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The Proverbs Woman

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### The Virtuous Woman and Marriage by Amanda Stephanus

Throughout our Christian lives we most likely have heard or read various lessons on the Virtuous Woman (Proverbs 31). This text has been used to teach women how to be godly wives and mothers. Using this beautiful text, I want us to hone in on lessons regarding marriage.

The first observation for consideration is found in verse 11: "The heart of her husband safely trusts her." When we think about those we trust, what comes to mind? Someone who is honest, someone upon whom you can depend and, someone who does not require constant correction or supervision. Our husbands should have that same level of trust towards us. We ought to use honesty and dependability to garner the trust of our husbands in the same way the virtuous woman did.

As a result of the virtuous woman's husband trusting her, he is able to be out in the community and be known (v.23). How many times do we stop to think about how our actions and behaviors at home affect our husband's lives at work, in the community, in the church? Proverbs 12:4 tells us an excellent, or virtuous, wife is a crown to her husband. The more our husbands can trust us and depend on us to fulfill our God-given role in marriage, the more successful they can be in their own responsibilities.

The next observation is found in verse 12: "She does him good and not evil all the days of her life." On the surface this might seem like an easy thing to do, to do good towards our husbands every day of our lives. However, there is no exception for the days when we are not feeling well or when we feel he does not reciprocate our love. There is no exception to being kind toward our husband every day when we might not like a decision that he has made. At times this is more difficult for us as women because it can be easy to allow external factors to influence our actions. We tend to get our feelings hurt more easily, and when our husband does something that hurts us, unintentional or not, we can be tempted to lash out or to not think good towards him. It is during these moments that it is important to remind ourselves that we are in control of ourselves and that we have a God-given command to respect and submit ourselves to our husband the same way we do the Lord (Ephesians 5:22).

The last point for consideration is found in verse 28: "Her children rise up and

call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her." When a wife does all that she is commanded to do and takes care of her family, the husband commends her for all that she does, and through praising her, gives her the encouragement she needs to continue being a faithful, loving wife. While our behavior should not be contingent upon our husband praising us for who we are and what we do, it is always encouraging to know that they value what we do. Ultimately, we know that our Heavenly Father is pleased with us when we fear Him and keep His commands (Prov 31:30).



### Reflections of a Godly Woman by Alice Simmons

"Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies" (Proverbs 31:10 KJV). What biblically defines a virtuous woman? In Proverbs 31, King Lemuel's mother is giving him advice as she warns him of the dangers he may face as he begins his "royal" position. Her beautiful words portray what every mother wishes for her son who is about to enter a new phase in his life, especially when it comes to choosing a wife. Many traits of a godly woman involve her daily actions and activities.

Aside from portraying goodness, fairness, honesty, and love in the home, the woman who desires to set the proper example also shows those godly traits to her friends and those with whom she sees at any given opportunity. Is she kind and considerate as she waits patiently at the various offices? How does she react when coworkers are rude, nasty and critical?

Do her neighbors see and hear soft-spoken words coming from her mouth, or is it a yelling, grouchy sound to their ears? How does she treat the busy clerk at the neighborhood market, or the clerk at the department store who accidentally overcharges her on a sale item? These are the situations that 'try' our Christian example and show our 'true' self.

Even our recreation should portray who we are and who we serve. Steering away from questionable places where there are ungodly practices is a must, even though we do not take part; our presence there does not look good. Constantly exposing ourselves to sin not only increases our chances of partaking in sin and adds to causing our faith to weaken, but we also are setting the wrong example for others.

When we choose to keep God in our lives and stay busy in His Kingdom--

reading and studying His Word daily, obeying His Christian principles--our thoughts and attitudes are attuned to positive words and deeds. Out of the goodness of our hearts we come to the aid of any who need our help. Our Christian sisters, friends, and neighbors should know for certain they can call on us any time and we will be there for them. "A friend loves at all times" (Proverbs 17:17) is a proverb that is so true and defines who we are. Under all circumstances Christian sisters/friends are ones on whom we can depend. We are friends with one another in the Lord's Body.

Oddly enough Jesus referred to His enemies as "friends." Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do, then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him" (Matthew 26:50). Yes, even those in the world, those who may not like us, those who are different from us, all should be treated as if they are our friends. We should always exemplify a Christian woman.

We should never compromise the truths found in God's Word. Our approach in how we "stand firm" when teaching or discussing God's Word should be demonstrated in a humble, kind manner. Never resort to arguing or arrogantly appearing as a 'know it all!'

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver" (Proverbs 25:11) sends an excellent message that speaking in a timely manner with kind words is more effective than a haughty, negative attitude. Our character is determined by our speech.

Jesus says, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). What a wise self-examining statement! Constantly displaying a negative attitude in how we react, in what we say, and the body language we express, is readily evaluated by others. First impressions make judgments. Learning to control our feelings and responses to others is an essential asset.

As to hospitality: Opening our homes as the welcoming hostess sets the stage for a pleasant time enjoyed by all those invited. Putting our best foot forward to make "company" feel relaxed and comfortable in our homes is a must. It's always fulfilling to know everyone left wanting to come again. A godly woman makes it a point to serve her guests as best she can, and though exhausted, she has the satisfaction that "She has done what she could" (Mark 14:8).

When we leave this world, all the 'things' we possessed, the successes we've obtained, the blessings we've received, or the experiences we endured, will all be forgotten in time, but our reputations built on our actions and attitudes will always be remembered. We hope they will be treasured and well-spoken of by all who knew us. God bless us as we strive to reflect godliness in all we do.

"Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised" (Proverbs 31:30).



### The Ideal Woman by Elizabeth Turner Beall

The Proverbs woman was neither lazy nor idle, but worked tirelessly for the good of her family. To read verses 10-31 and see what she does, some of us might be tempted to say, "I could never do all that! I'm not even going to try." Others might say, "It makes me tired just reading about her!" In today's culture she might be called "Superwoman." We should not be discouraged reading about this "Ideal Woman" because she is our model, someone we can learn from and make our goal to be like.

In verses 13, 19, 22, and 24, she seeks, works, makes, sells, and delivers. First, she looks for and finds wool, indicating her family does not have sheep, so she must locate where to get her wool. She also must find someone who grows flax that she can buy in order to have the linen she needs. After she seeks, she begins to work with her hands. She has to spin the wool into yarn and the flax into linen threads. After the spinning comes the weaving, before it can be made into garments, bedding, sashes, or whatever she needs.

She recognizes her talent for making good quality items, not only for herself and family, but that will also sell. She uses her time and talent to add to the family financial resources. "Her lamp does not go out at night" shows us that she works into the night, but not all night, because we see in verse 15 that "she rises while it is yet night and provides for her household and portions for her maidens."

From sunset until bedtime would give her a few hours to work, similar to the hours we have after our evening meals before going to bed. In those remaining night hours she would have plenty of time to give her body rest and still get up while it's dark. It's interesting to note that she didn't wait for her maidens to wake her up and attend to her. Instead, she gets herself up and prepares not only for herself and her family, but her maidens as well. How many of us would require our maidens to wake us, help us get dressed, then bring our breakfast?

Verse 14 is figurative language that shows she does whatever is necessary to bring food items that are not raised in the household garden into her house. By whatever method she gets this food, she must plan for it and get it into her possession. She cannot be idle or lazy to manage this for her family. It takes thought and time to plan meals and/or menus whether they are for two, or for households of several people.

Verse 16 shows consideration and purchase, which indicates a level of wisdom and judgment. We might call it “business sense.” This also shows us that she possibly has control of a large amount of money. At the very least, she has access to money with which to purchase this field. To consider the field to purchase shows thought, discernment, and necessary time to think it over, not impulsive buying.

The phrase “planting a vineyard” probably does not mean she planted that vineyard by herself. A household with maid-servants would also have man-servants who would do this work, or possibly hired hands. No matter how she obtained the food items, she had charge and oversight of the field and that means time and energy on her part, as well as managerial and supervisory skills.

Verse 20 shows us that even in her full day of providing for her family, preparing and delivering the items to sell, conducting business outside her home and overseeing it, she still is aware of others in need and has time to give and do for them.

“She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness” (verse 27). This statement summarizes her character, her attitudes, and her work ethic for her life.

In conclusion we see a very busy woman who took care of herself and her household. She evidently had a perfect balance of caring for those within her house—husband, children, servants—as well as conducting business, and also giving to and doing for those in need because in verse 28 we see “her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.”

Looking at your own life, do you see balance? Or a woman overwhelmed by demands from every side? Do you see a woman who lets God be in control, or a woman “too busy” for God? Most of us are somewhere in between, striving for that goal. God bless you as you “keep on keeping on.”



Questions for meditation and discussion:

1. Define virtue and virtuous.
2. From the scripture, make a list of character traits of the Proverb's woman.
3. Consider how you act/react 1) when someone is rude to you; 2) when you are forced to wait in a long line; 3) when things don't go your way at home? Do you need to change, and if so, how will you do that?
4. Jesus called an enemy "friend." There are people we all like less than others. How do you treat those people in your life?
5. How might our actions/behavior at home affect our husbands 1) at his daily work, 2) in his spiritual work, and 3) his influence in the community?
6. If you work outside the home, consider the balance in your life (i.e., does work dominate your entire life so that you have little to no time with the family), and how you might gain more balance.

Ideas for application of the topic:

1. Using the list made above, evaluate your strengths and weaknesses. Choose one weakness and work on it for the next month.
2. We all have a bad day once in a while. Consider how you might handle some situations better. Make a plan with a focused effort to work that plan. You might want to share your thoughts with your husband/children and include them, let them help you, or let it be a couples/family project.
3. Consider your thoughts on submissiveness and the respect to be shown for a husband's position in the family as God gave it. Does this subject make you uncomfortable? Why? Consider Ephesians 5:21 where Paul is writing about how our relationship with our church family should be, and he ends with "submitting to one another in the fear of God." What are your thoughts on the concept of "submissiveness" in both the husband-wife relationship and the relationships within the church family? Remember, this is not an option, it is a command.

Prayer suggestions:

1. Pray for wisdom in setting priorities for yourself and your family, wisdom for handling various situations you encounter, especially concerning the family, and wisdom in handling financial resources (whether it's budgeting, investing, or spending).
2. Pray for an open heart and understanding of the role of submissiveness as a wife to her husband, and as a Christian sister in your congregation.
3. Pray for patience, energy, and peace to go through activities of each day.

## FUN PAGE

Find the words below in the puzzle.

BEAUTY	FEARS	KINDNESS	REACHES
BLESSED	FRUIT	OPENS	RISES
CHARM	GATES	PLANTS	SEEK
CONSIDERS	GOOD	PRAISES	STRENGTH
DELIVERS	HOUSEHOLD	PROFITABLE	TRUST
DIGNITY	IDLENESS	PROVIDES	WISDOM
EXCELLENTLY			

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E I D L E N E S S E N D N I K
L X D I G N I T Y S N E P O E
B A C O N S I D E R S P L A E
A D H E H O U S E H O L D W S
T E A F L D F H T R F R U I T
I L R E G L I J S I B K D S R
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