

A View of the “*Virtuous*” Woman

Proverbs 31:10-30

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Introduction: Proverbs 31:10-31 is a poem in the form of an acrostic (each of the 22 verses beginning with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet). The description is of an “excellent” (“*virtuous*”) wife and mother. This could be considered the prayer of a mother for her son’s future wife (see 31:1). Though some suggest the presentation of this “ideal” wife and mother is a composite sketch of many different women, it is best to see this as a picture of the worthy woman which offers standards possible for other women to meet. The key to her “success” is revealed to be her devotion to her Lord, expressed by her finding fulfillment in her role as a wife and a mother. Consider with me this morning that the spiritual vision of a godly mother depends upon her continual view of her great God.

I. Let’s define the **virtue** of this virtuous woman (:10a).

A. Consider some secular **definitions**.

1. Webster’s first definition is: “general moral excellence; right action and thinking; goodness or morality” (Guralnik).
2. The third definition offered is: “chastity, especially in a woman.”
3. The fifth listed definition is: “effective power or force; efficacy; potency; especially the ability to heal or strengthen (the “*virtue*” of a medicine)”.

B. Consider the spiritual **demonstrations** (or applications).

1. Definition #1 could speak of this woman’s piety; the strength of her **convictions** (she is spiritually dependable).
2. Definition #3 could speak of this woman’s purity; the strength of her **character** (she is morally devoted).
3. Definition #5 could speak of this woman’s potency; the strength of her **condition** (she is physically determined).

II. Let’s determine the **value** of this virtuous woman (:10b).

A. Consider the preciousness of **rubies**.

1. The Hebrew word here is “*peniyim*,” translated as rubies, pearls, jewels, or corals.
2. The word suggests that which has great value. It is used elsewhere in Proverbs 3:15, 8:11, and 20:15.

B. Consider the preciousness of a **virtuous woman**.

1. This woman is valued for her virtue and industriousness.
2. This woman is to be viewed as a rare jewel.

Illustrate: Someone has suggested that her value in monetary terms takes into consideration her wide variety of jobs and skills: Cook, babysitter, chauffeur, dishwasher, interior decorator, nurse and/or doctor, plumber, “handywoman,” maid, secretary, bookkeeper, teacher, social activities director, lawn and garden specialist, & etc.

Summary: “The poet thereby means to say that such a wife is a more precious possession than all earthly things which are precious, and that he who finds such an one has to speak of his rare fortune.”

III. Let’s describe the **vitality** of this virtuous woman (:11-27).

A. Her **trustworthiness** is depicted (:11-12).

1. Her husband is able to trust her without reservation (:11a).
2. Her husband is aided by her financial success (:11b).
3. Her husband is assured of her desire to please him (*good*) and not do him harm (*evil*) (:12).

B. Her **industriousness** is described (:13-27).

1. She acquires the needed raw materials to work "*willingly*" ("take delight in, be pleased with") with her hands (:13).
2. She draws upon distant resources ("*merchants' ships*") to meet her family's needs (:14)
3. She arises early ("*yet night*") in order to use her time wisely and accomplish her goals (:15).
4. She involves herself with labors outside the home – agricultural pursuits (:16 and compare Geneses 29:6; Joshua 2:6; Song of Solomon 1:6; 8:12).
5. She enters into the work herself, not just directing her servants (:17).
6. She experiences ("*perceiveth*") the successful results of her farming endeavors with such a busy schedule taking her long into the night (:18).
7. She spins yarn into cloth (:19).
8. She shows compassion and generosity to the poor (:20).
9. She fears not the future, for she has made adequate preparation for the cold weather of winter (:21).
10. She prepares fabrics ("*tapestry*") and acquires high quality cloth ("*silk and purple*") (:22).
11. She frees her husband to carry out his place of responsibility ("*in the gates*") by taking care of business in the home (:23).
12. She makes money for her household by producing linen cloth used for outer wraps ("*linen*") and belts ("*girdles*") (:24).
13. She provides financial stability to her household ("*strength and honour*") and her confidence in God gives her ability not to worry about the future ("*rejoice in time to come*") (:25).
14. She models wisdom and kindness before her family (:26).
15. She demonstrates diligence, even working long hours to see that her home is in order (:27).

Summary: "Here is a woman who leaves nothing to chance; who uses her organizing ability, her skillful hands, her business sense and every minute of her time, to create a home where nothing is second-rate or insecure, where wisdom and faithfulness abound; where help is at hand for the hard-pressed and where family bonds are affectionate and strong" (Kidner).

IV. Let's discern the vision of this virtuous woman (:30).

A. Her outward appearance > the "look" of man

1. "*Favour*" (or charm) is deceitful because it is only "skin-deep" - it is **external**.
Matthew Henry observes, "There may be an impure, deformed soul lodged in a comely and beautiful body."
2. "*Beauty is vain*" suggests beauty passes away; it is **temporal**.
"...Beauty may indicate weak character of one who overemphasizes the development of the external appearance at the expense of the inward development of the soul" (Stevenson).

B. Her inward attitude > the "look" of God (& cf. I Samuel 16:7; I Kings 8:39)

1. Fear of the Lord **defined** by the "scholars" -
 - a. The fear of the Lord is "a reverence of God expressed in submission to His will" (Ryrie). [A fear of His displeasure, not of His damnation.]
 - b. "...she is truly pious (having or showing religious devotion), &, in all she does, is guided & governed by principles of conscience & a regard to God..." (M.H.). [Desiring His smile, dreading His frown.]
 - c. "...reverential awe & admiring, submissive fear... the fear of the Lord is a state of mind in which one's own attitudes, will, feelings, deeds, & goals are exchanged for God's" (MacArthur).

2. Fear of the Lord **demonstrated** in the Scriptures -
 - a. The desire for wisdom > Proverbs 2:1-5
 - b. The departure from evil > Proverbs 8:13 (cf. 6:16-19)
 - c. The devotion to God > Proverbs 14:26 (cf. Psalm 97:10)

[Living with an awareness of God's presence, power, & purpose > sensing His presence (Mt. 28:20); sharing His power (Phil. 2:13; 4:13); & seeing His purpose (Ps. 40:8).

Summary: "Here we have the secret of her devoted virtuous life. She fears the Lord. This, which Proverbs has declared to be the beginning of wisdom, is her abiding characteristic. Her words, her ways, her dress, & her household disciplines, are all ordered as in His presence" (Ironside). "But the fear of God reigning in the heart is the beauty of the soul, it recommends those that have it to the favour of God, & is, in His sight, of great price; it will last for ever..." (Henry).

Conclusion: What could be considered 20/20 vision for a godly mother? From our text, we can conclude it is the woman with the right view & vision of her Lord. The Proverbs 31 woman is extolled as virtuous, having great value, blessed with enormous vitality. Tonight we will see her victory of praise. Not only does she receive praise from her children & husband, but also her works. But the most important word of praise comes from her Lord, "*a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.*" Matthew Henry concludes, "That which completes & crowns her character is that she fears the Lord."

How about you, Mom? Is your vision of the Lord reflected by a "fearful" & a "faithful" heart? Might we all be evidencing that fear of the Lord in our desire for wisdom, our departure from evil, & our devotion to God. May we also realize our spiritual strength comes from the Spirit of God as we resolve to make the Word of God our daily delight.

As we honor mothers this morning, might we realize that the spiritual vision of a godly mother depends upon her continual view of her great God.