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Introduction

This collection of studies is primarily for women, and especially for girls and young women, (although young men will benefit from its study of the true godly beauty they should seek in a wife).

Most women are interested in being pretty. It doesn't matter what age we are. Almost from the cradle, we enjoy the little things that make us feel beautiful. Tiny hair bows and twirly skirts, sparkly crowns and puffy sleeves gradually give way to finding the perfect hairstyle and fragrance, the most slenderizing dress style, and the most flattering makeup. We all want to do what we can to look our best.

There's nothing wrong with looking our best. God is the one who made beauty. He approves of it! But He's even more interested in what is happening in our hearts.

This collection of studies is about doing all we can to be our best. The truest beauty comes from our hearts. No matter how hard we work to be beautiful on the outside, if our hearts aren't right with God and right with people, we won't really be beautiful. A rebellious, selfish heart usually shows.

The book will help you accomplish two important things:

It will help you grow to understand beauty. God is the giver of beauty, and He wants us to understand what *true* beauty is and where it comes from. These studies will help you learn what *God* says about beauty in the midst of a beauty-obsessed world.

It will help you learn how to study the Bible. This book is designed to give you experience in many different approaches to Bible study. When you have completed the book, you will not only know more about godly beauty. You will also know how to continue studying the Bible on your own. The more you read and study and obey God's Word, the more you will become like Jesus.

That will be truly beautiful.

If you learn to trust like Jesus, humble yourself like Jesus, serve like Jesus, and love like Jesus, it will show on your face. The beauty of a heart that loves Jesus is a beauty that doesn't fade. It only grows more and more beautiful.

As you learn about beauty, you will also learn how to:

- Compare one passage of Scripture with another
- Observe repeated words and themes in a passage
- Outline the content of the passage
- Gather all of Scripture's words about a particular topic
- Study the lives of people in the Bible, noting how their attitudes and actions portray the truths of Scripture
- Study original Hebrew and Greek words and how they are used in other places in Scripture
- Use printed and online study helps in your Bible study
- ...and much more!

How this book works:

This book consists of nine studies, with a short review study at the end. Each study is divided into daily assignments which take from five to twenty minutes each. The book contains 86 days worth of study (about 17 weeks if you do five studies a week). You may complete more than one assignment per day if you want to finish faster. Ideas for additional study are given at the end of each study (a total of 49), giving enough direction for up to a whole year of meaningful Bible study.

To help you navigate the pages of this PDF eBook on your computer or eBook reader, the table of contents gives direct links to each chapter. Tapping the any page header or chapter title will also take you back to the table of contents page. Also, blue text indicates clickable web links to recommended websites and resources.

Using Computers for Bible study:

Digital Bible study tools are becoming more available and affordable, and if you use the Internet, you can find most of the study tools that you'll need for free. These tools can help you study more thoroughly and efficiently. The studies in this book are based on printed study tools, but each study gives optional instructions for using digital Bible study tools (in the gray boxes in the sidebar).

Recommended materials:

To fully benefit from these studies, you will need *Nave's Topical Bible* and *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*. Both books are valuable study tools that you will use over and over again, and they are worth the investment. You can find these books online, at most Christian bookstores, or possibly from your church library. We also offer inexpensive hardbound editions at www.doorposts.com.

Several studies require you to mark words or verses in your Bible, so you will need a Bible that you don't mind marking in and some colored pencils or non-bleeding highlighters.

Bible translations:

The studies in this book use primarily the King James translation of the Bible because of the many study tools available for this translation. If you prefer to study in a different translation, search for study tools like a concordance and a topical Bible that are designed for your translation. These are becoming increasingly available.

Recommended age levels:

The studies in this book are designed for ages 10-12 and up. Younger girls may be able to complete the studies with help from a parent, older sibling, or teacher.

For families with boys:

This study is written primarily for young women, but it's also appropriate for young men. Young men can encourage young ladies to grow in true, godly beauty. They also need wisdom to discern between true and false beauty in their relationships and as they consider marriage. In a few places, alternate questions for young men are indicated with “*”. These alternate questions are found in the back of the book.

Study 3

Beauty in Trusting God

A Character Study of Sarah

“...as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.” (1 Peter 3:6, ESV)

In 1 Peter 3, Sarah is held up to us as an example of godly beauty. We know from the Old Testament that even in her old age, she was so beautiful that her husband knew she would attract the attention of kings in the foreign lands they traveled through. She is also praised in the New Testament as an example of fearless submission and God-honoring faith.

In this study we will learn the basic steps of a character study as we look at Sarah’s life.

Day 1 - Read Sarah’s story in the Bible

A. * Use *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* (or an online concordance, see page 46) to compile a list of every reference to Sarah. Look up the word **Sarah** in the concordance and record each reference listed. Do the same for the word **Sarai**, her name before it was changed to Sarah.

B. The main account of Sarah’s life is recorded in the book of Genesis. Rather than reading isolated verses from Genesis about her, read the entire story of Abraham and Sarah. Start in the first chapter she is mentioned and read continuously until you reach the last reference to her. You will get a much fuller picture of her life this way, and better understand her life with Abraham and the others around her.

Divide the verses into two sections, and read one portion today and the other portion tomorrow. Answer the following questions as you read:

Character study:

1. Find and read person’s story in the Bible
2. Use study helps to find background information
3. Note observations
4. Study difficult passages
5. Summarize & apply

What you will need:

- Bible
- Concordance
- Bible atlas
- Bible dictionary or commentary

Sarai's name was changed to Sarah. What do both names mean?

What was her family ancestry?

What was her husband's family ancestry?

Day 2 - Continue reading

Where did Sarah live and where did she travel to? (Find these places in a Bible atlas.)

When did she live? (Use a Bible dictionary or commentary to help you answer this question.)

What were the main events in her life?

Look up Sarah in a Bible dictionary online:

1. Go to www.biblestudytools.com.
2. Click on "Library" in the upper tool bar.
3. Click on "Dictionaries".
4. In the "Search dictionaries" box, type "Sarah," and hit enter.
5. You'll find entries in several Bible dictionaries explaining the meaning of her name, where she is mentioned in Scripture, etc.

Finding Bible maps online:

1. At www.biblemap.org, you can enter book and chapter of the Bible that you are reading, and it will pinpoint any locations on the map for you.
2. Go to <http://www.biblestudy.org/maps/main.html>. Scroll down and view the two maps entitled "Palestine during the Biblical patriarchs" and "Abraham's Journey to Land of Canaan".
3. At www.bible.ca/maps/, scroll down the page and you will find several maps related to Abraham.

Day 3 - Additional details

Read through the verses about Sarah again and look for answers to the following questions:

At what times did Sarah submit to her husband?

What promises were made to her husband Abraham?

When was her beauty noticed and admired? How old was she at these times?

What hardships did she endure?

What temptations did she face?

What evidences do you notice of her faith in God?

What apparent mistakes did she make and what were the results?

What is she remembered for in the New Testament?

Day 4 - Questions

A. Read Gen. 12:10-20 again. Abraham is often seen as being cowardly in this account. Answer the following questions:

Considering her beauty and the attention she had already attracted, what might have happened to Sarah if the Egyptians killed Abraham?

Reread verses 12 and 13. If you have access to an ESV Bible (you can also look online), read this verse again in that translation. Do you think Abraham might have been trying to protect Sarah by posing as her brother?

Read Gen. 20:12. Was Abraham actually her brother?

Do you think Abraham was forgetting that God was able to protect him and his wife?

How did God protect Sarah when she was in the household of Pharaoh?

B. Read all of Genesis 20 again and compare it with the account in Genesis 12.

What details are the same in this story?

What details are different?

How did God protect Sarah in this situation?

What else does God do in this account?

Reread verses 11-13. How did Abraham answer when Abimelech asked what he saw that led him to act in the way he did?

How did Sarah respond in both Genesis 12 and Genesis 20?

Day 5 - More questions

A. Read Genesis 16 again. This is another story in Sarah's life that is a bit confusing.

Summarize what Sarah suggested to Abraham.

Sarah was suggesting that Hagar bear a child on her behalf. Because she was barren, Hagar would bear a child for her, and the child would become Abraham's heir. This was a custom of that day. Why do you think Sarah did this? Do you think Sarah knew the promises that God had made to Abraham?

What were the results of this decision?

According to God’s promise to Hagar (verses 11-12), what will Ishmael and his descendants be like?

How was Hagar to respond to Sarah’s treatment, according to God’s words to her after she had fled from Sarah?

Use a Bible dictionary to learn more about the Ishmaelites, the descendants of Hagar’s son.

Do you think Sarah’s idea of bearing a child through Hagar was a good one? Why?

B. Note below any other questions you have about Sarah’s life and the references of any specific passages you found puzzling. Leave space after each question or reference to record answers that you find.

Use a commentary, Bible dictionary or study Bible to look for answers to these questions. Ask your parents and pastor for their insights.

“‘Wife’ is here used to describe an inferior, though not degrading, relation, in countries where polygamy prevails. In the case of these female slaves, who are the personal property of his lady, being purchased before her marriage or given as a special present to her, no one can become the husband’s secondary wife without her mistress’ consent or permission. This usage seems to have prevailed in patriarchal times; and Hagar, Sarai’s slave, of whom she had the entire right of disposing, was given by her mistress’ spontaneous offer, to be the secondary wife of Abram, in the hope of obtaining the long-looked-for heir. It was a wrong step—indicating a want of simple reliance on God—and Sarai was the first to reap the bitter fruits of her device.”

– Robert Jamieson, Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary

Day 6 - New Testament references

A. Read 1 Peter 3:1-6.

Reread verse 4. We talked about imperishable beauty in Study 2. Do you think Sarah had the imperishable beauty of a meek and gentle spirit? If so, could this be part of why Sarah was still so beautiful, even at the age of 65, that Abraham was worried that he might be killed by those who were attracted to her?

How, according to this passage, did holy women of God adorn themselves?

Reread verse 6. You have read all the passages in the Bible that tell us about Sarah. Does Scripture record her actually “calling him lord”? List examples of Sarah’s submission to Abraham.

According to the last part of 1 Peter 3:6, how do we become Sarah’s “children”?

Think back over all that you have learned about Sarah. Review the passages that tell her story. Then list the different times in her life with Abraham when she would have been tempted to be afraid.

B. Read Hebrews 11:8-16.

What were the evidences of faith in Abraham's life?

Do you think these circumstances would have been a test of his wife's faith, as well as his?

What did Sarah receive as a result of her faith?

Did Abraham and Sarah see the entire fulfillment of God's promises to them before they died?

Did they still believe God would keep His promises?

Day 7 - Summary and application

A. Write a short summary of Sarah's life.

List several words to describe Sarah's character:

B. What lessons can you learn from Sarah's life?

In what areas are you tempted to be afraid?

What do you need to remember in order to overcome your fears?

In what areas is God calling you to trust Him more fully?

What will you do differently?

For further study:

- Many other men and women are given to us as examples of faith. Using the method described in Study 8, study the entire chapter of Hebrews 11. What is faith? How did these people prove their faith in God? What can you learn from them?
- 1 Peter 3:6 says that we are Sarah's daughters when we choose to obey and "are not afraid with any amazement". Use your concordance to study Scripture passages that tell us to "fear not". What do you learn from these passages that will help you obey with courage like Sarah did?
- Using the method outlined in Study 6, do a topical study of trust. What do you learn that will help you trust and obey God in all the circumstances of your life?
- Make a list of all God's promises as you read through the entire Bible. (You can also mark these in a special way in your Bible.) Note each reference and promise, and categorize these promises in a form that you can review them when you need encouragement to trust God in all things.
- Study the topic of lying in the Bible. Is it ever right to lie? What verses and stories in the Bible support your conclusion?