

Finding a Virtuous Woman

The Burden of a Mother

(Proverbs 31)

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A teacher gave her class of second graders a lesson on the magnet and what it does. The next day in a written test she included this question: "My full name has six letters. The first one is M. I pick up things. What am I?" When the test papers were turned in the teacher was astonished to find that almost 50 percent of the students answered the question with the word Mother instead of the word magnet.

Must a woman still perform those old-fashioned duties of a mother? Does God expect a mother to still give of herself to household duties? Feminism says these are bygone days and that women are now liberated from household work. This is another lie from Satan! In the book of Proverbs chapter 31 there are many verses that speak directly to the wife's ministry revolving around the home and family. Her world begins with her family, and the Christian mother knows that this is where God has called her.

The record of Scripture in both the Old and New Testament instills within our minds that God expects a woman to remain in the home with her young children so she can raise and care for them in those formidable years of life. A mother's absence from the home flies in the face of clear Scriptural commands and examples. A woman is expected to fulfill certain God-given mandates in the home. We must understand that the American home is under Satanic attack and much of the attack has been directed against the role of women. Christian homes are under tremendous social and cultural pressure today. What is needed is for ladies to return to the first principles of Christian womanhood so that they might fulfill their God-given roles.

Oppressed by the amount of work, which had to be crowded into her life as a mother, a certain old woman had chiseled on her headstone several words.

“Here lies a poor woman who always was tired,
Who lived in a world where too much was required.
Weep not for me, friend, when death doth us sever.
I’m going to do nothing for ever and ever.”

Being a mother in the 21st century is not easy but with Biblical guidance and God’s power a Christian woman can become the kind of virtuous woman and godly mother of Proverbs 31. Every woman must ask one question. Am I truly willing to become what God wants me to be? Can you say today:

“I am willing Lord,
I am willing Lord,
To be just exactly
What You want me to be.”

Proverbs 31:1

"The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him."

In Proverbs 31 we have a mother reminding her grown son how to choose a lifelong mate or woman who will be an excellent wife for him and mother to his children. Proverbs gives us important details about Biblical womanhood during a humanistic, hedonistic, and feministic society that has lost all its Biblical moorings concerning true femininity and womanhood. For this reason, this mother’s advice recorded in these verses is very valuable (2 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 15:4). Every Christian woman and mother should take Proverbs 31 to heart and begin to put these life changing truths into practice within her daily routine of life. God’s mind has not changed regarding virtuous living as a wife and mother. Therefore, what is said in these verses is extremely important for our present-day generation of wives and mothers.

The word for "prophecy" in the above verse (Prov. 31:1) is an oracle or utterance that is delivered with a deep burden. One of the burdens of this mother's heart was to see her son marry a woman who was full of virtue and character. This is a message and burden that every mother should share with her son. Apparently this message was something she instilled within her son while he was younger during those formidable years. Now

he was a king and as a mother she continues to remind him what he has been taught and the importance of choosing and marrying a woman of excellence.

Proverbs 31:10

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price *is* far above rubies.”

The term “virtuous” (vs. 10) means someone of “strength, ability, and resource.” The word suggests that the woman who is addressed in this poem or acrostic expresses both strength of *character* and *ability* to perform her God-given roles. She is a capable woman. Men, God wants you to find not only a woman of character but also a capable woman, a woman who can perform her God-given tasks and roles as a mother and wife. This is important and is the prayer of this godly mother for her son. She wants her son to find a woman of right character and a conduct as it relates to her abilities within the home setting. The term “virtuous” would broadly speak of a woman of moral integrity and ability. She is strong in her beliefs, values, and ministry within the home and family unit. She is a godly and resourceful woman.

Martha Peace said:

“As a beautiful flower in the light of the morning sun reflects the glory of God’s creation, and excellent wife reflects God’s glory by her attitudes and actions.”

Proverbs 31:29 says:

“Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.”

This woman is seen excelling or ascending above others in her spiritual life and duties as a wife and mother. Ruth was called a virtuous woman, and everybody knew it. Ruth 3:11 records: “And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou *art* a virtuous woman.”

People are not blind to certain realities. They know when a person practices the kind of living that the Bible endorses. They know when someone practices what they preach. When a woman exhibits godly character and

fulfills her God-given roles she becomes a blessing to her husband, family, and a testimony to those she meets. Her husband is especially blessed to have a virtuous woman of proper character and conduct standing by his side and living in the home. This is brought out in various verses.

Proverbs 12:4

“A virtuous woman *is* a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed *is* as rottenness in his bones.”

This proverb is true. It describes the potential impact that a wife can have in the home. She has the potential of expressing *happiness* or *harm* to her husband. She can shame her husband instead of being a help and blessing to him. A virtuous woman, a woman that excels in her godly character and who is resourceful will become a “crown” to her husband. A crown speaks of respect, honor, and glory. When a woman is virtuous, strong in her Christian character, ethics, and fulfilling her role as a wife and mother, she brings glory and honor to her husband as the leader of the home.

In other words, by living a godly life and in accordance with Biblical womanhood, she will not bring shame to her husband. Instead, she will be respectful to him and be a blessing to him all the days of his life. A virtuous woman will treat her husband with love, respect, dignity, and committed service all her days. She will stand by his side and be a tremendous help to him. She will enhance his life and be supportive of him. Only when she reaches out to him in this way can a woman be a crown to the man’s life or a wife who brings honor and blessing into her husband’s life as the leader of the family unit.

Someone said:

“Happy is the man who had a good wife; unhappy is the man who has a bad one.”

Before studying this section of Scripture in Proverbs 31, I’m reminded of a little poem that I stumbled across some time ago. It speaks of a woman’s busy day as a mother.

“Mama, on a winter’s day, milked the cows and fed them hay, hitched the mule, drove kids to school...did a washing, mopped the floors, washed the windows and did some chores...Cooked a dish of home-dried fruit, pressed her husband’s Sunday suit...swept the parlor, made the bed, baked a dozen loaves of bread...split some firewood and lugged it in, enough to fill the kitchen bin...Cleaned the lamps and put in oil, stewed some apples before they spoiled...churned the butter, baked a cake, then exclaimed, ‘For goodness sake!’ when the calves ran from the pen, and she chased them all back in again...Gathered eggs and locked the stable, back to the house and set the table...cooked a supper that was delicious, then washed and dried all dirty dishes...fed the cat and sprinkled clothes, mended a basketful of hose...then opened the organ and began to play: ‘When You Come to the End of a Perfect Day.’”

In our outline of Proverbs 31, we are going to look at the marks of a virtuous wife, a woman that excels in her character and service toward her husband and family in the home unit. Ladies, God can help you become the kind of virtuous woman Proverbs 31 talks about because of His divine power that is available to you.

2 Peter 1:3 declares:

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”

God has called every woman to a life of virtue and excellence. Any flower can bloom when it is tended by God’s hand. God can make you into an virtuous woman that a blessing to your husband and family.

Proverbs 31 is an acrostic poem corresponding to the Hebrew alphabet. It was a poem written to teach a man what qualities to look for in a wife. This passage presents the poetic picture of an ideal wife. Sometimes ladies will deceive themselves and think that a woman like this one mentioned in Proverbs 31 is impossible to duplicate. They claim that she is superwoman! Of course, this is not true since *God’s commands are God’s enablements*. God has promised His presence and power to assist every woman to live out the kind of life that He expects from her.

Philippians 2:13

“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.”

Often a woman who is bent on living her own life and doing her own thing will read Proverbs 31 with the mentality that this kind of womanhood is out of date for 21st century living. But this type of thinking reveals that a woman is not ready to become a virtuous woman of spiritual excellence that God wants her to be. Ladies, your heart must be one of submissiveness, tenderness, and readiness to be all that God wants you to be. God does not expect you to be a superwoman but a Spirit-filled woman (Eph. 5:18), a woman who fears God (Prov. 31:30) and who wants to honor Him with her life.

This Proverb echoes the same truth taught in the New Testament about Biblical womanhood.

Titus 2:5

“*To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

1 Timothy 5:14

“I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.”

In Proverbs we find that the home is called “her household” (15, 21, 29). This indicates that her center of ministry and responsibility was in the home with her children. This is a good reminder of what God expects of women who have younger children that are still in the home.

Someone said:

“The wife is in charge of the home whereas the man is the head of the home.”

This is true. God has called a woman to invest her time in the duties of home life. Generally speaking, she is to take charge of her home duties and excel in them, whereas the man is to take charge as the spiritual leader of

the home. This chapter is the purest and best description of Biblical womanhood found in the Bible. Ladies, you must take it to heart and pattern your life according to God's description of a virtuous woman and wife. Within the sphere of the house, we see that the woman has opportunity for great influence and achievement not only succeeding herself but enabling her husband and children to succeed as well.

What are the marks of the virtuous woman who is excelling in her personal and home life?

1. She is rare (vs. 10).

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price *is* far above rubies.”

This verse speaks of how a virtuous woman, a woman whose strength in character and resourceful conduct within the home is a rare find. Who can find a virtuous woman? She is like a rare piece of treasure that is unearthed. And yet her value or price is far above the cost of expensive rubies (Prov. 3:15). In other words, the value of a virtuous woman cannot be compared to material wealth. Her price and value to a husband and home cannot be compared to the cost or expense of anything else in life.

A virtuous woman is a rare find within a humanistic, feministic, and materialistic society. Therefore, her price is highly valuable. Men, you don't have enough money to pay for a virtuous godly wife. Her character and conduct in the home are priceless to you. If you have a wife such as this you may want to pause and thank God today! You have a rare find. Women of excellence are rare. There are not many to go around. Why is this? It's because women are not committed to living out Biblical womanhood. They are not wholeheartedly committed to living out a life of righteous character and conduct that is pleasing or honoring to God within the family. The virtuous woman is like a rare gem since many women these days are not willing to sell out for God and be what God wants them to be within the home unit. The songwriter wrote:

“To be what You want me to be, dear Lord,
I'll live so the world can see.

To be what You want me to be, dear Lord,
I'll live for eternity.
To be more like Your son, dear Lord,
Until the race is won."

Ladies, where is your heart today? Is your heart committed to excellence? Do you have the desire to live out a life of excellence before God and in the home? Do you want to be a virtuous woman? When God gets a hold of your heart you will want to be what He wants you to be. You will abandon your personal goals, agendas, and dreams in life and conform your future to God's purpose for your life (Luke 9:23).

2. She is reliable (vv. 11-12).

This is indicated in two ways:

a. She can be trusted with finances (vs. 11).

"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil."

The virtuous woman can be trusted with finances. Her husband can have complete trust or confidence in her when it comes to handling money. She will not waste money. She is a careful steward. The husband's money and possessions are safe with her. She will not become a spendthrift and drain the bank account. Because of the care she takes with money the man will "have no need of spoil" or monetary increase. Every woman must remember that money does not grow on trees and that stewardship is an important part of motherhood. She must use money wisely and not spend what is not in the bank account. She must learn the secret of being satisfied with less. She will not see any need to keep up with the Jones' family down the street. The virtuous woman knows how to handle money and use it effectively for her home.

b. She can be trusted with service (vs. 12).

"She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life."

The virtuous woman has a servant's heart (Matt. 10:24; 20:27) and this will lead her to perform good works for her husband throughout the marriage. If a woman has a servant's heart she will realize that she is called upon to be the man's helper (Gen. 2:18). This means that she will not be a rebel against his will. Her goal is to work with him and for her husband. When a woman does this "she will do him good and not evil all the days of his life." This means that she will be there to help him through life to accomplish his goals and follow him.

The woman of excellence, who is virtuous, does not seek to work *against* her man but work *with* him. She is dedicated to her husband. All that she says and does is meant to support, build up, and encourage him. Ladies, life is difficult enough for a man who makes his way in the world. When a man must add the burden of a wife who does not understand or support him, it makes life most miserable for him. The virtuous woman expresses the strength of her character and conduct in the way she treats her husband. She is to faithfully serve him and do him good by supporting his endeavors in life and in this way she becomes both a compliment and completer of him.

Some women are mixed blessings to their husbands. Eve tempted Adam (Gen. 3:6). Job's wife urged him to curse God and die (Job 2:9). Then you can see the brawling woman of the proverbs (Prov. 21:9). These types of women do not help the man along in life or do him good. They actually do him "evil" and put a thorn in his side. The virtuous woman is not like this. She seeks to "do him good" by supporting him and encouraging him in his life and calling. Her husband's good consumes her life. Doing good for him is her desire. No wonder her price is far above rubies. She does him good for she is there for him, helping him, and giving him the assistance that he needs for accomplishing God's goal for his life.

You may ask, "What about my goals?" Ladies, your primary goal should be to support the man's goals in life. God has called you to stand by his side as a helper (Gen. 2:18) so that you might assist him in accomplishing his goals. This is Biblical womanhood and God's high calling for you. If a woman is going to do her husband good she will be loyal to him, dependable, trustworthy, and helpful to him.

3. She is resourceful (vv. 13-19).

“She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise *is* good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.”

The ideal wife is not an idle wife. She is industrious. She is resourceful. She is seen to be an initiator who needs no prodding to attend to her duties (“worketh willingly” – vs. 13). This woman works willingly and diligently. She takes personal delight in her work and gets out of bed early (vs. 15) and works until it’s late (vs. 18). This woman is a go-getter in life. She is not a lazybones type of woman. She does not sleep the morning away. She has no time, nor would she want to take time for the afternoon soap operas. She is with it in the industrious field for she is seen supplying the needs of her family and husband. She is indeed a domestic engineer!

The excellence of a woman is seen in her ability to do the tasks that God wants her to accomplish as a mother, wife, and woman. She wants to manage the home affairs well and free the man from household duties that are hers. Many men come home after a hard day’s work and find themselves doing the job of the woman. Ladies, this shames Biblical womanhood, and it should shame you. God expects that you accomplish your roles as a woman and fulfill your God-given duties as a wife and woman of excellence. This verse gives a catalog of her activities. It is a detailed account of what fills the hours of her day and the days of her week.

Her resourcefulness can be seen in three ways:

- a. She clothes the family (vs. 13).

“She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.”

This woman spends a great deal of time buying raw materials and spinning, weaving, and sewing. Mom, it's your job to see to it that the children are clothed properly (vs. 21). You may not make clothing as this woman did but the principle cannot be overlooked. God wants a woman to take the initiative to keep the children dressed properly. You know, the way children are dressed reflects the mother. This has always been true. A mother must know what God expects of her. If she is going to be a mother she must understand that a large portion of the child's care falls into her lap and hands. God holds her responsible for taking care of the children and keeping them clothed properly is certainly part of this responsibility.

b. She feeds the family (vv. 14-15).

"She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens (servants)"

This woman is compared to the trading ships that return to port filled with produce from afar. She is compared to a sailing merchant ship that brings food into port. In other words, the virtuous woman knows how to provide for her household. She is like a merchant ship that sails into the coast bringing back plenty of food for her family. She is always on top of feeding the family and making sure they have plenty. This woman knows what to do to get food on the table. This woman knows that shopping was often a daily routine, especially in Bible times. This was true because refrigeration was not available in these days. So the woman would often be like a merchant ship as she brought back food from the local market. Now let's update this to our times.

Ladies, God wants you to provide for your family. He wants you to be a woman who sees the importance of going to the supermarket and getting good bargains like a merchant would. He wants you to prepare meals for your children and husband. Does a woman really have to do those old-fashioned household duties like having supper on the table when a hungry man gets home from work? According to this study God expects the virtuous woman to remember that she is responsible for making meals and serving them to her family.

The implication is this. A woman of excellence will make sure that her household is fed. “She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens” (Prov. 31:15). This woman uses her time wisely. She rises while it is yet night (early morning) in order to distribute food to her family and household servants (“maidens”). There can be no doubt about it. The excellent woman understands that she is the cook. She knows how to prepare meals for her household. Ladies, this is not old-fashioned, it is Bible-fashioned.

God wants you to know your responsibility toward your family. If you don’t know how to cook then get some cookbooks and get started. Your husband will be gracious! A woman of excellence will take her responsibilities seriously and not look at cooking or food preparation as something that is archaic. We see that a woman’s energies should be poured into the home life. A godly woman wants to faithfully meet her family’s needs. She sacrifices herself for her family. Her time and energies are poured into the family instead of all kinds of extra activity. Her family is her priority in life.

c. She helps the family financially (vs. 16-19).

“She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.”

This woman knew how to use her spare time productively. She became involved in agricultural activities. Men, if you went to work, came home, and discovered that your wife had purchased a ten-acre field from a farmer while you were gone, what would you do? What would be your reaction? “Honey, you know that I love you, but you must return the field.”

Apparently this woman lived in a wealthier household where she had opportunity to purchase land. If she saw good opportunity she was given the authority to make a wise decision. Now ladies, you may not have money to purchase a field, but you are given the responsibility to purchase things for the family that would meet their needs in life. The purchases you make must be wise and resourceful. You must use money wisely. The virtuous woman knows how to effectively use money. She knows how to stretch a dollar.

She also knows how to use the field to be resourceful for the Bible says, “with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard” (vs. 16). This woman was not afraid to get her hands dirty. She does not just purchase the field to increase her wealth but uses it to plant a vineyard, which can be used for harvesting grapes. This woman was always looking out for her family’s needs in everything that she did. She had the goal of providing for her household.

It’s important to understand that this woman’s enterprise did not overtake her family responsibilities. They simply helped her to fulfill her responsibilities. *This is not a mother working outside the home but a mother working while she is in the home.* We don’t know all the details of this woman’s family situation. Perhaps the children were older and this gave her more time for her enterprising activities. However, I tend to believe that this woman simply found time to create materials that she could sell to earn money on the side and help in the family needs.

“She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.”

Verse seventeen is an idiomatic expression that speaks of the woman’s ability and desire to work hard to help her household. The expression of girding up the loins speaks of a woman tying up her robe to keep it from interfering with her hard work and labors. This pictured her readiness to begin her work. When it says she “strengtheneth her arms” it pictures how the woman has the power and ability to perform the tasks that she needs to do in order to help her family. This woman did not even take vitamins but she still has the fortitude, drive, and determination to do what she could to help the family financially.

“She perceiveth that her merchandise *is* good: her candle goeth not out by night.”

Verse eighteen reminds us again of her resourcefulness. A Russian proverb says, “There are two fools in the market. One asks too much and one asks too little.” This woman knows that what she is making is good and will sell in the local markets. She knows the price that she can get for a project well

done. Therefore, she is ready if need be to burn the midnight oil and finish her project. The old line is still true:

“Man may work from sun to sun,
But woman’s work is never done.”

The virtuous woman is seen to be diligent in finishing a project that might help or profit the family in some way. The virtuous woman is very industrious in her living and practice. She tries to do all she can with the time she has to enhance her family financially.

“She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.”

The “distaff” and “spindle” were tools used for cloth-making. Imagine how long it took to spin thread or yarn, then weave a piece of cloth! Consider how much time every woman had to spend spinning and weaving in ancient days. Yet this woman does it without complaint. She knew that this trade would clothe her family and also bring extra finances into the home. The making of beautiful material was an important lucrative trade. This virtuous woman, even with children in the home setting, still found time to do those things that could bring money out in the world. She knew that her first commitment was to her children while at the same time she sought to help financially in any way that she could. All her effort and hard work was designed to help the family.

4. She is responsive (vs. 20).

“She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.”

This noble woman was not so busy with her household duties that she forgot the needs of others. The virtuous woman was ready to respond to the needs of others. She was interested in helping other people who were hurting and in need and became a blessing to many by her generosity. This woman reminds us of another generous woman called Dorcas.

Acts 9:36-39

“Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.”

The virtuous woman is the type of woman that demonstrates pity and kindness to those who are in need. She responds to the needs of others. She is ready and willing to shower gifts upon them. This woman was not self-centered or selfish. She was giving and generous. Let me tell you what Jesus said about this during His earthly ministry. “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Every woman, wife, and mother must remember this. When we learn the secret of reaching out to others we will find great blessing and fulfillment in life. Any woman can write an encouraging card and send it to someone. Any woman can visit another needy mother or elderly person and give her a gift certificate to a store or some other place. She can drop some groceries off to a mother who is struggling. The virtuous woman is this kind of woman. She responds to the needs of others.

5. She is ready (vs. 21).

“She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household *are* clothed with scarlet.”

This woman is prepared or ready for the weather to change. Therefore, she is not afraid of the snow. You may say, “But this statement was made before the invention of cars and driving on frozen freeways!” Yes, but this is not what it is talking about. This virtuous woman is not afraid of the snow or the colder months because she has her children and husband clothed with

warm clothing. Snow is not uncommon in Israel or the land of Palestine. It can linger in the hollows or shadows for two or three weeks at a time.

The virtuous woman makes sure that the family is prepared for the winter season. This once again demonstrates her concern for her family. Mothers today must take this to heart and learn to cover their babies well in the winter months. They must use motherly instincts or sense and keep their children warm and protected from the elements.

I have seen more than one mother carrying a baby around in her arms on a cold winter's day without covering the baby's face or adequately clothing a little boy or girl. Mom, babies are defenseless against the cold without your help and little children are ignorant of the cold weather. Keep them safe and warm from the elements. This is your motherly calling.

Years ago, a young mother was making her way across the hills of South Wales, carrying her tiny baby in her arms, when she was overtaken by a blinding blizzard. She never reached her destination and when the blizzard had subsided her body was found by searchers beneath a mound of snow. But they discovered that before her death, she had taken off all her outer clothing and wrapped it about her baby. When they unwrapped the child, to their great surprise and joy, they found he was alive and well. She had mounded her body over his and given her life for her child, proving the depths of her mother love. Years later that child, David Lloyd George, grown to manhood, became prime minister of Great Britain, and, without a doubt, one of England's greatest statesmen.

6. She is rewarded (vs. 22).

“She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing *is* silk and purple.”

The woman's skill, industry, and wise investments pay off. She has managed everything so well that she can afford to reward herself. She does so by making herself coverings for her bed. Women somehow like fancy coverings on the bed. Men don't seem to mind what the covers look like just as long as they keep them warm at night. But a woman likes fancy covers. She also rewards herself with her clothing which are described as

being “silk and purple.” This type of clothing would evidence her wealth since purple dye was extracted in minute quantities from certain shellfish found in the eastern parts of the Mediterranean Sea, making it costly and rare.

Please note that her use of fine things is not condemned but commended as rewards for her hard work. Men, we must allow our women to be rewarded for their sacrifice and work in the home. We should not keep nice things from them when they commit themselves so wholeheartedly to their tasks. And men, don’t think you can buy guns and ammunition every year and forget to reward your wife. Let her know that you appreciate her. Open your wallet. Get out the cash!

7. She is respected (vv. 23-25).

The virtuous woman is respected by all those who know her because of the way she conducts herself in life. This is evident in the next set of verses.

There are three reasons why this woman is respected.

- a. She gets the job done in the home (vs. 23).

“Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.”

This woman gains respect because she allows her husband to succeed in his calling. The virtuous woman does her work in the home effectively so the husband can do his job or work effectively. The term “in the gates” (Deut. 21:19-20; 25:7) coupled with the husband sitting “among the elders of the land” suggests that her husband had a community leadership position. This is probably why the family was above average in respect to wealth and servants. The term “gates” was the description where business, legal, and governmental matters were carried on.

The point is this. The man was able to dedicate himself to his calling because the woman was dedicated to her household calling. He was known in the gates of leadership and business because he was not sidetracked by

wife or home problems that would detract from his ability to lead. The man did not have to worry about the children and home conditions knowing that a godly and virtuous woman was in control. This does not mean the man had no responsibility in the home or to his wife. It simply means that he could concentrate on his job in a greater way and be committed to his calling since he did not have to pick up the slack in the home.

Many men must come home from work to a woman who is out of order and out of sync. They come home to a brawling woman and find themselves making supper and doing the laundry or those other home duties that could and should be done by a committed mother and wife. Ladies, when your man must do your responsibilities it keeps him from being known in the gates, and it also becomes a frustration to him. These things ought not to be!

As a woman you must take your home responsibilities seriously and commit yourself to God's high calling for your life which is in the home. God has called you to fulfill home duties since it is your household (Prov. 31:15, 21, 27) and when a man must do them it shames you and God's design for womanhood. This woman is respected for the simple reason that she allows her man to succeed in life.

Something else might be said at this point. The virtuous woman functions in a way that honors her husband's leadership rather than demeaning it or tearing it down. In other words, she respects him and builds him up and this is yet another reason why he is known in the gates. The wife should build up her husband and not humiliate him in front of others. Any woman will be respected for doing this.

b. She gives good work for added income (vs. 24).

"She maketh fine linen, and selleth *it*; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant."

The virtuous woman was also respected because the work that she did was always done right. She did good work allowing her trade to provide supplemental income for the family. The mention of "fine "linen" (outer

garments) and “girdles” (belts) were her creations that she sold to the merchants to help in the economic affairs of the household. It’s likely that this woman sold some of the materials she has made (vs. 13) in trade for food or money to help buy needful things for the home (vs. 24). The merchants always knew that her products were done well and because of this she could get a good price for them. It always pays to do things right when you do them. Cutting corners will sooner or later catch up with you. So, this woman was respected because of the excellence of her work.

c. She girds herself with virtues (vs. 25).

“Strength and honour *are* her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.”

The virtuous woman also gains respect because of her virtues which she exhibits in her life. She is called the virtuous woman (vv. 10, 29) and one of the reasons for this title is because of the virtues she displays in her life. The true clothing that this woman would wear consisted of her godly virtues of strength and honor. They are spiritual clothing and this is what is suggested in this verse.

This virtuous woman was clothed with spiritual strength. When the virtuous woman was exposed to fierce temptations she would rely on the Lord’s strength and come through victorious. No foe could daunt her - no fear could haunt her! This woman knew that she was on the victory side. The virtuous woman was clothed with spiritual strength for she knew that her strength was in the Lord (Ps. 46:1).

She was also clothed with honor because of the way she conducted herself in life. Her honor would refer to her spiritual excellence and dignity as a woman. She was known as a very godly and spiritual woman who walked with God and manifested godly traits in her character and convictions. This woman had more than fancy clothing. She had the true clothing that will count for now and throughout eternity. She wore the clothing that will make a household holy and a woman a true blessing to her husband and family.

8. She is right (vv. 26-27).

a. She is right in what she says (vs. 26)

“She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue *is* the law of kindness.”

These are the gold and silver qualities of this woman’s spiritual excellence. She not only spins, weaves, buys fields, provides for the needs of her family, and helps the poor, she also gives instructive wisdom to her children and family (Prov. 1:3, 7, 20; 4:7).

Abraham Lincoln said:

“The greatest lessons I ever learned were at my mother's knees.”

This woman shares the wisdom of God’s Word, the wisdom of her personal experiences, and the wisdom of her age with her children. She might also share the wisdom of her homemaking skills with others (Titus 2:4). She has wisdom because she knows what is true and how to live in accordance with truth. Children today need this kind of motherly wisdom.

A Jewish proverb says:

“A child without a mother is like a door without a knob.”

The Bible also says that “in her tongue is the law of kindness” and this speaks of the way she speaks to her children and husband. She has a meek and quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3:4). Her words are not harsh and battering but kind and loving. Love is kind (1 Cor. 13:4) and she knows that a kind word can build up instead of tear down. She knows that kindness (Col. 3:12) is Christlike and will always be the best example to set for her children. The children probably learn as much from this woman’s moral example than they do with her teaching. The children were *taught* a lot of things from this woman, but they also *caught* a lot of things by just watching their mother.

Someone said:

“It’s not always what you were taught but what you caught that makes a difference.”

b. She is right in what she sees (vs. 27).

“She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.”

The word “looketh” means to “to spy, keep watch, or observe” what is going on in her household. This woman is on top of things. She watches over the affairs of her household. She knows how to keep control of her children and those who were working under her as servants (vs. 15). The virtuous woman sees what is going on in the physical and spiritual lives of her children. She knows what is happening for she is on top of things and wants to protect and care for her children in the best possible way. Blessed are they who can see what is happening! Staying on top of her household duties, children, and servants was a full-time job. This is why she does not eat “the bread of idleness” which is an expression used for laziness. If a person had time to always sit around and eat bread they were not doing their job or fulfilling their obligation.

The wife also looks well to the ways of her household by seeing the needs of the husband and family and providing for these needs. For instance, a husband has the right to expect a neat home, clean clothes, and a meal on the table when he comes home from a hard day's work. When a woman looks well to the ways of her household she will be taking care of these household needs. A woman should spend her day in honest labor.

It becomes clear that God wants a woman to fulfill her God-given roles. The home or “household” is her domain, and her ministry involves her family. As a result, she experiences a genuine satisfaction in the work that she does. She possesses an inner fulfillment knowing that she is following God’s calling and making a difference in her children’s lives.

There was a neat greeting card for Father's Day. On the front it read: “Dad, I want you to know that if there's anything you need, like a soft pillow, an afternoon snack, or a glass of lemonade...” Then on the inside it said: “Just let me know, and I'll call Mom!” Well, we know that motherhood involves much more than just picking up after everybody else. It involves real

commitment to excellence of living that will influence the home and children for a lifetime.

9. She is recognized (vs. 28).

The virtuous woman will receive recognition from her family for being the kind of woman that is committed to motherhood and living a spiritual life. Recognition speaks of how her family acknowledged her for her achievement and service as a mother and wife. She deserved recognition for her faithful service and commitment to Biblical womanhood and spiritual living.

“Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband *also*, and he praiseth her.”

a. She is recognized by her children (vs. 28a).

Unlike many homes in America today where the children are bitter toward their parents, this home manifests praise for being a godly mother. The children offer up thanks that they were born in such a home as this where a godly mother fulfilled her role so effectively and lovingly. When her children rise up and call her “blessed” they do so realizing that her example, love and dedication to them throughout the years cannot be replaced with anything else.

The Hebrew verb rendered “call her blessed” is not the verb frequently used for pronouncing a blessing but a verb form that has the sense of “declaring someone happy.” In one sense the children were saying, “Hooray, hooray for our mother.” That's how the children of this woman talk. What greater words could a mother receive? Children, even while they are still in the home, can realize that a woman is an outstanding mother. Of course, when they are full-grown they too can look back with gratitude and thanks for a mother who accomplished her role effectively and biblically. They will sing their mother’s praises throughout their entire lifetime. Even at her funeral.

b. She is recognized by her husband (vs. 28b).

Her husband also recognizes her as a virtuous woman when the text says that he “praiseth her” in much the same way her children do. He sends a joyous note of praise to his wife for being a kind, loving, submissive, consistent, teaching, virtuous mother and wife. Any man who knows that he has a good wife should send forth praise to her for her commitment to excellence and living. He should not hold back his praise to her. Men need to keep saying “thank you” to their wives for all that they do.

10. She is renowned (vv. 29-31).

The virtuous woman has a reputation of being a woman that is a true godly mother, a spiritual woman, and a wife that is committed to the welfare of her family and the success of her husband. Everybody knows this when viewing her walk and talk in life.

She has a three-fold reputation.

- a. She is a superior woman (vs. 29).

“Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.”

The term “daughters” is an expression related to womanhood and this statement is actually made by her husband. In his praise of her womanhood, he reminds her that she is a renowned woman or a woman with a reputation that tops them all. The term “excellest” means surpassing and in this context means to “be superior” or “better than.” The husband was saying, “You are the best of them all. You beat them all. You are the number one among them all!” This is because she had “done virtuously” or practiced true Biblical womanhood by the way she lived. She was a woman of excellence in her character and conduct of living (vs. 10) and this brought praise to the lips of her husband. He was so thankful for her godly life and ministry.

- b. She is a spiritual woman (vs. 30).

“Favour *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain: *but* a woman *that* feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.”

Verse thirty is the capstone of this woman’s noble character. She may be beautiful to look upon in her purple fancy clothing (vs. 22) but her true beauty was her spiritual character. Her true beauty was seen in the way she lived and expressed herself as a woman of excellence. The expression “Favour is deceitful” means that a woman’s outward charm or beauty can mislead or trick people as to what she is really like. Beauty does not tell the full story, or really any of the story, regarding a woman’s true character.

Matthew Henry put it this way:

“There may be an impure deformed soul lodged in a comely and beautiful body.”

Men, don’t let beauty cause you to make a quick decision for a future mate. Beauty can be very deceiving. It might be an illusion or mirage. By the way, beauty changes through the course of the years. The young look gives way to the older look. Beauty is a transitory thing whereas the true beauty of a woman’s character will last forever.

When the Bible says that “beauty *is* vain” it is not giving women the advice to try and look as ugly as they can for their husbands (read the Song of Solomon 4:1-7). One must understand that the Bible is making a comparison here. The point is this. In comparison to virtue and spirituality, outward beauty is vain. It is empty. It can’t do anything for a woman. It has nothing true and lasting to offer a woman. Spiritual living is the true beauty that lasts for it is not transitory; it is the true beauty for it brings joy and gladness to the home. It is true beauty for it is the mark of godliness and spiritual excellence. Some women spend hours trying to improve their external beauty and miss out on what has lasting value!

1 Peter 3:3-4 gives us this same perspective on beauty:

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel (*to become overly excessive and obsessed in only the physical*); But *let it be* the hidden man of

the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

A woman’s true beauty is seen in that she “feareth the LORD” which means that she has deep reverence and respect for God, so much so, that she possesses a healthy or wholesome dread of not pleasing God with her life. In other words, the virtuous woman lives to please God, and this is her driving force in life. She wants to live in such a way that her life brings pleasure to God and that she has His favor. *The fear of God means that she lives to honor God and with this mindset she will not want to do anything that will bring displeasure to Him.* The fear of God is the deep respect that people have toward God and the deep desire to please Him in everything they do. When a woman lives like this her husband will rise up and praise her. In short, he will shout, “Hurray for my wife. She is so wonderful.”

c. She is a successful woman (vs. 31)

“Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.”

The husband is now saying that his virtuous wife is successful in life, and she should be rewarded accordingly. The “fruit of her hands” speaks of those things that her own hands have wrought or what she has accomplished (vs. 16). It encompasses everything that she does in her life from a physical perspective (her craft) and from a spiritual perspective (her virtues). The husband is declaring that his wife should receive great reward, blessing, and praise because she has lived as a virtuous woman. An unusual woman calls for unusual recognition! Although her husband might reward and praise his wife, In the end, her own virtuous life will bring honor and praise to her.

We have seen the virtues of an excellent wife in Proverbs 31. They encompass such things as hard work, wise investments, good use of time, planning ahead, care for others, respect for one’s spouse, ability to share godly values with others, wise counsel, and godly reverence or fear expressed toward God. These are qualities that lead to honor, praise, success, personal dignity and worth, and enjoyment of life.

Ladies, it truly does pay to practice virtuous living. It pays in this life, and it will pay in the next life. A woman may receive praise “in the gates” or the public domain of life for the way she has lived, but more important she will receive God’s reward and praise throughout eternity for fulfilling her role as a virtuous woman and excellent wife (Rev. 22:12).

So, we have discovered the burden that every godly mother should possess for her son. Her burden should be for her son to find this rare ruby or jewel of Proverbs 31. Every mother should be instructing her son about the importance of marrying the right woman who will have a genuine heart for him and the home.

Proverbs 31:1

"The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him."

Every wise mother knows that the happiness and blessing of her son’s future depends on the kind of person he chooses as his lifelong mate. What else can this mother possibly say? Only one thing.

Proverbs 31:10

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price *is* far above rubies.”

Abraham Lincoln once said:

“No man is poor who has had a godly mother.”