

# Women's Bible Study Leaders Handbook

**"But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the **Word**." Acts 6:4**

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*Dear Fresh Faith Servant Leaders,*

*"I am among you as the one who serves." Luke 22:27b NABRE*

*Jesus said these words to His disciples as they debated over what position they should have in His kingdom. Christ set the ultimate example of leadership through service by washing the feet of His disciples.*

*Considering Christ's example, our aim is to serve one another in love and build up the Body of Christ, His church. Our Lord uses those who are willing to put on the towel, follow His example, and serve.*

*It is the Holy Spirit who leads us and directs each person to serve. In Acts 1:8, we are reminded that it is by His power that we are enabled to serve effectively and have impact.*

*We thank God for your devotion to Him and your commitment to serve Him through this ministry. Our prayer is that you will be blessed beyond measure for answering the call to servant leadership.*

*"...through love, serve one another." Galatians 5:13b NKJV*

*In His Love,*

*Brenda Leavenworth  
Women's Ministry Director*

# RELIANCE MISSION GOAL & VALUES

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## OUR MISSION

at Reliance Church is to make disciples who know, love, and serve Jesus.

## OUR GOAL

is for people to thrive in their relationship with the Lord and with one another in unity.

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## WE VALUE

### THE WORD OF GOD

We trust God's Word as the only foundation for truth and our only hope for change.

*"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." — 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

### THE LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We change the world one life at a time through the power of the Holy Spirit who flows through men, not methods.

*"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witness to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." — Acts 1:8*

### PRAYER

We work like everything depends on us, but we pray like everything depends on God, because it does.

*"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."  
— Philippians 4:6*

### SPIRITUAL GROWTH

We develop a godly character through a lifelong commitment to learning.

*"...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" — 2 Peter 3:18*

### SERVING

We are contributors, not consumers.

*"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." — Mark 10:45*

### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

We empower people to their highest calling.

*"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."  
— 2 Timothy 2:2*

### MISSIONAL LIVING

We live out a genuine faith and intentionally share that faith with others.

*"You are a light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." — Matthew 5:14-16*

### UNITY

We are a diverse family that sticks together in a world falling apart.

*"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." — John 13:35*

### QUALITY

We bring innovation, excellence, and creativity to everything we do.

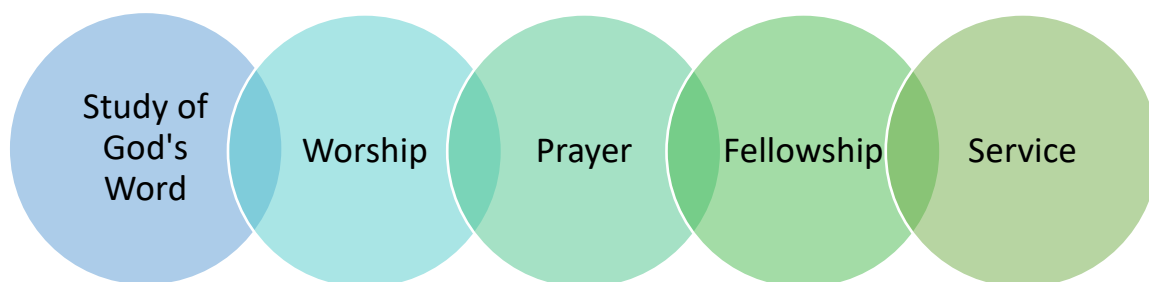
*"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." — Colossians 3:17*

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# Our Purpose

The purpose of **Fresh Faith Women's Bible Studies** is to offer a means for women to grow into the image of Jesus Christ. Review and keep this purpose in mind. To effectively accomplish this goal, we offer morning and evening Bible studies during the fall and spring, as well as other growth opportunities throughout the year.

**Fresh Faith Women's Bible Studies Focus on Five Main Elements:**



# Our Mission

To raise up disciples who know, love, and serve Jesus and to lead women into deeper personal relationships with Jesus Christ, evidenced by everlasting fruit which glorifies God

# Our Approach

Using our gifts in service to Christ and through the empowerment of His Spirit, our aim is to provide a Bible study atmosphere where we:

- **Show** the love of Christ through our actions, words, and hospitality.
- **Lead** and disciple women by our example and with Biblical guidance.
- **Introduce** Jesus to the unsaved.
- **Make** Jesus the focus of each meeting.

**"But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the **Word** and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."**

**Matthew 13:23**

# Leader Characteristics



## *Leaders Should:*

- **Love** *Possess affection and devotion for God and His Word; and have a desire to know Him and be used by Him (Psalm 119:47).*
- **Discipline** *Be committed to making the study of God's Word and prayer a priority (II Timothy 2:15).*
- **Humility** *Live a lifestyle of actions that point others to Christ, not to themselves; an example of servant-leadership (Titus 2:3-5).*
- **Tact & Diplomacy** *Be skillful in handling people and/or sensitive situations. Consider the effect that words and actions have on others, and identify the best way to communicate the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15-16).*
- **Courage** *Be able to step outside their comfort zones to fulfill the task at hand, even though it may be difficult or challenging (Joshua 1:6-9).*
- **Submission** *Render their will unto the Lord and have respect for those in leadership, deferring to one another in love (Hebrews 13:17-18).*
- **Prayer** *Have consistent, personal fellowship and communication with God. Abide close to His heart with a sensitivity to the working of the Holy Spirit (I John 4:11-13).*

# Servant Leader Commitments

**All** who serve in **Fresh Faith Women's Bible Study** must adhere to the following leadership commitments:

- Agree with the mission and ministry philosophy of Reliance Church.  
Refer to the *Reliance Values Sermon Series (2017)* available on the Reliance Website.
- Have a burden and call to minister to, nurture, disciple, pray for, and encourage women in a closer walk with the Lord.
- Arrive early for studies and events in order to pray over the event, set up, and greet the women.
- Faithfully attend Sunday service and make it a priority.
- Participate in fellowships and other events when possible.
- Have family support for the time commitment involved.
- Respect the Reliance Church policy of NOT promoting any other ministry project or business opportunity during Bible Study or special event gatherings.

## **Additional Group Leader and Group Administrator Commitments**

- Group leaders (GLs) and group administrators (GAs) are to attend weekly meetings before Bible study to discuss the lesson each week.
- GLs and GAs are partners in serving the ladies that God has placed in their groups.
- Discussion group leaders are to complete weekly lessons and be prepared to facilitate a discussion on the content. Group administrators should also complete weekly lessons and be prepared to assist group leaders with discussion.
- Group administrators are to be prepared to reach out to the women in love through phone calls, notes and/or e-mail, maintaining regular communication with group members.
- GLs and GAs encourage participation while selectively reserving personal comments to avoid dominating the discussion during group time. GAs are responsible to partner with GLs to keep conversations going and step in with input when discussions seem to lag.

- GLs and GAs integrate prayer into the group meeting by lifting up the individual requests. GLs and GAs coordinate how prayer requests are disseminated within the group. Some groups may wish to use group emails through the *planning center* or use prayer cards etc.
- GLs and GAs communicate to ladies that they are available for discrete private prayer requests.



# Roles and Responsibilities

## **Ministry Director**

The ministry director provides vision and guidance for the overall direction of Reliance Women's Ministries and seeks God's wisdom in all decisions, while keeping in accordance with the vision and doctrine of Reliance Church.

- *Has accountability to Senior Pastor*

## **Ministry Coordinator**

The *Fresh Faith Women's Bible Study* coordinator organizes logistics for the *Fresh Faith Women's Bible Study* to ensure the study runs smoothly. Oversight includes all aspects of the study, supervision of ministry volunteers, and training of new group leaders and group administrators.

- *Has accountability to Ministry Director*

## **Worship Leader**

The worship leader ministers to *Fresh Faith* participants through worship, prepares hearts through song, and prayerfully selects music. The first portion of a study/gathering is dedicated to this important component of worship. Responsibility includes arriving early for sound check and practice.

- *Has accountability to Ministry Coordinator*

## **Group Leader (GL)**

Group leaders facilitate the study of the Word by promoting a bond of fellowship amongst the women, debriefing homework, and fostering a safe learning atmosphere. The aim is to encourage women to share what God is teaching them through the study of His Word. Group leaders are to keep the group focused, remain on schedule, and ensure the discussion is grounded upon biblical truth. Theology matters, so GLs correct false doctrine and re-enforce proper theology, bringing side conversations to a close and re-directing conversations that go astray. GLs are mentors and role models for the group administrator, intercede for the group, create a hospitable environment, and encourage women in personal study and growth. Group leaders always remain teachable.

- *Has accountability to Ministry Coordinator*

## **Group Administrator (GA)**

Group administrators aid the group leader as a key contributor and are to set an example for the women. They are to demonstrate leadership commitment, assist with any facilitation challenges by providing examples and responses during discussions as needed. They are responsible for sending out prayer requests as needed, organizing prayer cards if needed, and to remind group members of upcoming events (luncheons, outreach opportunities etc.). GAs substitute for the group leader in the event of absence, although this is not an absolute requirement to be a GA. If the GL is absent, the ministry coordinator may appoint someone or lead the group herself if the GA is not comfortable with this role. Group administrators always remains teachable.

- *Has accountability to Ministry Coordinator*

## **Children's Ministry Director**

The children's ministry director will schedule and assist with the overseeing of the children's classes while their moms attend the *Fresh Faith Women's Bible Study* and will be the *point person* if any concerns arise. Curriculum, crafts, and snacks will be provided each week. After approval, the church provides paid childcare staff to ensure that all Children's Ministry Policies/Procedures are being followed, and to help foster a smooth operation of the program. The paid staff is meant to be a *supplement* to the volunteers that each ministry may need to provide to meet the minimum ratios. If ratios are not being met, the children's ministry director will advise the ministry leader and she will be responsible for immediately providing more volunteers to accommodate the need. This is for the safety of the children in our care and to ensure their well-being if any emergencies were to arise.

- *Has accountability to Ministry Coordinator*

## **Sound/Media Coordinator**

The sound /media coordinator is responsible for the set-up of sound and stage lighting. She collaborates with the musician(s) and coordinates a sound check prior to the study/event and facilitates music, slide, and DVD media for studies/events. The coordinator ensures appropriate background music is playing and that all slides/DVD clips are ready and cued. She also tests media prior to the study/event and oversees media during the study/event.

- *Has accountability to Ministry Coordinator*

## **Set-Up & Tear Down Coordinator**

The set-up and tear down coordinator is the point person for ensuring readiness prior to the Bible study or event and tear down upon the conclusion of the study/event. She ensures that coffee and refreshments, as well as servant's tables and chairs are ready prior the event. She makes sure restrooms are checked to ensure they are guest-ready and visits the childcare area to ensure teachers are prepared and ready. At the end of the study/event she oversees tear down of all related items.

- *Has accountability to Ministry Coordinator*

## **Hospitality Coordinator**

The hospitality coordinator arrives early and ensures coffee and refreshments are in place prior to the study/event.

- *Has accountability to the Ministry Coordinator*

## **Greeter Coordinator**

The greeter coordinator arrives 30 minutes early to set up the welcome table with name tags, etc. She is responsible to train and recruit greeters. Greeters are to arrive 20 minutes before the start of the study/event with welcoming smiles. Greeters are to welcome ladies in the foyer, at entry doors, outside, and when they enter the sanctuary. Greeters are to be available to answer questions the ladies may have regarding childcare location and availability, nursing mother information, restroom locations, etc. When applicable, greeters disperse nametags or handouts. Greeters should be sensitive to see unseen ladies, those who seem uncomfortable or alone.

- *Has accountability to Ministry Coordinator and is assisted by the Women's Ministry Administrator*

## **Connection Kiosk Servant**

Servants running the connection kiosk arrive *30 minutes prior* to the start of the study to log on, etc. in preparation for the arrival of the women. She is responsible for registering ladies for Bible study and other events. She answers church related questions and gives general directions (locations of classrooms, restrooms etc.). She makes sure the kiosk is available until *30 minutes after* end of Bible study.

- *Has accountability to Ministry Coordinator*

**“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the **Word** of truth.” 2 Tim 2:15**

# Models for Leading Group Discussions

## ☉ Volunteer Style

Asking women to volunteer their answers to the study questions

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no pressure to answer.</li> <li>• Women respond to questions that are meaningful to them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women who are more vocal tend to answer too frequently.</li> <li>• Quiet women tend to hold back.</li> <li>• The leader may have a tendency to fill in the silence or offer an answer too often or too early.</li> </ul>

### Guidelines

- Encourage the ladies to step out and talk.
  - Don't worry about a little silence. Consider asking women to raise their hands to answer, so that you might choose who answers, giving the quieter ones more of an opportunity.
- Pay attention to who has their study done.
  - Call on those women, especially for the factual/observation questions. Help them succeed. Affirm right answers.
- Allow for volunteers only when answering personal questions.
  - Refrain from calling on someone to answer personal questions. It may be helpful for the group leader to answer the question to model transparency and help draw out the women to share.

## ☉ Classroom Style

Taking turns one by one to answer factual (non-personal) questions

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets the expectation for women to complete homework beforehand and challenges them to do their best</li> <li>• Allows everyone an opportunity to participate</li> <li>• Reduces the probability of getting sidetracked during the study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women may feel pressured that they will be called on.</li> <li>• Creates the feeling of a classroom</li> <li>• Women may feel they do not have the opportunity to answer questions that are meaningful to them</li> </ul>

### Guidelines:

- Inform the group that for personal questions volunteers will be asked to share. Allow women to *pass* if they want.
- Ask for several answers for life application questions to promote group discussion.
- Make sure to maintain eye contact, and affirm answers before proceeding to the next question.

# Preparing Beforehand to Lead a Discussion Group



The group leaders and group administrators have a responsibility to prepare beforehand to aid in creating an environment that will lend itself to honest dialogue, spiritual growth, and fellowship.

## Group Leader

- ✓ While reviewing the lesson in preparation for the study, be aware of which questions would allow for good discussion starters and will draw the women out to share. Pray for the Lord's guidance concerning focus questions and highlighting pre-identified questions for group discussion.
- ✓ Come to the study prepared with your lesson completed.
- ✓ Be prepared to simplify any difficult concepts or topics that may have been covered in the lesson.
- ✓ Pray beforehand for the lesson, the participants, their hearts, and for God's will.
- ✓ Begin promptly and respect others by ending on time.
- ✓ Prepare your own heart and mind so that you have a good attitude and are ready for what the lesson or discussion may bring.

## Group Administrator

- ✓ Come to the study prepared with your lesson completed and highlighted.
- ✓ Pray beforehand for the lesson, the participants, their hearts, and for God's will.
- ✓ Take weekly attendance and post weekly attendance reports to *the planning center*. Give a copy of the attendance to group leader.
- ✓ Watch the time for the group leader to ensure the study starts and stops on time. Asks your group leader how she wishes to be *signaled*.
- ✓ If using prayer cards, have cards and pens ready for prayer request time.
- ✓ Maintain up to date contact information for ladies and provide the most current information to the group leader.
- ✓ Prepare your own heart and mind so that you have a good attitude and are ready for what the lesson or discussion may bring.

# Getting Started

Welcoming and making everyone feel comfortable and at home creates a safe environment for learning, sharing, and growing in God's Word. To start off the study:

- Everyone serving welcomes women with love. Be in the foyer 15 minutes before the start of Bible study to participate in greeting ladies as they arrive. It is a good idea to wander into the sanctuary and greet ladies already inside as well.
- If it is the first session, greeters or group administrators make sure everyone has a nametag.
- Group leaders start the study by officially welcoming ladies, allowing time for introductions, and opening the lesson in prayer.

## Leading a Discussion Group

As the group leader facilitating the group discussion, here are some helpful tips to make sure the time is well spent, all feel included in the discussion, and the lesson objectives are met:

- *Stay on topic.*
- Always line up your counsel with God's Word.
- Be careful not to encourage women to follow human reasoning.
- Show interest in the women so they know they are welcome.
- Make eye contact.
- Create a safe atmosphere for the women to share.
- Don't use group time to counsel a woman. Set up a time after.
- Don't allow gossip, slander, or rude talk.
- Be willing to learn from others.
- Facilitate the group and teach when appropriate.

# Moving Through the Lesson

During the study most of the time will be spent reviewing the lesson and answering the discussion questions. Keeping the lesson at an appropriate pace, as a discussion (versus a formal Bible study) and on-topic are necessary focus areas.

- Keep conversations appropriate.
  - *Fresh Faith Women's Bible Study* group time is a place of encouragement and uplifting the name of the Lord. It is the group leader's role to create an atmosphere which reflects God's love and service to His people. It is very important to steer conversations away from:
    - Gossip masqueraded as *sharing*
    - Husband bashing
    - Murmuring or complaining about members and/or the leadership of **God's** church
- Facilitate the lesson as a discussion group instead of as a teaching study.
  - As a discussion group, keep the format as such. Implement teaching where necessary, but keep it at a minimum. The aim is to allow ample time for the women to share their hearts and what the Lord has shown them as they've studied.
  - To ensure time for sharing, do not read the entire lesson aloud since the purpose is to facilitate fellowship through discussion.
  - Review the pre-selected questions you identified before the study. Avoid covering each question.
- For answering questions, try both methods of either calling on women to answer and/or reading the question and leaving the door open for women to respond.
  - If there is a period of silence, do not become overly anxious.
  - Wait patiently for answers.
  - Keep the format free for the Spirit to move.
  - Switch between both formats because some will not offer to share if they are not called on.
  - Utilize the group administrator as a resource to help keep on topic and spur on discussion.
- Encourage multiple responses.
  - Many questions will generate more than one response. Encourage other responses from the group. After the first woman answers, encourage her with a positive affirmation. For example, you could say:
    - "That's good insight."
    - "That's helpful."
    - "Does anyone see anything else?"

- Ensure each question is answered properly.
  - Sometimes during a discussion, the question will not get answered thoroughly or correctly. If this is the case, redirect the discussion by saying, “According to the Scriptures that we are studying...” or “In summary, let’s focus back on this question (or passage) and recap the answer so we can move to the next question.”
  
- Bring the group back when they get off subject, then move to the next question.
  - There will be times when a discussion gets very involved, and you will suddenly realize everyone is off topic and the time is gone. Although we want good discussions, we also need to ensure that we are allowing enough time for God to speak through the text. If the discussion only covers part of the passage, the group may only receive part of its meaning or point.
  
- Always cover the portions of the lesson where women are invited to receive Christ.
  - Be careful not to assume that all the women know Jesus as their Savior just because they attend Bible study.
  
- Discuss how to apply the lesson and the truths they have learned into their daily lives. Help them to *put feet on their faith*.



# Closing the Lesson

Be intentional to allow time for and create a tradition of closing your group time in prayer.

- Suggestions for how to close in prayer:
  - Because the prayer time is a vital and precious component of the study, avoid cutting this time short. Allow for a *minimum of 10 minutes* for collecting requests and praying. It is an option to begin the group time with prayer/prayer request cards.
  - The group administrator should serve as timekeeper and alert the group leader when it is time to pray.
  - Let the women know this is the time to pray for personal issues. Be sensitive to keep the focus of this time on personal prayer requests. This is not a general prayer meeting where they pray for every need they know about. It is a time to focus on personal issues.
  - It is suggested that the group administrator assists by passing out index cards for personal prayer requests. This will minimize drawn out requests that take time away from praying. Collect them and redistribute them to pray over.
  - If your group would like to pray for *all* the group members requests the GA should send them out through the *planning center* by Monday of each week.
  - As women feel led, allow them to pray in the group. Encourage all women to pray during the week for the person whose card they received.
  - The group leader or group administrator will close in prayer.
  
- Dismiss women and remind them that they will be prayed for during the week.
  - If a woman needs extra time with the group leader after the study and she has children enrolled in child care, have her pick up the children *first*, then return to talk further.
  - Group leaders and group administrators are encouraged to make a cushion of time after the study, if possible, to chat or pray with ladies who have a need or questions.

# Handling Difficult Situations

At times, there may be a difficult or uncomfortable situation that arises. As someone who is called to lead and serve, God will provide you with wisdom and discernment. Always know that the ministry director is a resource and there are definite scenarios where she should be informed of the matter. GLs or GAs are welcome to text the ministry coordinator during the group time if needed.

Below are some guidelines for how to handle situations that may arise during the group discussion:

- Beware of letting someone dominate group time.
  - If there is a pattern of repeated behavior from someone who dominates discussions, it may be necessary to speak with her directly, privately, and in love.
  - If a woman tries to take control of or lead the group, try to handle the situation. If the problem persists, inform the *fresh faith ministry coordinator*.
- If there is a woman in the group who is living in an abusive household, please contact the *fresh faith ministry coordinator* for prayer and guidance.
  - If a woman has a need for money, clothing, shelter, etc., please advise the *fresh Faith ministry coordinator* so her need can be properly assessed.
- Solicitation and distribution of fliers, invites, etc. is **not** allowed during group time.
  - Be aware of any women who solicit business and/or ministry opportunities outside the realm of Reliance Church.
- If a woman is distraught or crying, stop the group and pray for her.
  - If there is a need for counseling, ask to meet one on one after the group has ended. Refer the woman to the ladies at the front desk in the church office. They will direct the woman in need to the proper pastor or counselor.
  - If the need is urgent, the group administrator can escort her to a private place to talk and pray.

**“So shall My **Word** be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”**

**Isaiah 55:11**

# Contacting Women Throughout the Course of the Study

The group leader and/or group administrator should make it a point to reach out to the women during the course of the study. GLs and GAs can work out their contact activities together. Mostly, this responsibility falls to the group administrator.

The purpose of contacting each woman in the group is to encourage her in her study of God's Word and to cultivate her desire for spiritual growth. The aim should be to strengthen the bond of fellowship and participation she experiences as a member of your group.

*Women don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care!*

- When the GA is contacting women in writing via email (through the *planning center*) she is to CC the group leader.
- Contact each woman in the group at least once a month personally.
- Contact the group as a whole at least once per week.
  - All group emails and text messages must always go through the *planning center*.
  - Rosters are highly discouraged. Communicate through the *planning center*.
- Promptly contact members who are absent from the group.
- Pray before making phone calls.
  - Ask the Lord to guide and guard the conversation.
  - Keep in mind the *Fresh Faith Women's Bible Study* role you represent.
- Suggested questions to ask during the call could be:
  - "How are you doing with your lessons?"
  - "Do you have any questions?"
  - "Is everything clear for you or are you having difficulty with parts of the study?"
  - "Have you been able to apply what you are learning?"
- Pray with her, especially addressing any needs she might have.
- Remember, if a group member has a deeper counseling need than you can provide, always encourage her to speak with a pastor.
- In a desire to be a blessing and not a burden, be sensitive to the amount of time spent on the phone.

**"When she speaks, her words are wise and kindness is the rule when she gives instructions."**

**Proverbs 31:26**

# Praying Continually for the Women

**“What happens when saints pray is that the power of the Almighty is brought to bear on the one for whom they are praying.”**

**Oswald Chambers**

**Seek the Lord in the following areas concerning your group members:**

- Spiritual growth & maturity
- Real change as they renew their minds
- Consistency in attendance
- Faithfulness to complete lessons
- Love for one another
- Ears to hear what the Lord is speaking to them personally
- Courage to share

**Different forms of prayer and the importance of prayer:**

**Personal Prayer** is unsurpassed when preparing to serve.

In prayer we may confess our sins, cast our cares, surrender our will, receive direction and inspiration, and so much more! We encourage you to come to the study filled with the Holy Spirit, through prayer.

**Intercessory Prayer** is praying for others.

**Corporate Prayer** is praying with the body of believers.

It is important to pray as a group, not only for the needs of the women, but also as an example to them. There will be many opportunities during the *Fresh Faith Women’s Bible Study* meetings to pray corporately.

It is our desire to make prayer a priority throughout the *Fresh Faith Women’s Bible Study*. Therefore, please take time to pray for your group members faithfully.

**“And we can be confident that He will listen to us whenever we ask Him for anything in line with His will.” 1 John 5:14**