## Icebreaker

Tell the group about two *different* kinds of work you do. They might be paid, voluntary, at home or studying.

## Scriptures – Proverbs 31:10-31

David explained that there are several layers of meaning in the woman of valour poem, and that it isn’t just about the obvious “wife” as it might appear at first. Divide into subgroups, with paper copies of the poem handout and pencils, and ask each group to read it through and annotate or rewrite it to bring out one of the layers of meaning, then feed back to the group.

* A group looking at “the Worker” can change the female-gendered words to neutral gender and try to think of equivalents in contemporary work/life. If only one subgroup, do this one.
* A group looking at “the woman wisdom” can substitute in the word wisdom for some of the female gendered words. It won’t all fit, so skip onto the next indented section if necessary
* A group looking at “Shekinah/the Holy Spirit” will also need to skip past some of the sections, but should find enough to be worthwhile.
* A group looking at the more obvious “wife of noble character” will need to think up parallels in modern life

## Discussion and application questions

This passage, and much of Proverbs emphasises an enthusiastic approach to work, and chasing away laziness. At the other end of the spectrum some of us need to hear the Sabbath call to stop working at times. Thinking about your work, do you feel enthusiasm or overwork? (Or both or neither?)

The woman in the poem has a tremendous variety in her work and is skilled and dedicated. In your various kinds of work are you looking for more variety or trying to get more skilled? (Or both or neither?)

The worker in the poem serves and blesses others generously. What opportunities do you have to serve and bless others, either directly in your work or through what you earn?

## Prayer

Which ideas in this poem connected with you, either in the original words or as you did your themed interpretations?

Thinking back to your two different kinds of work in the icebreaker, what might God be hinting to you through these scriptures?

Pray positively and proactively about each person’s different kinds of work, not just in response to challenges they may have mentioned.