

My Year of Biblical Womanhood

Sticking to God's Old Testament instructions for a woman isn't easy—especially when adhering to these commands

Strong-willed and independent, I couldn't sew a button on a blouse before I embarked on a radical life experiment: a year of biblical womanhood. Intrigued by the ways in which the phrase "biblical womanhood" was carelessly invoked in my religious community, I decided to take the concept literally. As a result, I found myself growing out my hair (1 Cor. 11:14-15), covering my head (1 Cor. 11:3-16), abstaining from gossip (1 Tim. 3:11), rising before dawn (Prov. 31:15), making my own clothes (Prov. 31:22), remaining silent in church (1 Cor. 14:34-35), and even calling my husband "master" (1 Peter 3:1-6).

In addition, I spent hours researching everything the Bible has to say about women and conducting interviews with women from a variety of faiths and traditions: an Amish housewife, an Orthodox Jew from Israel, a pastor, a daughter of the Quiverfull movement, a Bolivian widow, even a woman in a polygamist marriage.

Some of the highlights of the year included literally praising my husband at the city gate with a homemade "Dan is Awesome" sign (Prov. 31:23), adjusting our habits as consumers so that they were more equitable (31:27) and practicing contemplative prayer in a Benedictine monastery (31:30).

Some of the hardest parts included caring for a computerized baby for four days, and observing the Levitical purity codes that stipulated that I couldn't touch my husband, or any men, for the 12 days surrounding my periods (Lev. 12).

I also took time to explore the fascinating stories of women such as Leah, Rachel, Deborah, Ruth, Huldah, Mary Magdalene, Priscilla and Junia, and to wrestle with those difficult

passages of Scripture that portray misogyny and violence against women.

What I learned through all of this is that the Bible does not present us with a single prescription for how to be a woman of faith, but that women in all kinds of cultures and circumstances can bring honor and glory to God as women of valor.

For more about my adventure, check out *A Year of Biblical Womanhood*, available online and in bookstores around the country.