week, we've provided some questions to help you discuss what you've read and further explore and apply the Bible's teachings to your life. When you're done, encourage your friends to start their own groups. You'll find many additional resources, including companion videos and helps for group leaders, at TrueWoman201.com.

Together, *True Woman 101* and *201* encompass the foundational teaching of the True Woman movement. You can do *True Woman 201* without having completed *101*. But to get the whole picture about womanhood, we suggest you study both resources.

In these studies, we've tried to focus on timeless biblical principles rather than the specific application of those principles. Practical application is vital, and the Holy Spirit will help you apply these core truths to your specific life situation. But our goal is to provide teaching that is relevant for every woman in every season and circumstance of life, and that will be just as applicable to the great-granddaughters of our generation as it is to us.

Decades ago, the secular women's movement set out to spread its radical message and vision through small groups that met, multiplied, and eventually ignited a revolution. Our desire is that a new revolution will take root and spread in our day, as Christian women band together to ask, "How can we more fully reflect the beauty and gospel of Christ to our world, through the expression of our true, biblical design?"

the movement continues

True Woman 101 and 201 are a response to the many requests we have received for further biblical teaching and practical resources since the first True Woman conference in Chicago in 2008.

What a joy it is to see the message of True Womanhood being multiplied and to see Christ being put on display in a greater way through women's lives—not only in the US but in other countries around the world.

Thousands of women have attended True Woman conferences, signed the True Woman Manifesto, are following the True Woman blog, and are talking about the meaning of biblical womanhood with other women through various social media communities, small groups, and studies.

The goal of the True Woman movement is to help women . . .

- Discover and embrace God's design and mission for their lives
- Reflect the beauty and heart of Jesus Christ to their world
- Intentionally pass the baton of Truth on to the next generation
- Pray earnestly for an outpouring of God's Spirit in their families, churches, nation, and world

When it comes to womanhood, many of us are tired of clichéd advice, shallow caricatures, and cookie-cutter solutions. It is our hope that this resource will shift the discussion to a better focus. We pray that it will

- enable you to explore God's timeless design for womanhood straight from His Word
- help you wrestle with how to apply God's design to your season of life
- encourage you to have grace toward women who differ in life circumstance and application
- equip you to pass on the message of True Womanhood to the next generation

Discovering and living out the meaning of True Womanhood will be a journey for you, as it has been (and is) for us. At points, you may find yourself disagreeing with what you're reading, or struggling with some of the implications of this teaching. We've had some of those same reactions ourselves! We would simply encourage you to turn to God's Word with an open, seeking heart. Ask His Spirit to teach you, to give you understanding, and to incline your heart to say "Yes, Lord!" to His Word and His ways.

every design has a purpose

Charles Eames is a famous American designer who made major contributions to modern architecture and furniture design. He defined *design* as "a plan for arranging elements in such a way as to best accomplish a particular purpose." ⁴ We think his definition is appropriate for this study.

God has a divine plan for womanhood. He has given us the elements that are necessary to accomplish that purpose. And what is that purpose? The goal is not just so our lives can be easier or work better. According to Isaiah 43:6–7, God created sons and daughters for the purpose of displaying His glory. His divine design reflects profound truths about His character and about the gospel of Christ.

You have a purpose. Your womanhood has a purpose. The Lord wants you to discover the beauty of His plan for manhood and womanhood, and to experience the joy and fulfillment of being exactly who He created you to be. He wants to arrange the interior of your heart and life so that you might best accomplish the purpose for which you were made. And He invites us to participate with Him in that grand undertaking.

Are you ready to start? Let's ask the great Designer to start renovating. And let's watch the amazing transformation as He gives us a beautiful, new *Interior Design*!





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A True Woman is characterized by right thinking ... She knows "what accords

with sound

doctrine."

Those who have met us know that we (Nancy and Mary) are almost as different as two friends can be. And those differences extend beyond our personalities and appearance into our interior decorating styles.

If we were to walk into a home décor store, Nancy would gravitate toward primary, winter colors—vibrant reds, blues, and greens. Mary would gravitate toward warm, bold, autumn tones—cinnamon, caramel, rust, chocolate, and teal. Nancy would like the floral patterns. Mary would like anything but. Nancy would be attracted to furniture that had light, clean, classic lines. Mary would be attracted to heavier, antique furniture with a funky modern twist. Nancy would be drawn toward serious and sophisticated accessories. Mary would be drawn toward quirky and artsy ones. One of the beautiful truths about women is that God created us all different.

The two of us have different styles. And your style is likely different from ours. There are so many to choose from: contemporary, country, Victorian, Federal, St. Louis, Nordic, modern, French provincial, retro, eclectic. What's more, these styles can be combined with an endless variety of patterns, colors, textures, and accessories. As a result, our homes don't look exactly the same. They're all different.

But although styles differ, there are certain elements that all good designs have in common. Designers choose and arrange flooring, wall treatments, lighting, window treatments, furniture, and accessories according to their color, texture, line, form, and space. These are the critical elements of every design.¹

This Bible study is about the critical design elements of womanhood. As we explained in the introduction, it's based on the passage in Titus chapter 2, where Paul outlines what the women in Titus' congregation needed to learn.

The first critical element of womanhood evident in the passage is discernment. A True Woman is characterized by right thinking . . . She knows "what accords with sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1).

"Wait a minute!" you may object; "isn't discernment something guys need too?" Absolutely. In this chapter Paul gives instruction tailored to several different groups of people in the church. In verse 2, he lists some things older men need to learn. In verses 3 to 5, he lays out the curriculum for older and younger women. In verse 6, he talks about the curriculum for young men. All these groups need to learn "what accords with sound doctrine." Obviously, both sexes need discernment. Men and women, young and old—all need to know sound doctrine.

But here's the thing. Though there's overlap, Paul's lists in Titus 2 suggest there's a different emphasis needed for each gender, in terms of how they apply and live out sound doctrine. Some traits are especially important to what it means to be a man, and some are particularly important to what it means to be a woman.

Paul gives certain traits a gender-specific emphasis. But that doesn't imply that they're *gender-exclusive*. For example, Paul instructs *women* not be slanderers; he exhorts *men* to be sound in faith. Obviously, that doesn't mean that men don't need to learn to control their mouths, or that women don't ever wrestle with doubt or doctrinal error.

Women are instructed to be reverent, to love their spouses and children, to exercise self-control, to be pure and kind, to be devoted to their homes, and to submit to God-ordained authority. Yet men arguably need to learn these things too! Men are instructed to be soberminded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Yet women need to learn these things too!

So why the sex-specific lists? Why not just lump everything together under one big category of "Important Stuff for Christians to Learn"?

The reason for the differing lists is that men and women are different. As we learned in *True Woman 101*, Paul's lists counteract our sex-specific sin tendencies and point us back to our divine design. So although "discernment" is important for both men and women, there are specific applications of "sound doctrine" that are particularly directed to and important for each gender to understand.

According to Paul, right thinking leads to right living. If what you think about womanhood isn't shaped by sound doctrine, chances are, you're not going to live in a way that pleases the

Lord. Discernment, grounded in a clear understanding of God's Word, is the first critical element of true womanhood.





WEEK ONE / DAY I

a healthy mind

"He must hold firm
to the trustworthy word
as taught, so that he
may be able to give
instruction in sound
doctrine and also to
rebuke those who
contradict it."

Titus I:9

"But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine."

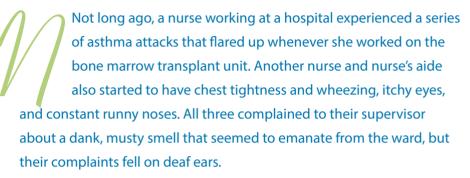
Titus 2:1

"... in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned."

Titus 2:7-8 мкју

"... so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior."

Titus 2:10



It wasn't until a six-year-old patient on the unit developed a fever and pneumonia and suddenly died, and an autopsy revealed that her lungs were

filled with a fungus typically found in decaying organic matter, that management took the employees seriously. All of a sudden, their claim that the building was making them sick didn't sound so far-fetched.

Sure enough, an environmental investigation found that the air filters on the bone marrow transplant unit



were clogged with a thick, greenish-black mold. The contaminants in the air were responsible for the employee sicknesses and the little girl's death. To deal with the problem, the hospital had to rip out its heating and air-conditioning system and renovate the entire bone marrow transplant unit.²

Some experts suggest that the lack of ventilation in newer buildings, combined with increased use of mold-friendly building materials, allows for severe mold infestations. The contaminated air results in "sick buildings," where large numbers of employees begin to experience similar health symptoms.

The apostle Paul wanted to make sure that the churches on the island of Crete provided a spiritually healthy environment for fledgling new believers. He wanted to make sure they were breathing spiritually healthy air.

Read Titus 2:1. What did Paul want Titus to be careful to teach?



Doctrine is a major theme in the book of Titus. Circle the word *doctrine* in each verse in the margin on the previous page.

What comes to your mind when you hear the word *doctrine*? How would you define it?

For some, the word *doctrine* undoubtedly conjures up images of old, cokebottle-lensed theology professors using long, unfamiliar words and droning on and on in unintelligible languages. Perhaps the mere mention of the word makes you want to stifle a yawn, or bolt for the nearest exit.

It's important to understand that doctrine isn't something reserved for the theological elite. The word simply means "teachings." A doctrine is a set of beliefs. And everyone has one.

Atheists have a doctrine. For example, the famous evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins believes the Bible should not be taught as reality. "It is fiction, myth, poetry, anything but reality." That is his doctrine.

Oprah Winfrey used her multi-award-winning talk show to teach her doctrine of self-improvement, church-free spirituality, and guilt-free sexuality to millions of women each day.

In the space below, list some doctrines (teachings) about womanhood that are commonly expressed in popular media and contemporary culture:

The teaching you believe determines the way you live. Paul knew that believers in Crete would undoubtedly have and follow a doctrine. But he was concerned about what *kind* of doctrine they were going to teach, believe, and practice. Not any kind of doctrine would do. Paul was concerned that their doctrine would be "sound."



"He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it."

Titus 1:9

"But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine."

Titus 2:1

"...in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned."

Titus 2:7-8 NKJV

"... so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior."

Titus 2:10





sound doctrine

Like the word *doctrine*, the word *sound* is also a recurring theme in the book of Titus. *Sound* essentially means "healthy." The Greek word for *sound—hugiainō*—is closely related to our English word *hygiene*. Sound doctrine is doctrine that is free from contamination. It's pure and wholesome. It is that which makes sick people well.

Our culture is obsessed with physical health and soundness. It advises us to avoid junk food, read labels, shop in whole-food stores, and pay more for organic foods. As a result, many people watch what they eat. But sadly, most are utterly unconcerned about their spiritual consumption. They are unaware that they are ingesting a lot of contaminated, unhealthy ideas.

Sound doctrine is healthy. It's pure, uncontaminated, and free from error. It's like breathing in clean, fresh air. Unsound doctrine is a mixture of truth and error. It's like breathing in air that's tainted with a dangerous contaminant. You may not smell or notice the toxin, but it's inevitable that it will negatively impact your health. Unsound doctrine leads to spiritually sick and weak believers, which leads to spiritually unhealthy churches.

In the verses in the margin, put a box around the word sound.

In the word cloud, cross out the three words that are antonyms (opposite meaning) of the word *sound*:

proven healthy solid
wholesome infected sick true
safe flawless undamaged reliable
proper debilitating secure

Why do you think Paul was concerned that the women in Crete know and believe sound doctrine?

Do you know what your doctrine is? Do you care? Have you evaluated the doctrine of your favorite TV shows? Of the books and magazines you read? Have you evaluated what you're being taught about womanhood? Because every time you hear or see an advertisement, or watch a TV/computer/movie screen, or listen to the lyrics of a song, or read an article or book, or listen to your girlfriends chatter about their exploits, or catch up on the latest happenings on your Facebook or other social network, you are breathing in doctrine. And it's important to consider whether that doctrine is sound.

Check any statements below that are true of you:

	☐ The teaching about womanhood I breathe in is generally sound.			
☐ The teaching about womanhood I breathe in is generally unsound				
	I'm not sure if the teaching about womanhood I breathe in is sound.			
	I don't think the unsound teaching in my environment affects me.			
	I have strong filters in place so as to minimize the unsound teaching.			
	I'm not convinced that my doctrine about womanhood matters.			
Explain	why you chose those particular statements:			



In Titus 2, Paul outlines the Lord's expert design for womanhood. The basis for that design is sound doctrine. Sound doctrine is healthy, wholesome, and beneficial. Do you believe that? Do you

believe that the Lord's design for women is not only right, but also beautiful and desirable? Do you believe that the

instructions He gives you are truly "for your good" (see Deut. 10:12–13)?

Close today's lesson in prayer, asking the Lord to help you learn about and embrace His expert design.





"WHAT DOES THE LORD YOUR GOD **REQUIRE OF YOU, BUT TO FEAR THE** LORD YOUR GOD. TO WALK IN ALL HIS WAYS, TO LOVE HIM. TO SERVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND TO KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS AND STATUTES OF THE LORD, WHICH I AM COMMANDING YOU TODAY FOR YOUR GOOD?"



Deuteronomy

10:12-13



WEEK ONE / DAY 2

The state of the s

the plumb line

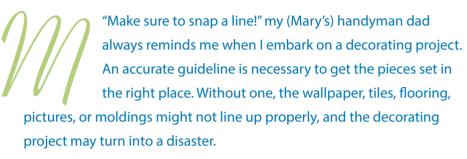
"Paul, a slave of
God and an apostle
of Jesus Christ, to
build up the faith of
God's elect and their
knowledge of the truth

that leads to godliness ... "

Titus I:I HCSB

"He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it."

Titus I:9



Two tools are essential necessities for the decorating enthusiast: a plumb bob and a level. These tools ensure that a guideline is perfectly vertical or horizontal relative to the earth's true horizon.

You've probably seen a level (sometimes called a "spirit level" or a "bubble level"). It looks like a thick, metal ruler with embedded glass vials. The vials are incompletely filled with a colored spirit (alcohol), leaving a large bubble visible inside. The bubble moves with the angle of the ruler and indicates whether an object is "level"—that is, whether it is exactly horizontal, or true. To get a perfectly horizontal line, the decorator has to tilt the tool until the bubble is situated perfectly between the markings on the middle of the vial.

A plumb bob is a simple brass or metal weight with a point on one end. The bob is attached to a string (the plumb line), which is often coated in colored chalk. This tool uses the law of gravity to establish what is "plumb"—that is, what is exactly *vertical*, or true.

You can use a plumb bob to line up wall-paper, wall décor, or art, or to locate fixtures or decorations in relation to an object or surface above or below. You simply hold the end of the string near the ceiling and let the plumb bob hang free. When it stops swaying, the string



is perfectly vertical. Depending on your project, you can then mark the top and bottom points, or snap the line to leave a chalk mark on a wall.

On one occasion, I tried to hang wallpaper without following my dad's advice. The walls looked straight to me, so I started papering in the corner. I didn't bother to check if the adjacent wall was plumb, and I didn't take the time to snap a line.





The first piece of wallpaper looked just fine. But I had to raise and tilt the second piece to get the edge and pattern to match. After that, each piece looked more crooked than the last. By the time I got to the middle of the wall, it was painfully obvious that the wall I had used as my starting line was slanted, and that things were going extremely wrong. The pattern

was running uphill, and the bottom of the paper was getting farther and farther away from the floor. It was a disaster! I had to rip it all down and start over . . . Needless to say, I was careful to snap a line the second time around!

Paul knew that the ideas being promoted by some of the Cretan believers were a bit off. He wanted Titus to "snap a line" and put things in order by ensuring the lives and doctrine of the believers lined up plumb, level, and true with God's standard.

Read Titus 1:1–9 in your Bible. What do verses 1 to 4 point to as the standard for truth?

What would happen if the women in Crete increased in their knowledge of the truth (see verse 1)? Check all that apply:

They'd all turn into mindless puppets.

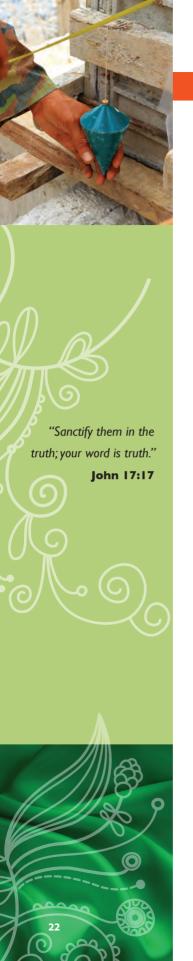
They'd demonstrate that Christian women are intelligent.

Their increased knowledge would lead to increased godliness.

Their right thinking would lead to right behavior.

What do you think it means to "hold firm to the trustworthy word" (v. 9)?





a plumb line

Scholars think that Paul wrote his pastoral letters of Titus and 1 Timothy shortly after being released from Roman imprisonment. Nero was the emperor on the throne (AD 54–68). Animosity against Christians was on the rise, and things were about to get a lot worse. The Roman government would soon take an official stand against Christianity. Paul would be imprisoned again, and eventually would be beheaded.

We don't know for sure if Paul vet sensed that his life and ministry were nearing an end. But these letters appear to have a sense of urgency about them. In light of the looming persecution, it was critical that the churches were strong and healthy and that they had solid, established, mature leaders. In his letter to Titus, just as in his first letter to Timothy, Paul warned against false teachers and issued instructions to various groups regarding proper Christian behavior. Paul wanted the churches to be "sound in the faith" (Titus 1:13) and to use the right plumb line to determine



which ideas didn't line up with sound doctrine.

In Titus 1:1–9 we learn that mature believers:

- Have a saving faith in the gospel of Christ Jesus
- Uphold the Bible as the standard for truth
- Regard the Word of God as trustworthy
- Honor the teachings of Christ and the apostles
- Know what accords with sound doctrine
- Are able to discern truth from error
- Exhibit godliness of character and godly relationships

Paul hoped that the men and women in Crete would hold firm to the trustworthy teachings of the faith. He anticipated that those who embraced sound doctrine would also be sound in faith, sound in love, sound in steadfastness, sound in speech, and sound in all sorts of other things too (1:13; 2:1, 2, 8).

A deeper knowledge of truth leads to deeper godliness. Healthy beliefs lead to healthy behavior. Right thinking, empowered by the Holy Spirit, leads to right living.

Read John 17:17 in the margin. How is truth instrumental in sanctifying us (making us more holy)?

Can you identify an instance in your life when unsound thinking resulted in unsound, unhealthy behavior?

Can you identify an instance in your life when the Word of God changed your thinking, and this resulted in sound, healthy behavior?



Close today's lesson in prayer. Ask the Lord to show you if there are any

areas in your thinking or lifestyle that are not "plumb," according to His Word.



WEEK ONE / DAY 3

discern the difference

In yesterday's lesson we learned that what we believe about the gospel and about the Bible is critically important.

According to Paul, the Word of God provides a plumb line. It establishes that there's a right way and a wrong way for Christians to think and behave. Some of its instructions are gender specific, so it also provides a plumb line for womanhood. There's a right way and a wrong way for us to think and behave as women . . . and the Word of God helps us discern the difference.

Read Ephesians 5:8–10 in the margin. Why do we need discernment in order

to know what pleases the Lord?

"Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord."

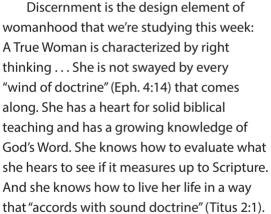
Ephesians 5:8-10

"The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way."

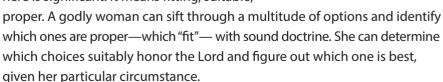
Proverbs 14:8

"It is the duty of every Christian to think biblically about all areas of life so that they might act biblically in all areas of life."4

Tim Challies



The word "accords" (Greek: prepō) used here is significant. It means fitting, suitable,



Should you pursue higher education? Should you embark on a career? Should you marry George, or Frank, or forgo marriage altogether? How much should you work outside the home? Should you use birth control or family planning? Should you aim to have two kids or twenty-two? Should





you send your kids to public school? Private school? Or homeschool? Should you lead a Bible study or sing on the worship team? Should you spend your money on a trip to Disneyland or give it to rescue girls from the sex trade? Is it your responsibility to cook all the meals and his to cut the grass? Should you trade in all your pencil skirts for ankle dusters? Should you be listening to that band or going to that movie? For these and millions of other big and small questions, the Bible simply doesn't say.



Identify a current or past situation in which you weighed several options, and tried to discern what was "pleasing to the Lord."

Over the course of your lifetime you will be faced with a multitude of choices—some inconsequential, some good, some bad, some right, some wrong, some better, some best. That's why you need discernment. That's why you need the ongoing help of the Holy Spirit. That's why you need to wrestle with how to apply the Bible's precepts to your life.

You can't rely on a prescribed formula, or base your decisions on what your girlfriends are doing or on the standards set by our culture. You have a personal responsibility to figure things out. The Bible gives us guiding principles, but it doesn't specify exactly how to apply those principles. That's why each of us needs to *try to discern* how we can best please the Lord.

In the space below, write out a definition for the word *discern*.

If you peeked at a dictionary to help, you may have discovered that the English word, *discern,* comes from the French *discerner,* which means to distinguish or separate. It's based on the Latin *discernere: dis* (off, away) + *cernere* (distinguish, separate).







"So that you may approve [discern] what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ."

Philippians 1:10

"Give your servant therefore an understanding mind ... that I may discern between good and evil."

I Kings 3:9

"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."

I Corinthians 2:14



The concepts of *distinguishing* and *separating* are inherent in the Word. Discernment involves distinguishing the difference between two things and separating one from the other.

Spiritual discernment involves using God's Word as the standard for distinguishing and separating ideas and behaviors. It distinguishes and separates truth from falsehood, darkness from light, healthy from unhealthy, sound from unsound, and good from evil, based on the Bible's plumb line.

Author Tim Challies provides a helpful definition of spiritual discernment:

Discernment is the skill of understanding and applying God's Word with the purpose of separating truth from error and right from wrong.⁵

Read 1 Corinthians 2:14 in the margin. Then, mark each statement below as true (T) or false (F).

Spirit-filled women will discern things differently from women who walk according to the flesh.

Any woman—regardless of whether or not she is a true believer—who reads the Bible has the ability to discern what pleases the Lord.

There are many women who don't understand the Bible's precepts about womanhood and consider them foolish.

Women who are spiritually discerning have a heightened ability to see and understand issues from God's perspective.

off color

A skilled decorator is discerning. She has an eye for what matches the décor of a room. She pays attention to the subtleties between various tints and shades. She knows when a particular color is "off" and doesn't fit with the design. She discerns differences that others may not notice or may shrug off as inconse-



quential. Spiritual discernment is much the same.

Members of the congregation at Crete were being deceived by teachers who were pushing doctrine that was politically correct, but theologically wrong (Titus 1:10). The reason they were fooled was that they didn't discern the subtleties between concepts that were true, and concepts that were only partially true. Falsehood often contains enough truth to mislead those who lack discernment. The idea is just slightly "off." If it were blatantly and utterly false, people wouldn't be taken in by it.

I (Mary) was in high school in the late-1970s, during the peak of the feminist movement. I remember asking my spiritual mentor, Diane, what she thought about women's lib. Diane, who was in her early twenties, was the adult sponsor of the Christian club I helped co-lead. Diane was a "go-getter"— extremely gifted, capable, and intelligent. I expected that she would enthusiastically support a movement that pushed for the equality of women.

When I asked for her opinion, she thoughtfully paused, and then said something like this: "Well...I can't say I know much about it, but from what I've heard, something seems 'off.' While I sympathize with many of the concerns, the clamoring for personal rights and the inciting of anger just doesn't sit right with me. It doesn't jibe with the character of Jesus."

Diane's words of discernment proved helpful for me over the following years as I completed a professional degree and embarked on a career in an educational and work culture that pushed feminist ideology. The red flag that Diane raised caused me to be cautious, and to pray for discernment about all the new and seemingly promising ideas that many were so quick to embrace.

In your own words, rewrite Challies' definition of spiritual discernment:

Read the verses in the margin on page 26. Summarize why it's important for you to be discerning about the opinions and ideas that come your way:

Close today's lesson by personalizing Solomon's prayer from 1 Kings 3:9. Ask the Lord to help you become a more spiritually discerning woman.





always learning



"For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers . . . They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works."

Titus 1:10, 16

The fog was particularly thick as I (Nancy) drove to the *Revive* Our Hearts studio one morning. It was terribly difficult to see. People had clicked on their headlights, and everyone drove extremely slowly and carefully. Traffic crawled along at a snail's pace. In all that fog, I had to be careful to watch for the right turnoff. It took a lot more effort than normal to discern the difference between the right and the wrong turn, to avoid running into a car or pedestrian, and to stay on the road and avoid ending up in the ditch.

There's a lot of spiritual "fog" out there these days . . . and not only in the world, but also in the church. There are all sorts of persuasive voices offering ideas about what we should believe and how we should live. And this is particularly the case with regard to "bibli-



cal womanhood." It can get quite confusing. Even disorienting.

The situation is not unlike the one facing the believers on Crete. They also had dissenting voices in the church telling them what they should believe.

Read Titus 1:10–16 in your Bible. List the traits and characteristics of the people pushing false ideas in the Cretan churches:



Crete is the largest of the Greek islands and is fifth largest in the Mediterranean. It lies at the junction of four seas: the Ionian, Aegean, Mediterranean, and Libyan. Its location put it at the center of the development of world culture and civilization. Crete was famous in Greek mythology as the birthplace of Zeus, and for the legends of King Minos, Theseus, and the Minotaur. It was the hub for the Minoans, Europe's first advanced civilization.

In approximately 67 BC, Crete was conquered by the Romans, who built luxurious Roman buildings, temples, stadiums, and baths on the island. By then, the Cretan population

numbered about 300,000. Though most inhabitants were Greek, the cities also housed significant Jewish communities. Jews from Crete were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11).

Cretans were famed as daring sailors, prosperous traders, and fierce warriors. But they were also notorious for their character flaws. The Roman historian Titus Livius spoke of Cretan "avarice" (greed). The Greek historian Polybius wrote of their "ferocity and fraud" and "their mendacity"—which is the propensity to fabricate stories or bend the truth.

Another Greek historian, Diodorus Siculus, noted that Cretans tended to be stubborn and insubordinate. They were intent on doing things their own way. Paul quoted Epimenides, a Cretan poet/prophet, as saying "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons" (Titus 1:12). Things were so bad that in the ancient world the word "cretanize" was proverbial for telling a lie.

Paul was concerned because Cretan *mendacity* had spilled over into the Christian community. To accommodate Crete's Greek mythological culture, certain teachers were pushing elaborate myths in an attempt to make the Hebrew Scriptures more palatable for a better sell. They adopted new, speculative, and fanciful biblical interpretations, possibly based on Old Testament genealogies. Instead of adhering to the teachings and traditions passed down by the apostles, these upstart theologians promoted "cleverly devised myths" (2 Peter 1:16) that undoubtedly appealed to their first-century listeners' sense of political correctness.









"[Nor] to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies. These promote empty speculations rather than God's plan, which operates by faith.... Some have deviated from these and turned aside to fruitless discussion. They want to be teachers ... although they don't understand what they are saying or what they are insisting on."

I Timothy I:4-7 нсsв

"Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness."

I Timothy 4:7

"Guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called 'knowledge." I Timothy 6:20

This problem was not limited to the church in Crete. Paul addresses similar issues in his letters to Timothy, a pastor in Ephesus.

Read the verses in the margin. What do you think Paul meant when he said these teachers "promote empty speculations rather than God's plan"?

False teachers in the early church promoted new ideas that distracted people from pursuing godliness and got them caught up in controversial, speculative arguments (1 Tim. 1:4, 6; 4:7; 6:4, 20; Titus 1:10; 3:9; 2 Tim. 2:14, 16, 23).

Instead of encouraging believers to guard and cherish the deposit of truth they had received and to work at applying the Word, they fostered an attitude of irreverence toward Scripture and the apostles' teaching (1 Tim. 4:7).

The teachers tantalized believers with novel, progressive interpretations, which they confidently promoted as "knowledge" (1 Tim. 6:20). Their ideas were persuasive, yet subtly deceptive. These teachers confused rather than clarified the issues (1 Tim. 4:1–3; Titus 1:10–13; 2 Tim. 3). What's more, they advocated loose moral standards (1 Tim. 1:19, 20; Titus 1:15, 16; 2 Tim. 2:16, 19; 3:1–5). In essence, they encouraged believers to value and trust their own opinions more than they valued and trusted God's (2 Tim. 3:4).

Use the paragraphs above to make a list of the "red flags" (warning signs) that should have alerted the people in Crete that the teachings might be false:

weak women

We can't be sure of the exact content of the false teaching, but it's clear that it was devoid of any true spiritual value and that it only led to further speculation, questions, controversy, and arguments. It's also clear that some women of that day were particularly susceptible to being deceived by it.





According to 2 Timothy 3:7, why do you think the women were taken captive by false teaching? Put a check $\lceil \sqrt{\rceil} \rceil$ next to the statement(s) that apply:

They were too feeble to stand against popular opinion.
They weren't educated and hadn't studied the issues enough.
The false teaching appealed to them because it validated their sinful tendencies and desires.
Deep down, they didn't really want to change their behavior and

Read 2 Timothy 4:3. Explain why and how Christian women in our day might reject sound teaching about womanhood:

The women mentioned in 2 Timothy 3 were always learning. The reason they were taken captive by false teaching—and were unable to "arrive at knowledge of the truth"—wasn't due to a lack of information. It was due to a lack of holy desires. You see, right thinking and right living go hand in hand. If you are unprepared to live the way God wants you to, chances are, you'll reject sound teaching and will simply gravitate toward teachers who will tell you what you want to hear.

Close today's lesson in prayer. Ask the Lord to give you the mind to discern sound doctrine and the heart to obey it.



"FOR AMONG THEM ARE THOSE WHO CREEP INTO HOUSEHOLDS AND CAPTURE WEAK WOMEN, BURDENED WITH SINS AND LED ASTRAY BY VARIOUS PASSIONS. ALWAYS LEARNING AND NEVER ABLE TO ARRIVE AT A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH." 2 Timothy 3:6-7 "FOR THE TIME IS COMING WHEN PEOPLE WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND **TEACHING, BUT**

HAVING ITCHING

EARS THEY WILL

FOR THEMSELVES

TEACHERS TO
SUIT THEIR OWN
PASSIONS."

2 Timothy 4:3



WEEK ONE / DAY 5

handling truth

In 2005, United States Secret Service agents began encountering a run of counterfeit bills unlike anything they had seen before. Except for identical serial numbers and tiny imperfections that casual observers were unlikely to notice, the cash almost looked

and felt genuine. The funny money turned up everywhere from upscale retailers to fast food stores in every state in the nation, and in nine foreign countries.

Despite the Secret Service's best efforts, the forger of these notes evaded capture for more than three years. By then, Albert Edward Talton, of Lawndale, California, had put more than \$7 million in phony currency into circulation. And he'd made much of it using a computer, basic ink-jet printers, and supplies purchased from his local Staples.



Counterfeiting is considered such a threat to the fabric of the country that it is—along with treason—one of only two criminal offenses named in the US Constitution. According to the Secret Service, the best defense against it is to educate and train the public to discern the difference between genuine and fake currency. It encourages everyone to "Know Your Money!"⁷

"Knowing their money" is the process whereby the FBI trains its agents to spot counterfeits. Agents spend countless hours handling, examining, and intensely studying authentic currency. They are so familiar with the real thing that when a counterfeit is presented, its flaws are obvious to them. They can immediately tell that the texture, feel, and look aren't quite right.

False doctrine poses as serious a threat to the church as false money does to the economy. Paul wanted the believers in Crete to be so familiar with sound doctrine that they'd immediately discern if something was off. He wanted their thinking and lifestyles to display the pure, untainted truth of the gospel.

"Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. Give me understanding [discernment], that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart."

Psalm 119:33-34



Read Psalm 119:9–16 in your Bible. According to the psalmist, how can we keep our thoughts and actions pure (healthy/sound)?

Discernment is the skill of understanding and applying the Word of God, with the purpose of separating truth from error and right from wrong. Familiarity with sound doctrine is what helped Diane (Mary's high school mentor) discern that certain elements of feminist doctrine were wrong. Diane was able to spot the falsehood because she had spent time handling the real thing. She knew her Bible!

According to Hebrews 5:14, how does a believer get better at the skill of spiritual discernment?

What do you think this "constant practice" involves?

I (Nancy) studied piano for years. Weekly lessons and daily practice were a regular part of the rhythm of life. While many of my peers were out socializing or having "fun" after classes and on weekends, I spent countless hours sequestered in a practice room, working on scales, arpeggios, and other technical exercises, playing through the same classical pieces over and over and over again, until they were mastered. There were no shortcuts or substitutes for "constant practice" if I wanted to become an accomplished pianist.

And there are no shortcuts or substitutes for "constant practice" when it comes to developing spiritual discernment—while others are whiling away their time with trivial pursuits, a woman who wants to be spiritually mature will devote herself to reading and mediating on God's Word and putting it into practice in her life. As we spend time in His presence, our minds are renewed, and we grow in our ability to discern truth from error, right from wrong.

"BUT SOLID FOOD IS
FOR THE MATURE,
FOR THOSE WHO
HAVE THEIR POWERS
OF DISCERNMENT
TRAINED BY
CONSTANT PRACTICE
TO DISTINGUISH GOOD
FROM EVIL."
Hebrews 5:14

Deception was and still is—crucial to Satan's strategy."8





"So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."

Ephesians 4:14

"So that you may approve [discern] what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ."

Philippians 1:10



Why is it important that you grow in discernment? Match each reason to the verse in which the idea occurs. Write an [H] in the blank for Hebrews 5:14 (on previous page), an [E] for Ephesians 4:14, and a [P] for Philippians 1:10:

 So you won't be tossed around by the latest new idea
 So you can figure out what the best choice is
 So you won't be fooled by clever but misguided people
 So you will get better at telling the difference between good and evil
 So you may be pure and blameless
So you may grow up and mature spiritually

It's important that you strive to grow in discernment. Women who are discerning have the ability to see and understand issues from God's perspective. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they strive for and are given an understanding of what pleases God and what doesn't. They do this by understanding God through his Word, and by applying the wisdom of sound doctrine to their lives.

practice it

In his book *The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment*, Tim Challies points out that "discernment is a skill. It's not an inherent ability like breathing or chewing but a skill"—like playing an instrument—"that must be practiced and improved. There's not a person on earth who has been born with a full measure of discernment, or who has all of the discernment he will ever need. There's not a person who has attained a level of expertise that allows him to move on and to leave discernment behind. Like the master musician

who practices his skills more as his acclaim grows, a discerning person will see with ever-greater clarity his need to increase in discernment. He will want to sharpen and improve this skill throughout his life." 9





In the verses in the margin, circle the words *test* and *testing*.

The dictionary defines test as the means by which the quality or genuineness of something is determined. The Lord wants us to test

the things we see and hear and not mindlessly accept them. He wants us to hold them up to the standard of Scripture and discern whether they line up with God's plumb line.

Every day you receive messages about how you should live—ideas about gender, relationships, love, marriage, morality, children, work, finances, possessions, leisure, attitudes, emotions, habits, and a host of other things that impact you as a woman. The ideas come from popular media, books, social networks, relatives, friends, and colleagues . . . and also from teachers and leaders in the church.

Are you testing those ideas? Are you familiar enough with Scripture to know what accords with sound doctrine? And to perceive when something is not quite right? A True Woman is characterized by right thinking. She applies herself to become a woman of discernment.

In the space below, write out Romans 12:2 as a prayer, personalizing it.

Ask the Lord to help you become a woman who is grounded in the Word of God and who is able to discern His will.

"TEST EVERYTHING: HOLD FAST WHAT IS GOOD. ABSTAIN FROM EVERY FORM OF EVIL." I Thessalonians 5:21-22 "DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWAL OF YOUR MIND. THAT BY TESTING YOU MAY DISCERN WHAT IS THE WILL OF GOD, WHAT IS GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE AND PERFECT." Romans 12:2



process

The video for Week One will help you process this week's lessons. You'll find this week's video, the leader's guide, and additional resources at TrueWoman201.com.

ponder

Think about the following questions. Discuss them with your friends, family, and/or small group:

- 1. Why is it so important for us to have sound doctrine?
- 2. Describe some characteristics of false teachers. How can we distinguish between true teaching and false?
- 3. Identify some beliefs or patterns of thinking in our culture that breed spiritual contamination. How can we guard ourselves against breathing in these spiritual toxins?
- 4. False teachers in Paul's day encouraged believers to value and trust their own opinions more than they valued and trusted God. How do you see that happening today when it comes to ideas about womanhood?
- 5. What is your "plumb line" for making decisions in those gray areas of life, situations for which Scripture doesn't provide a black-and-white answer?
- 6. What is involved in practicing spiritual discernment? Why is spiritual discernment vital to glorifying God with our lives?
- 7. What characteristics do you see in the women described in 2 Timothy 3:6–7? What made them weak, and how can we safeguard against living like they did?
- 8. How can you develop greater discernment in your home, your relationships, and in other areas of your life?

personalize it	ge to journal. Write down what you learned this week. Record your comments, a favorite verse, or a concept or quote that was particularly helpful or meaningful to you. Compose a prayer, letter, or poem. Jot down notes from the video or your small group session. Express your heart response to what you have studied. Personalize this week's lessons in the way that will best help you apply them to your life.	
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